



Youth Discussions: A Conversation on Pornography Joshua Center Video Transcript

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Mini Lecture Series: Pornography and the Use and Abuse in Youth

by Celeste Coler

00:15

So today we want to talk about pornography and the use and abuse in youth. Specifically, how pornography consumption is related to attitudes and behaviors towards consent and sex. I think it's important to start this conversation with a shared definition and framework as to what pornography is. With this shared framework, we can also understand how much pornography we consume every day, and how the effects may be affecting us.

Pornography refers to any sexually explicit material such as a video, photo, audio or text that has the main purpose of arousing its consumer. It's really intended for a third person viewer, and there's little to no artistic merit. I also think it's important to make a disclaimer as we begin this mini lecture. Because a significant portion of data collected on pornography some of which we use in this presentation is not gender inclusive. Here, at Joshua Center, we fully understand that sex and gender orientation do not consistently overlap. So throughout this mini lecture, when I use the terms "men" and "women", I'm referring to the gender that you identify as not the sex who were born as. Another disclaimer that I think is relevant to this mini lecture is that pornography prevention is commonly taught using fear tactics. And here at the Joshua Center, we understand that fear is not an effective way to teach and learn consent topics.

Many youth encounter pornography well before they have their own developed impressions of sex. And this is because pornography does exploit this natural curiosity of youth. And what this means is that before youth have their own impressions of intimacy, of consent, they are being influenced by pornography, which tends to have very negative untrue messages about consent and sex. Additionally, pornography teaches a view of sex and bodies, which is unattainable, and this can really decrease people's self esteem and self confidence in every sphere of relationships. Youth are often left with impressions of sex and intimacy that can be harmful, not only to their partner, but to themselves.

Earlier when I stated that pornography consumption has connections to our attitudes and behaviors towards consent and sex, one example of this is pornography and sexual aggression. Research shows that pornography increases acts of sexual aggression, both verbal and physical across gender and sexual orientations in both adolescents and adults. So what exactly is verbal and physical, sexual aggression? It's using language or violence to manipulate someone into having sex.

The people who view pornography are more likely to hold attitudes conducive to sexual violence. And this is because pornography allows us to consciously and subconsciously accept

interpersonal violence myths. And we're going to get more into what these interpersonal violence myths are. These are examples of the messages that affect our ability to believe and support survivors, as well as our own ability to navigate consensual relationships.

Another example of the way that pornography consumption affects our attitudes and behavior is pornography and bystander intervention. Research shows that people who view pornography are less likely to practice bystander intervention. Bystander intervention is intervening to support another person before during or after they're sexually exploited. Here Joshua Center we have another mini lecture and youth discussion surrounding bystander intervention if you want to know more. What this means is that people are less likely to practice bystander intervention if they hold attitudes conducive to sexual violence. And the reason why people may hold attitudes conducive to sexual violence is based on those subliminal teachings inherent to porn that I shared in the previous slide.

The reality is, is that for some people, pornography becomes an obsession. Unlike food and drugs, there's no physical limitations to pornography consumption. And it's been proven that there is significant relationship between pornography consumption and depression, fixation and dependency on pornography, fixation on sex and a decreased interest in other passions and hobbies. Another reality is that pornography and its effects extend outside of our physical, romantic, intimate relationships, and it can bleed into other areas of our lives. And it's difficult to pinpoint that pornography can be the source of this disinterest and dissatisfaction with other aspects of lives and so it's really important to be conscious and critical of that. What happens is that the effects of pornography on your interest in other things becomes cyclical, right? The less interested that you are in your hobbies and the more fixated you are on sex, the more you will depend on pornography and this cycle continues.

Here, I want to address some of the factors and some of the things inherent to pornography that increase harm. Many of the harmful effects of pornography stem from a sense of entitlement that pornography upholds, right? Because pornography is easily accessible, people then believe and make the assumption that so should sex. Pornography also fails to acknowledge the consequences of non consensual sex. And actually a lot of pornography depicts non consensual sex in a way that normalizes it when in society, it should not be normalized.

Here's some steps that you can take to mitigate some of these harmful effects of pornography. The first step is to really be conscious and critical of pornography, right? Because pornography is actually inherent to a lot of our media, whether we choose to view it or not. Violence, nudity, non consensual relationships are in a lot of the movies and TV shows that we see today. The crucial step is being conscious and critical of this, understanding which relationships are depicting unhealthy relationships, and which depictions of relationships and sex are depicting healthy relationships. Another thing you can do is to seek out better resources that address questions and concerns about sex. I think it's also important to recognize that not everyone intentionally engages with pornography. Lastly, Joshua Center believes that it's important for everyone to incorporate consent culture into their relationships and behavior. Well, of course, it's important not to believe or practice these harmful attitudes and behaviors inherent to pornography, I think that there are other ways that we can, as a society, all practice affirmative

consent. And here at Joshua Center, we have another mini lecture on affirmative consent, that can inform you on exactly what that is, what that looks like and what it means.

Here, at Joshua Center, we created a resource using youth actors to demonstrate some of these harmful effects of pornography that we've spoken about. We think that it's really important to demonstrate exactly how pornography can affect people personally and in their relationships. So I hope that you keep watching.

Youth Discussions: Pornography

Please note this discussion is among youth actors.

07:37

Hi, my name is Anna. My friends watch pornography, but I don't. I think it kind of makes me uncomfortable. And they call me naive, but I'm actually think I'm a little more educated on the topic than them. So I'm here just to learn more so bring it back to them.

08:00

Hi, my name is Mason. I identify as gay and I got a lot of my, kind of, sex education through school. But it really only covered heterosexual relationships. So I initially turned to pornography as like an education source. But it's kind of had, at least I feel like it's had, some negative impacts on my body image and like how comfortable I actually am talking about and like engaging in sexual relationships.

08:29

Hi, my name is Melissa. I'm 17. Jack and I are here because we grew up best childhood friends. But it sort of evolved into something more and we started dating. But recently, I've really been feeling like he's stopped respecting my boundaries, and our relationship dynamic has really changed now that we're a couple. And he started crossing my boundaries, and it made me feel really unsafe. So he basically promised that he would come talk to me about this, because from where we are right now, I don't really know how I can move forward with my friendship, but it's really important to me. So I want to try to figure out a way to find a middle ground and come to terms with the way that our relationship has changed. And how we can both understand each other better and have a more respectful relationship that's not affected in the same way by the violent porn that Jack started viewing.

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Yeah, my name is Jack. I came with Melissa. Yeah, I get like, I'm here because like, I care about our friendship, but like, I don't know, like, I guess like, I watch porn, like, what? Like, everyone does that. So I don't really know why. But I don't want to feel like I didn't like hearing that like, she felt uncomfortable or unsafe. So I'm here to just kind of I'm here for her. But yeah, like, I don't know. I'm just excited to learn, I guess a little bit more. But I don't really think there's like an issue like, I don't know what like, I'm just doing it like there's nothing every person like in America and the world does it so I don't know why like, I'm just like, yeah, I don't know. So I'm here for her.

10:22

Hi, my name is Ella. I'm an athlete and a student. And lately, I guess I've just been realizing more and more how porn is kind of taking over my, my thoughts and my brain. And I don't really talk about it with friends a lot, because I guess I get kind of embarrassed because I don't know, there's there's a lot of stigma about talking about porn. So I don't, I don't really discuss, like how it really affects me very much. So I haven't really talked about it with friends. And I thought, coming to a support group and talking about it with you guys who may be feeling the same things as me might be helpful, because I don't really know how I'm feeling yet. I know that it's been a problem, or it's becoming more of a problem, because it's it's taking over my brain. And like I said, My thoughts more than more than it had before. And it has sort of crept into some relationships. So I just wanted to talk to you guys about about what you guys are guys are feeling and maybe it'll help me.

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I mentioned this in my introduction, but I personally don't watch pornography, I don't really see the purpose in it and have trouble understanding why somebody would. It worries me because if I'm in a relationship with somebody who was violent, I don't want that to have an effect on how they treat me. And I think that it's very likely that it could. And I know that when people watch porn, they can develop a false sense of intimacy. And I think that can affect people who don't watch pornography in the same way that it can affect people who do.

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I also talked a little bit about this in my intro, but I mean, obviously, I watch porn and my friends do and I really don't think that that's I don't think it's something you should judge people for at least I don't. But I do try to stay away from the more violent stuff. Because I, I know that I mean it honestly, it scares me a little bit. But even without, like actively seeking it out, there's so much violence just baked in to pornography, that it's hard to escape it. And I kind of worried that that's affected my sense of how intimate relationships are supposed to work. But on the positive side, like I have learned a lot like stuff that I wasn't ever going to get from a school sex education course or from my family. We're pretty traditional, fairly religious, I wasn't going to get any sort of detailed talk from my parents, that's for sure. Yeah, I guess on the whole, porn has exposed me to a lot of things that I I think I was looking for, like a lot of informative content to a degree. But with that has come a lot of stuff that I'm not sure is, I can't be sure that it's real. You know, I can't be sure that that's how relationships are actually supposed to work. And that undermines my confidence, not just in what I'm watching, but like, in whatever sense of relationships or intimacy that I've created for myself.

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Yeah,

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I think that the weird thing for me is I never really saw Jack as someone who would hurt me or be violent towards me. But once we started being intimate, I started to feel more unsafe and like he wasn't trusting my boundaries. And when I talk to my friends about it, they said that they had

learned that sometimes violent porn can be one of the reasons that people will start acting differently or not respecting boundaries. And I sort of did my research about it trying to figure out like, what's going on with Jack and I found that a lot of people that for a lot of people watching that sort of content makes them think really differently about intimacy and boundaries and I think Jack just thought that was normal and just because he saw it in porn, he thought it was okay to do without talking to me. So I don't think that Jack was like trying to be bad but like, it definitely made me feel uncomfortable and the way that he was seeing this stuff made him just sort of turn into a different person when he was around me like sexually and that's definitely been a been a negative experience for me because I want to feel safe around him and I want to have a relationship with him but I also want to feel safe and love when we're intimate and not, like, I have to be worried what he's gonna do next.

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Yeah, um, I wouldn't say like negative effect is like the perfect word for it. Like, I don't like I started like watching porn, like, like, eighth ninth grade, right? Because like, that's just what all the guys did like, like, just to be part of it, like just they made jokes and like, you get the jokes between like, the porn stars and like, the recent videos and like, we sometimes watched it together. Like, it wasn't like a weird thing. It was just like, kind of like, just, it was just part of what you did. And then like, and like I don't, like it just is just what you did. It's like watching Netflix, like, it's just something that is done and you just do it and like, it doesn't really affect my behavior when I watch something. But clearly, it changed something in me or something. Because like, I don't know, I like, I think I came in with like, an understanding of like, what sex was and like, what I expected from Melissa and like, just like what intimacy meant to me. And then clearly, she just was on a different page, which isn't bad. It's just like, now I'm like, okay, like, I don't know, like, there's nothing really like, I don't know where to go to learn it. Like, I just, that's what I know. And like, so clearly, we're on a different like, kind of wavelength. And I guess that's probably how its negatively affected me. But yeah.

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I think porn affected has affected me in more ways than I think I can realize at this point. I started watching porn in my early teenage years, so a couple years ago. And at first, I guess it was sort of just out of curiosity. I'd seen some movies where they was sort of like porn type stuff in it, and I was like, maybe I should check this out. And then I just got really, really addicted. And and then after I got addicted, I then started to get bored because you sort of repetitive and the same type of thing. So I guess I started watching more violent, and more graphic types of porn. And, and after that, it's just really, really taken over my thoughts. Like I said before, I'm not really attending practices as much. I'm soccer player, and I don't really go to practice as much as I used to. And I don't hang out with my friends as often as I would like, or as often as I should to maintain the kind of relationships that I want. And I guess I because like I said earlier, I don't talk about it a lot, because there's so much stigma, I guess it just kind of like eats at my brain. And I guess I've realized I've started to judge people around me for either not watching the types of porn I watch or not really looking like the people in porn that I watch. And yeah, I'm starting to realize more and more that it's that it's affected me more deeply than I think that I can't even articulate right now.

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I guess for me, it was sort of weird, because I didn't realize that what was happening in our relationship was probably caused by porn while it was happening. And I always just thought porn is sort of, like, funny and like weird, but I never was like really taught about how it could impact relationships. So for me, it was just sort of scary that something could be impacting me, but I didn't know why. And that I could see these changes in

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Jack who I always really trusted. And it was because of something that I hadn't really realized could cause a lot of harm before. And

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I don't know, I think like the like, I don't there's definitely been some negative experiences, but it's just like, like, the first time I was like, whoa, like, this is not like it's violent. I didn't like it. But then it just kind of you get used to that you're like, oh, yeah, like, this is kind of friends are doing it like it just makes sense. You see, like these people and like they're having sex but they don't have like, there's just no like nothing, there's no consequences, like they do it and like, then just the video ends, nothing happens. But like, I do it, and then I have consequences. Like I have to like, like there's accountability. Like I'm here with Melissa and like, then we get in a fight and like I don't know, like, I think it's just like the piece of like, that's like a timeframe like it's like 10 and 25 like some amount of time but like it the actual my experience is like it continues throughout if that makes sense. And then I have to deal with like the consequences

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I think it's affected multiple types of relationships. I think with my friends first off, it's harder to connect with them than it ever has been before because I'm thinking about porn that they're not thinking about. And I think I've sort of subconsciously started to resent them in a way for for not enjoying the same types of porn as me or not really like understanding me. Because I obviously like different things than they do. So it has caused sort of like an internal difference between me and my friends that I've noticed more recently. And also I'm not hanging out with them as much so it's, it's caused like a general rift in our relationships because I'm not spending time with them anymore because I'm spending my time watching porn. As for like romantic relationships, I think, well, I went on a date with a guy about two weeks ago, and I have liked him for a long time. And I was really excited for this date. And then, when I was on the date, I was thinking about porn and I was thinking about violent porn. And I was thinking about being intimate with him in a violent way, rather than sort of what I thought about before what I fantasized about before I started watching violent porn. And then during the date, I just, I remember not being very interested in him, and it kind of like, kind of scared me that I wasn't interested in him, because I was like, What's wrong with me? I've been thinking about this dude for years, like, why am I, why is this suddenly not interesting to me now. And then later in the date, we did start to get intimate. And I guess I was expecting what I had been watching. He wasn't really delivering in the same way that I was expecting him to, because I think my expectations of intimacy and romance had been have been shifted by, by violent and graphic porn. So I hope that answers your question.

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I think I was about seventh, eighth, ninth grade, somewhere in my sort of prepubescent slash going through puberty phase. And I was I was at a sleepover with a couple of friends, and we were watching a movie. And then we were all kind of like, sort of, you know, as, as young girls are kind of, like, intrigued by by what porn was after watching this movie. And so I think we watched one video together, and we're all kind of like laughy, and sort of disgusted. Ah this is so gross and crazy. And then, and then I think when I got home, I realized that I actually kind of enjoyed it. And I was more intrigued by it. Whereas I think some of my friends were kind of like, I'm never doing this again. So I started watching porn by myself and I, as most people do, it started off very, kind of innocent and wholesome. I remember watching this sort of like romance section of porn, where it was, like, couples who are really in love with each other, have kind of all genders and sexualities, which was cool. And then, I guess over time, after porn had really crept into my mind more and more, and I began to get addicted to that type of porn, I I started getting bored with it. And so I was scrolling through Pornhub and I found some more some more violent and graphic porn. And then as I started watching it, it was interesting to me and I, and I kept watching and watching and, and at this point, and at this time in my life, it's it's not necessarily it's a choice anymore, because I actively, you know, click on Pornhub, and I open porn videos. But at this point, I can't watch any other type of porn, nothing. No other type of porn, besides violent and graphic porn is interesting to me, which is kind of scary to think about, but

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that's where I am.

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I feel like my sex education experience personally taught me enough. But with that being said, I can see that other schools may not have the same education that I do. And I'm very fortunate to have had that education. But I think it just should be promoted in schools that pornography is staged. And it's because people think that it's a documented experience of sex, but there's so much behind it. And I don't think that people necessarily have to go to pornography for educational purposes, because there are so many resources on the internet and to educate ourselves further, because I personally have. So yeah, I don't really, I can understand, but I don't think that people necessarily have to go to pornography for education, because there's a lot of false realities related with it. But that's just my opinion.

24:14

Okay, as a gay person, obviously, the clear answer here is I wish that they would teach us more in school because there's sort of a it's it's sort of a given people expect that other people watch porn. So if that's a given going into the sex education process, and then there's little to no education about non heterosexual relationships provided at school, it's almost like they expect you to seek out your education in this in in pornography, because it's assumed that everybody's already engaging with that kind of content. In the end, yes, I wish that my sex education and other people's could be more inclusive so that we don't have to turn to porn for like basic education, because in the end, while it might show you things that you wouldn't have learned out elsewhere, it's not really that educational. At least, I don't feel like the educational benefits for me have outweighed the, like, numerous potential negatives. You know what I mean? Like,

there's so like, the little good that I feel has come with it is probably going to be outweighed, in the end, by something. I don't even know what kinds of impacts it could have had on me.

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I guess I wish I knew it was an issue at all, the way that like, my friends all talked about porn was, like just sort of casually, and I didn't realize that it could have negative impacts. And I just didn't even know to look for that as a reason that my relationship was changing. And I also just didn't even think about the way that Jack might be viewing it. And just learning about sex and what that meant to us, just based off of these characters, who were like acting and putting on a show and just doing whatever, without actually checking in with each other. So I guess I wish that we actually learned that porn is not realistic. And is not following very good examples of what an actual relationship or what actual intimacy would look like in a healthy, safe relationship. So I think the other piece of it was that I was sort of embarrassed to bring it up to anyone, like, I'm not going to talk to my parents about my sex life with Jack. So when it first started happening, I was like, what are my options here? Like, it was sort of embarrassing, and I didn't really realize that it was a thing that I could actually talk to my friends about. But once it started getting bad, I realized, like, okay, I actually need to reach out to someone. And I realized, it's like, not something that I should really be embarrassed about. And actually, a lot of people are, like dealing with things like that. So it was really important that I had a safe space that I could actually talk to someone about that. And that didn't just make me feel like uncomfortable that I was even having sex or doing anything, cuz that's not the part that I should be embarrassed about or worried about.

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Yeah, I guess, like, education wise. Like, even like, school, like, well, there's no nothing is taught at school, like I don't, like I don't and then there's nothing bad, I guess, right? Like, and like, you learn about stuff. You don't learn about that, then you don't learn that, like, it's bad, I guess. And it like, I know, I just kind of always viewed it as like Netflix and just a different way. Like, and it's a form, like, it's just a video and like, it's sex, but like, I like I think it's just good to like, I guess, like, learn. And like, remember and like be like, just continuously aware of like, I guess like, these are actors, and that they're paid to do this and that. Like, this isn't like, actually what full on sex is like, it's they are putting on a show and like, I don't know, like, I guess like, I think seemed to like go to it and like seemed like this was sex. And then I come back and then I just like, emulate what I've seen because that's like, I guess like,

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what I'm supposed to do. But so I think just like understanding that, like, these are actors, and this is like just an actual, like, not real. And that I can't do this in my real life, I guess, because it hurts the people that I'm with.

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I think I learned a lot today. I think hearing Mason's story especially is kind of helped me see different perspectives on why people turn to pornography. It's not necessarily always an entertainment thing. So thank you, Mason, it was great to hear. And I think it also sparked an interest in me to educate my friends a little further because I can empathize now with the reason they talk, they turn to pornography. Yeah,

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I mean, most interesting for me, I guess was to hear that there are like to learn that there are people like Anna for whom porn isn't like a given part of their life. Because I guess, oh, I came into this with the assumption that everybody's you know, had at least some experience with it. But the way Anna frames it, it makes it sound like it's worth the effort, you know, to seek out those non pornographic resources to educate yourself and others and I mean, I could maybe even propose some of this stuff to my school. To help them fix the curriculum if they don't do it themselves. So I think that's totally, it's going to change the way I approach pornography and sex education going forward.

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I think the most important thing for me probably is to make sure I talk to the people I'm going to be intimate with and make sure I have my boundaries set. And, and they don't think that they can just do whatever they saw in porn with me. So if they're, like watching porn, that doesn't mean that that's just how it goes. And I think that that will be important for me moving forward, because obviously, it's impacted my relationship with Jack and I don't want that to happen again. So I guess just the most important thing is talking about what I'm comfortable with, with my partner and what they are comfortable with too and how we can, like, still have fun and not make intimacy a stressful thing for either partner.

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Yeah, I can't, like, promise, like, I'm not gonna watch porn again. But like, I will say that I think I'll try to like, I don't like when I, when I do, inevitably, at some point, maybe watch it like, like, at least think about, like, the effects it has, like, think about, like, I don't know, like, I definitely came in here like being like, oh, like, like, like, before this, like I definitely watched for and it was like, oh, this is funny, this is dope, right? Like, and now I'm like, oh, like, I don't know, like, it tells you stuff. Like it does have messages in that I guess like about like, relationships and intimacy. And, like, it's not just a video or it is, but it like, tells you like it does have an influence on your life, I guess. So I think that like just being aware of it and just, I guess, like, I don't know, I think at some point, I definitely will probably bring it up to my guys. And like, just like, I don't want them to have to, like, have this issue too. So like, I don't really just like mention it to them and like be like, oh, like, dude, like, you know, like it actually does, like, it does affect you. Just because I think it's good that like, the boys are aware of it, you know? But yeah, so, yeah.

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Well, I think if I if I don't make a conscious, conscious effort to change, nothing will happen in my future. I think that if I if I don't like become self aware enough to to understand that, that the porn I'm watching is affecting my relationships and is affecting my life in a negative way, then, then I will continue doing what I'm doing. And that's kind of what's scary to me. But I think that what I want to do, it's much easier said than done, because it's a type of addiction that I'm that I'm realizing is that I want to hang out my friends more and I want to go to sports practices. And I want to go to football games on Friday night. And I want to hang out with my family more and I'm I want to be available for those things. So I think my next the next thing they really need to work on in my life is making a conscious effort to to unlearn the violent types of porn that I've been watching and, and recognize that that's not real life. And that's not going to benefit any of

my future romantic relationships. That's not going to it's not yeah, it's not real life. It's not what intimacy intimacy actually looks like, as I've now understood this date that I went on a couple weeks ago, so I just need to be I need to be aware and I need to come to more things like this and talk to people who also are struggling in some type of way with porn. So I think this right here is like a good first step, but I think I need to be more conscious in my future, unlearning unlearning things.