

## “What parents need to know about porn... and their kids”

By Marcia Segelstein, OneNewsNow Columnist - 2/24/2009

Most people probably don't picture kids when they think about who's viewing pornography. But according to statistics cited by the non-profit advocacy organization Enough Is Enough, the largest group of viewers of Internet pornography is children between the ages of 12 and 17. And there's more. The average age of first exposure to Internet pornography is 11. Eighty percent of 15- to 17-year-olds have had multiple exposures to hardcore pornography. Nine out of ten children between the ages of 8 and 16 with Internet access have viewed pornographic websites, sometimes inadvertently in the course of looking up information for homework.

Scary stuff because the pornography available at the click of a mouse today makes the pornography of a generation ago look positively innocent. Dr. Jill Manning, a therapist who specializes in issues related to pornography and whose patients include many teenagers, describes Internet pornography today as deviant, vile, and graphic. Picture rape and torture -- to name but two -- portrayed positively. Now imagine children watching such material.

Dr. Manning is the author of “What's the Big Deal About Pornography: A Guide for the Internet Generation”. Beyond the moral concerns most parents would have about their children viewing pornography, there are serious risks for kids who do, according to Dr. Manning. One is that young people are introduced to sexuality in a way that is completely disconnected from relationships to other human beings, and completely disconnected from spirituality. “When a young person is being immersed in pornography they are getting expert teaching in how to objectify human beings, how to strip human beings of their feelings, personalities and needs. That's a very dangerous road to be walking down.”

Most of Dr. Manning's patients come from Christian homes, and she believes many Christian parents need a wake-up call when it comes to this issue. In her experience, they are sometimes too trusting of kids, and naïve about the intensely graphic and deviant nature of material accessible via the Internet.

“I know that most Christian parents desire to create a home that's a safe haven from the world and evil influences,” Dr. Manning told me. She thinks most parents would probably be shocked to learn that approximately 80 percent of hardcore pornography viewing by young people happens in the home. “On the one hand that's very troubling, but on the other hand it can give us some hope, because it provides leverage. If we can get a handle on that in the home, we can make a tremendous impact for good on our young people.”

## **“What parents need to know about porn...and their kids”**

By Marcia Segelstein, OneNewsNow Columnist - 2/24/2009

Dr. Manning believes parents should have open and frank conversations with their children about the subject of pornography, in the same way they discuss the dangers of alcohol and drugs. She told me about a client of hers, a grown man, struggling with same-sex attraction. His first sexual experience was with homosexual pornography -- at the age of 9. By the time his parents sat down with him to talk about sex, he was 13 years old and already had years of exposure. She's had clients who first encountered pornography at the age of 5 or 6. "Teaching healthy sexuality is one of the best protections and ways to arm our children. Then when they encounter the lies pornography tells them, they have a powerful reference point. They'll be able to de-code it and say that's absurd." She believes young people should be told why parents disapprove of pornography, and why they believe it's harmful.

In addition to Dr. Manning's book, there are many resources available to parents interested in protecting their kids from online pornography. Enough is Enough provides extensive information for parents on its website, including its recently launched program "Internet Safety 101." This new teaching series for parents brings together under one heading the expert advice, tools, and resources Enough is Enough has been compiling over the last decade.

While there's no question that setting guidelines and putting safety measures in place are critically important, parents should keep in mind that sometimes children are introduced to pornography outside the home, away from those safety measures. Filters and other protections may not be in place at friends' houses, hence the importance of arming kids with information.

Based on her experience as a therapist, Manning told me that **many teens turn to the Internet for sexual information.** Perhaps they hear a word or a term they're curious about, so they go online to check it out. Unfortunately, they often end up at pornographic websites where they're not only exposed to explicit and degrading images, but any actual information they absorb is completely distorted.

## **“What parents need to know about porn... and their kids”**

By Marcia Segelstein, OneNewsNow Columnist - 2/24/2009

There are many documented risk factors associated with adolescents viewing pornography. In fact, Dr. Manning testified before a Senate subcommittee on the topic of "Pornography's Impact on Marriage and the Family." **Here are some of the risks she listed for adolescents who have been exposed to pornography:**

- Lasting negative or traumatic emotional responses
- Earlier onset of first sexual intercourse
- The belief that superior sexual satisfaction is attainable without having affection for one's partner
- The belief that being married or having a family is unattractive prospects
- Increased risk for developing sexual compulsions and addictive behavior
- Increased risk of exposure to incorrect information and overestimating the prevalence of less-common practices (e.g., group sex, bestiality, or sadomasochistic activity)

**Sadly, pornography is a threat parents simply cannot ignore.** The potential risks for children are too great and the chances of children being exposed to it far too high. If any further motivation is needed, read one last, chilling thing Dr. Manning shared with me:

**"I believe pornography is the most successfully marketed attack on our divine nature...that has ever existed.** There has never been anything so calculated and widespread and effective at reaching so many people at such a young age."