

Down the Rabbit Hole:
How many clicks until your child finds hard core pornography?

A few weeks ago, a client shared with me an experience he had with his child. Let me start by saying that I work with pornography addicts, and this gentleman has been in recovery for years. He is VERY knowledgeable about online pornography, it's dangers and how easy it is to access pornography online.

My client related that his wife had found pornography on his son's phone. His son is in the 12 year old range. My client and his wife are savvy folks. They handled this situation and conversation with their son with grace, knowledge, compassion and most of all, lack of judgment. The point of this story is not that he found pornography on his 12 year old son's phone, that is not an uncommon experience. It is not that he and his wife handled it beautifully. That, unfortunately, is not so common. The point is that my client, a pornography addict in recovery, was shocked by WHAT he found on his son's phone. Rape Pornography.

This young man went down the rabbit hole. That is what many of my clients call the process. You start with an innocuous image (non pornography but normally something risqué in a sidebar ad) and start your journey down the rabbit hole. Searching the web for anything is a process of clicks. It is the clicking process that can start the trance for which the internet is so famous. This happens if you are clicking links on Zappos.com, Wikipedia or pornography. The internet sucks you in and you end up on some site, three hours later, with no idea how you ended up looking at the page you are looking at. (For a great discussion of this, check out Phillip Zimbardo's Ted Talk on The Demise of Guys webpage).

This young man clicked on a non-pornographic link on a webpage he was viewing. He told his father that in a series of very FEW clicks, he ended up watching pornography that simulated (we hope) rape scenes. It is this easy. Three or four clicks into adolescent curiosity online and an impressionable young mind is watching violent pornography. It peaked his curiosity and on a subsequent visit to the internet, he typed rape pornography in the search box.

Research tells us that it is not uncommon for adolescents to view pornography. It is now seen, in some circles, as part of the process of adolescent sexual awakening and awareness. However, what research also tells us is that adolescents who are **frequent** users of pornography have views that support the objectification of women and have distorted views on the act of sex itself. Violent pornography sends messages to minds that are not yet ready to fully understand them, about the role of consent and violence in sex. These messages are not good.

My client was not shocked that his son was viewing pornography. He was shocked at the type of pornography he was watching. He was upset at himself about his own denial. He never thought this would happen. This is the point of my story today. Parents are often in denial, even parents who are more in tune to the technological world.

If your child is older than ten, chances are he or she has seen pornography. If they are 12 or older, chances are they have seen quite a bit of pornography. Parents need to talk to their kids about internet pornography. This conversation has to happen not just once, but often. Parents need to know what types of pornography their children might view and be able to talk about that too. Has your child seen violent pornography? Have they seen pornography with animals, same sex participants, or even child pornography? Parents need to prepare to talk about all of these things if they want to truly help their

child navigate this online world in the healthiest way possible.