

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: My 10-year old son admitted that he has viewed porn on the Internet. I'm devastated. I thought he was too young and sheltered to have to worry about that. How can his father and I handle this whole event?

ANSWER: We parents have to walk this line very carefully. Porn is everywhere. On the one hand, we don't want to violate innocence. On the other hand, we don't want to titillate. **We need to both protect and equip.** Boys and men have ample opportunity to view porn. Once the viewing happens, there is often no perfect answer as to how to proceed, and no guarantee the behavior will stop. The "best" answer often has two parts: an avoidance plan and damage control.

Regardless of what our society says, one cannot bring pornography into one's life without destructive consequences to mind, spirit and relationships. At 10, your son probably sees porn as new, interesting, maybe funny, intriguing and exciting. Viewing porn gives him a sense of power and accomplishment via a "secret knowledge." **This behavior is overwhelmingly attractive.** At some moral-cognitive level, he is probably aware that there is "something wrong" with what he is doing (regardless of what our present society says about porn being relatively harmless). Secretive behaviors breed guilt and more secrecy. At his age, I doubt he is presently masturbating as he watches, but it's certainly possible. So, the behavior is probably not YET overtly linked to the incredibly powerful sex drive, but it is simply a matter of time before the link to his own sexuality becomes established, and the ability to stop becomes extremely difficult. He is setting himself up for a lifetime of addiction. (No, not all guys who have viewed porn become addicted, but most viewers who begin at an early age continue to view throughout their lives, even into marriage, and significant numbers act-out their views.) I know that's hard to hear.

Some important facts:

1. Pornography has all the characteristics of any other addiction. The voyeuristic behavior cycles from ritual and fantasy, to anticipation, to viewing, to relief, to remorse, back to ritual and

fantasy. All behaviors have a function. Pornography is an “absorptive” addiction where the individual strives to lose himself (escape and find relief) in the behavior.

2. Pornography is progressive. More severe and perverted images are required more frequently to obtain the same “high” (level of escape and relief). There is always the real danger of acting out pornographic fantasies in real life. (A huge percentage of serial rapists and pedophiles have a history of pornography started at an early age. Young men ages 12 to 17 are among the largest consumers of pornography.) **Your son will start to search for more images as he meditates on, and replays the images already in his mind.**

3. Pornography affects the relationships in a male’s life by emotionally distancing him from others. Pornography is **not only false intimacy**; it is also a flight from true intimacy. It is incredibly attractive to boys/men because porn requires no effort, no real emotional engagement, no sacrifice, or no spiritual leadership.

4. Once the images are in the mind, they are impossible to remove. Guys are constantly haunted and taunted by the titillating memorable images. The “hook” is sharp, and the boy is quickly and securely caught. Pornography is a door all guys should never open.

5. As boys grow older, pornography often becomes a man’s sinful avoidance of true intimacy and true courage. Generally, men tend to struggle with issues of insecurity regarding adequacy in various aspects of life. Pornography is a safe escape and relief where true masculinity is not required.

6. Pornography is revenge and theft. Later in life, it is often used by a husband to make his wife pay for not being desirable in the way he wants her to be. Husbands steal true intimacy from their wives and replace it with fantasy and masturbation.

7. Pornography dehumanizes and objectifies women and children. Therefore, violence and perversions are easily introduced. Often, a **boy/man learns not only to associate violence and perversions with sexual intimacy, but also to require one or both for sexual gratification.** Any behavior that is linked to a drive as powerful as the sex drive is very difficult to stop.

8. Finally, pornography separates boys/men from God. Addictions create idols. God will not share his throne. A man who worships at the idol of pornography robs God.

What can you do? Fathers need to take the primary role in this struggle. They understand the strength of visual stimulation in guy's sexual excitement. If father is absent or brushes off the issue, mom will have to take charge...her job will be extremely difficult without dad on board (Often, not always, fathers who are reluctant to get involved and/or dismiss the issue (That's just what boys do.) have a history of using porn themselves.). **Understand that your son has most likely seen more than you think he has seen.**

1. **Pray before you have a heart-to-heart talk** with your son. Dad should do most or all of the talking. Have an attitude of calmness, sadness and seriousness. Anger will shut down the learning. Let your son know that such behavior is not OK, is not God pleasing, and is addictive (You'll have to explain addictions.). Let him know that you can "handle" both him and the issue...your son needs to know you are strong enough for this battle. **This issue is a spiritual war.**

2. **Tell your son you want to help.** Let him know he has you at his side! Tell him it might be pretty hard to stop. He will have to take difficult and practical steps. Get out your Bible and give him some godly reasons why he should stop (You might have to do some biblical research.).

3. **Set limits and boundaries regarding his Internet use.** Supervision at all times (yes, all times) is critical at this point. The window of opportunity to derail this addiction is small.

4. Establish rewards for his efforts. Let your son help come up with the rewards.

5. **Addictions are best derailed via re-directs** to other behaviors. For boys, physical activities are often best...keep your son active. Help him find enjoyment without "screen time." Keep him off the devices and out doing projects and activities. Dad, join him. Don't let him be alone. This event is an opportunity for you to engage your son in new and deeper ways. "Flee from sexual immorality." 1 COR 6: 18

6. **Pray with him** every day in an intentional way...not always about porn...just engage him via prayer. (You don't want him to always associate prayer with porn.) Prayer will build relationship, trust and model where a godly father finds help. **Again, this behavior is a spiritual war** (I understand not everyone sees it this way.).

7. **Know your son;** his strengths and weaknesses. You don't want to "obsess" about the porn (e.g. Ask him every day how he is

handling it.), nor do you want to dismiss it and believe a one-time talk will take care of the problem.

8. Understand that the issue overlaps and entwines his whole personality, spiritual maturity, moral development, peer group and his continuing story as he moves through adolescence, teen years and manhood. **There is no easy fix; there are re-directs and avoidance.** Your son will probably in some way struggle with the temptation and memories of porn his whole life. On the other hand, there is also the on-going opportunity for your son to be ever more dependent on Christ!

9. Understand **that your son will have deep, profound ambivalence toward the porn...**whether he now realizes it or not. As in all addictions, the object/substance/behavior is both the “friend” and the “enemy.” **Very few males want to stop using porn;** they simply become more secretive and sophisticated in how, where and when the use it.

10. Understand that porn is everywhere. More and more is tolerated and even promoted by the “entertainment” industries. Access on pads and phones makes disengaging and avoiding harder and harder for godly boys and men.

11. You might need to speak with a therapist for more specific ideas geared to you and your son.

“Finally, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”
Philippians 4:8

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