

Good Pictures Bad Pictures

A talk with our children!

There is no doubt that all of here love our children! All of us would go to the ends of the earth for them. We, as parents, protect them from harm, make sacrifices to send them to private schools, instruct them in their faith, run them all over town for sports and social events, take them to the doctor's when they are sick...everything possible to keep them healthy and happy!

We want to see our children grow up, further their education, be successful, fall in love, get married and have children – if that is their vocation - but most of all –to BE HAPPY! All of our dreams for our children can be completely ruined by one thing...pornography. We must teach our children how to protect themselves from this evil.



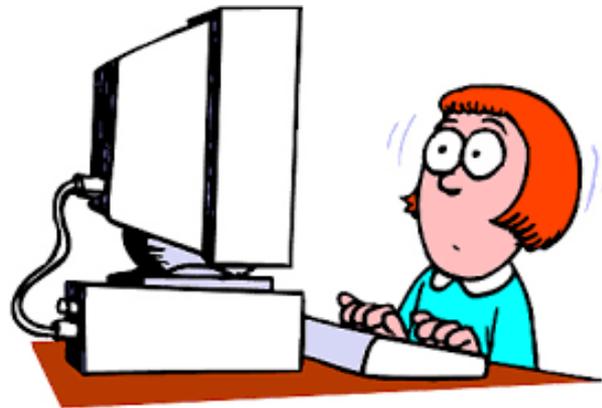
For instance, an innocent child asking a question of what a word means: sexy, hot, horny, etc...has prompted kids to go to their computer and look up the word.

Or the 11 year old, gets an Internet-enabled device for her birthday and innocently begins looking up terms she hears from her friends...out of curiosity because she is too uncomfortable asking her mom about things she has questions about.

Or a ten year old boy who was doing a research assignment for class, looked up specific terms and was connected to the wrong site.

A student is invited over to someone else's home, they stay up late, due to their curiosity, they begin searching these topics on a kindle, iPad, or any electronic device.

The list of examples are endless...



We want to tackle this subject as early as possible in an age appropriate, language appropriate way in order to arm our children with tools to defend themselves from the grip of pornography.

Back in the day, parents would have this conversation when the child is old enough to learn about the Birds and the Bees. In today's world, with images and sexual suggestions everywhere we turn, and the instant access to it all, the conversation needs to start earlier and continue throughout their teenage years.

We need to get the children to understand the dangers of bad pictures before they reach the curiosity stage through puberty. Once puberty hits, which is the case for this group middle school – junior high group - not only do they notice their bodies changing but **their attraction zones are turned on** and their curiosity is heightened.

Since pornography is so widespread, and the addiction is so hard to break free from, we decided to bring parents together and work together to help our kids understand the dangers of bad pictures/videos and learn how to prevent the grip that it has on so many young and old people.

So let's start the conversation...

What is pornography? (How to discuss this topic with children)

All of us have photo albums of summers together, holidays and special occasions with family and friends. How many of you have a child that loves taking pictures with your phone or a camera? And how many of them love looking at your pictures and videos on your phone. They can sit for a long time just streaming through our pictures and videos on our phone. Exactly like what we do with Facebook...or a news feed...just mindlessly streaming photos, articles, and more...it becomes a habit.



Bad pictures called pornography are those pictures, videos, or cartoons of people with little or no clothes on. Bad pictures/videos shows the parts of the body that we keep private – like the parts we cover with a swimsuit. Every part of our body is good, including our private parts, but taking pictures of them and showing them to others is bad. It's important to keep private parts private.



Looking at bad pictures/videos hurts your growing brain. Looking at bad pictures/videos is very dangerous. Many kids see it by accident: computers, phones, iPods, movies, you tube videos, even video games. It's all around us it can't be avoided.

It's normal for kids to be curious. The curiosity stage is most compelling during puberty. For many kids, wanting to see pornography can feel like **the pull of a giant magnet.** After they see only one bad picture, their brains can be tricked into wanting to see more and more.

It is our job as parents to keep our children out of danger...don't play with fire, don't play in the street, don't eat too much candy, ride a bike with a helmet, turn away from bad pictures/videos.



Pornography lies to your brain about how people should treat one another. It sometimes shows people being mean to each other acting like it is fun. It lies to you telling you that it will make you happy and feel good. It also lies to you again and again telling you that you want to keep looking at more and more pictures or videos in order to continue that excited feeling...it turns into an a bad habit/addiction that you can't get out of.

This lie makes your brain see and think things that are not true. It makes you see people differently, makes you understand love differently, and distorts all that is good and true. It changes YOU very slowly.



What's an Addiction?

Some people joke about being addicted to things...like chocolate or ice cream, but real addictions are very serious. **An addiction is like a powerful habit that is so strong that most feel like they can't quit** – even when they have tried really hard to stop. It feels like a trap they can't escape from. Some examples are smoking, drinking, gambling, playing video games, including viewing bad pictures/videos.



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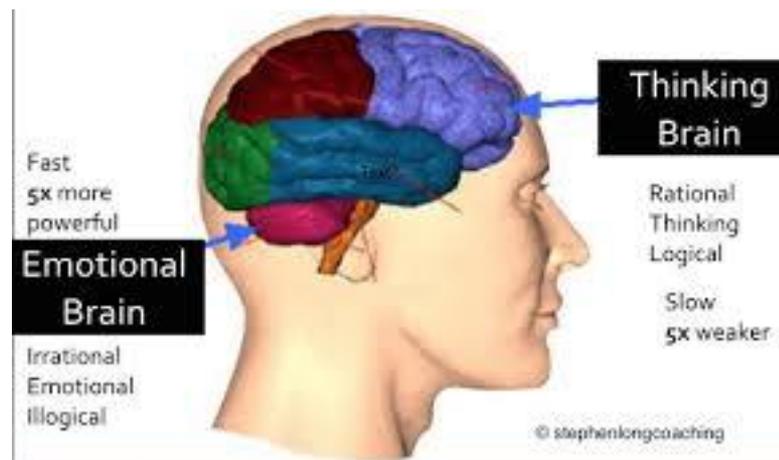


It's true some people can become more addicted than others, but no one ever wants to become addicted to something, where you can't control yourself...it's very harmful to your health and your brain.

People with addictions usually lie and deceive in order to keep the addiction a secret. **The secret is what keeps the addiction alive.** Addictions lie to your brain too. It tells you that you will feel good, but that feeling is short lived and leaves you feeling sad, miserable, ashamed, guilty and alone.

How does this happen?

You have 2 parts to your brain that involves addiction: The **Feeling Brain** and the **Thinking Brain**.

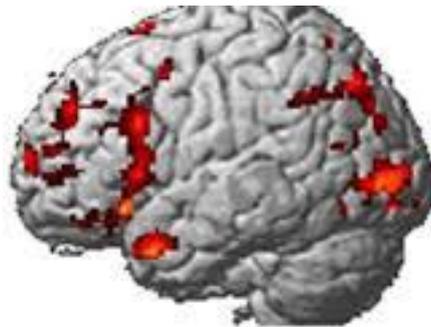


The Feeling Brain:

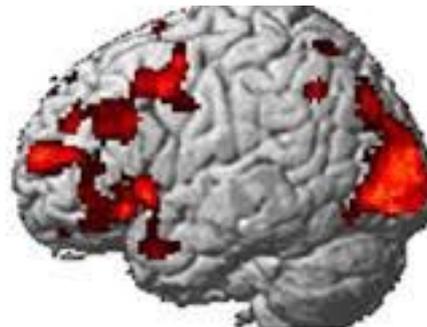
Your Feeling Brain sends messages to your body to trigger feelings. If you are too hot, the feeling brain sends a message to your body and tells you to cool down, so you get sweaty. When you get too cold, your feeling brain sends a message to your body telling you that you need to warm up, so you begin to shiver.

Your feeling brain is also in charge of your basic drives that keep you alive. For example, the feeling brain makes you feel hungry and thirsty so you'll want to eat and drink. It has a special reward system that gives you a feeling of pleasure for doing things like eating and drinking that helps you survive.

Rewarding you with pleasure for doing important things is a big part of the feeling brain's job. It does need our help though, because the feeling brain doesn't know right from wrong. We love ice cream, we eat ice cream, we are rewarded with the pleasure of eating ice cream because it tastes so good, but the feeling brain doesn't tell us when we have had enough ice cream. Too much ice cream can make us sick...so the thinking brain kicks in.



HAPPY

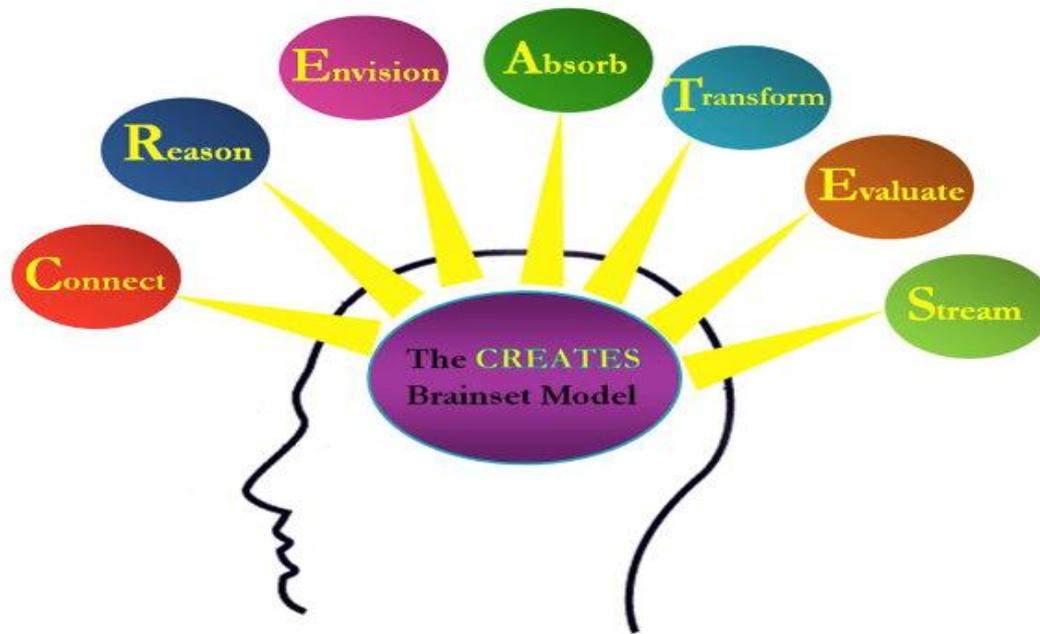


SAD

The Thinking Brain:

The thinking brain is right in front. It helps you solve problems, it helps you do your homework or figuring out solutions. Your thinking brain can make plans and exercise self-control like how to control your temper. But more importantly your thinking brain can help you to stop, think, and make good choices. **It knows right from wrong.** It is your moral compass. Your thinking brain stores the consequences of bad choices, and recalls it for the brain to stop, think, and make a good choice.

Every time you decide to make a good choice, your thinking brain becomes stronger and stronger to protect you from things like addictions.



The Two Brains Work Together:

The Ice Cream truck drives up across the street...your feeling brain says – go get ice cream right now. Your thinking brain says, stop – look for cars first.

An addiction weakens your thinking brain, so your feeling brain takes over making all of the decisions. **Remember the feeling brain can't know right from wrong.** Without your thinking brain, your feeling brain would do whatever it wants even if its not safe for you.

The thinking brain needs to stay in charge.



The Brain's Attraction Center:

One of the most powerful parts of the feeling brain is the **attraction center**. Everyone has an attraction center. It's normally turned off in young kids until they get older. The attraction center creates feelings of excitement and happiness that leads people to fall in love. It makes them want to be close to one another. Without the attraction center – moms and dads would not be attracted to each other or want to get married or have children.

Viewing or seeing bad pictures and videos can make you believe that people are objects instead of real people with feelings. **The attraction center is designed to bring real people together, but it can't tell the difference between a picture and a real person.** Looking at bad pictures **tricks** the brain into turning on a very powerful feeling that is difficult to control, especially for kids. And with a weakened thinking **brain...you don't have enough strength to say no or to understand real from unreal.**

Viewing bad pictures/videos can put the feeling brain and the attraction center in charge of driving you...and prevent the thinking brain from getting strong enough to put on the brakes and reject things that are bad for you. It can cause out of control behavior along with other behaviors that are very destructive. It can make you be a person you were not meant to be.

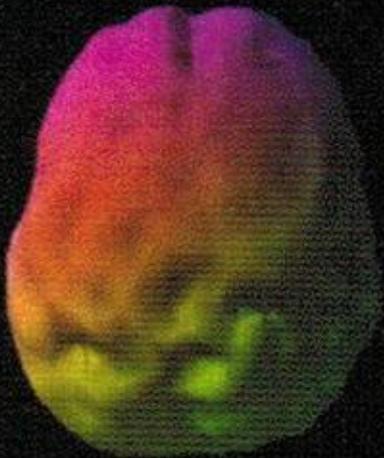
Pornography is like a drug. It produces the same chemicals in your brain that hooks people onto drugs. Kids know that drugs are bad for you...it makes you sick. Pornography has the same effect. Pornography can be **tricky** because it can feel exciting to your body. In fact, pornography tricks the brain into releasing a big dose of Dopamine, a chemical, that makes your body feel really good- for a short time. Once someone gets interested or is curious about looking at bad pictures, their attraction center produces intense cravings to look for new bad pictures.

A **craving** is a strong desire for something, which means you want it so badly it's hard to think of anything else. So, once exposed, the attraction center wants to see more...the brain gets bored with old stuff and excited by new stuff. When pictures become boring, people look for even more shocking pictures/videos to produce the same level of excitement felt the first few times.

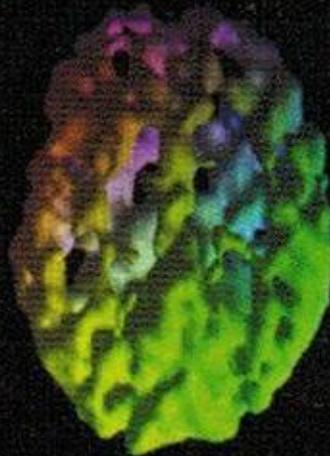
Pornography can make your brain just as sick as a very bad drug can. (Heroin/Cocaine)

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Porn Brain



healthy brain



heroin brain



pornography brain

Unlike Comment

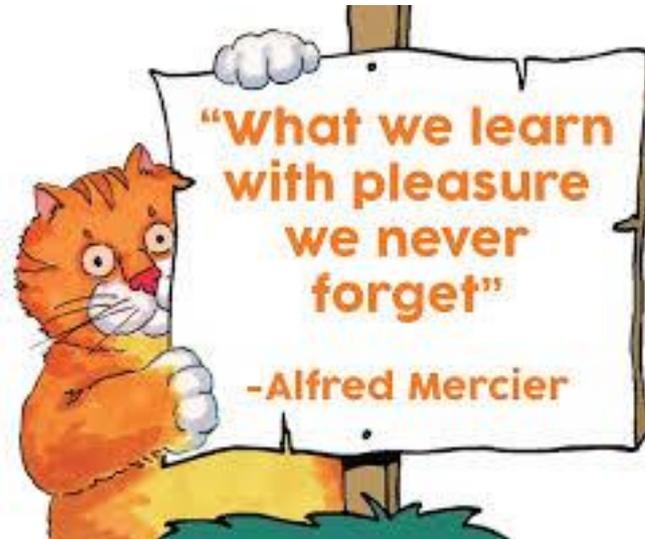
Tag Photo

The Trick:

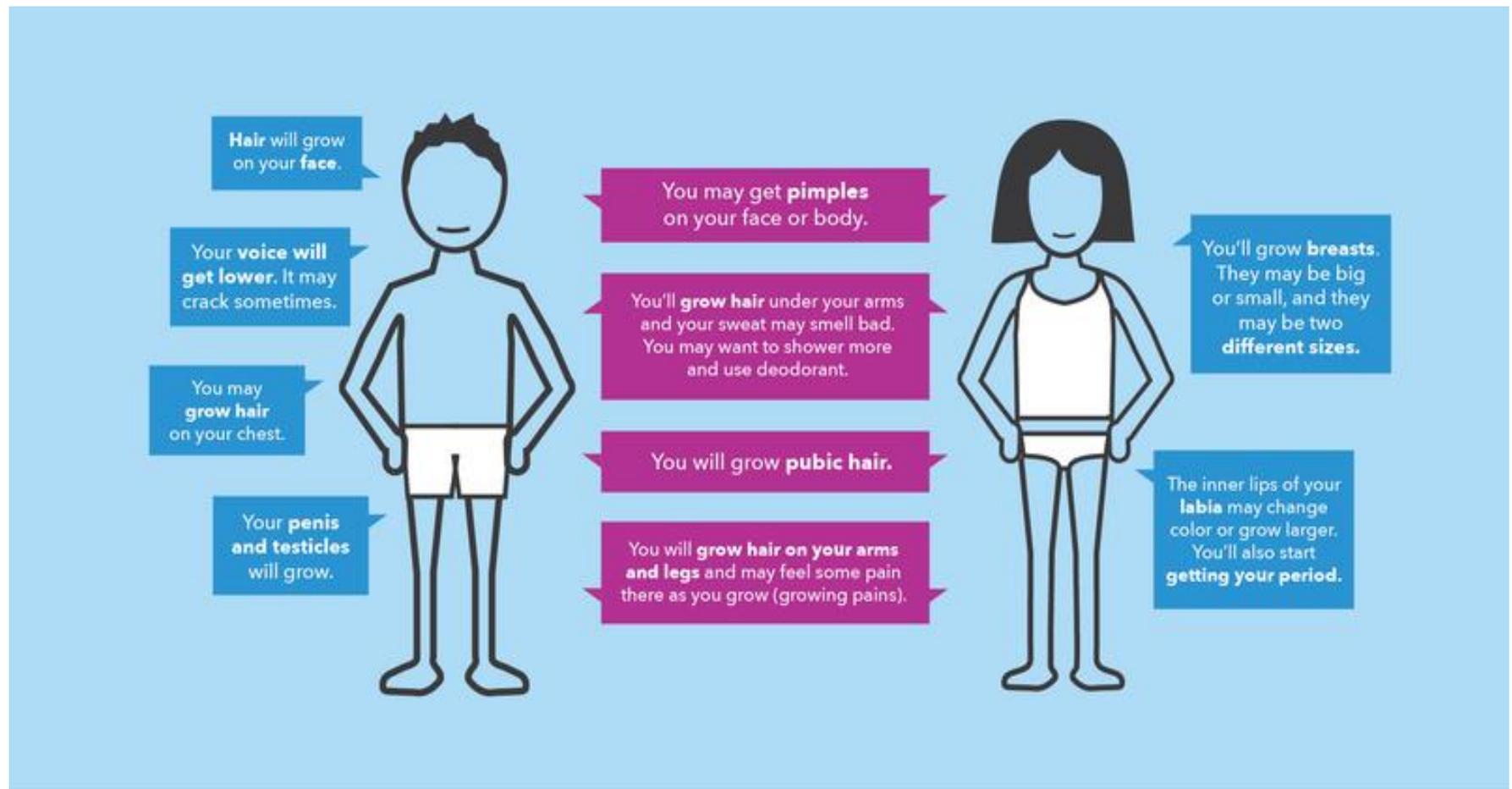
Pleasure is short term-, addictive and selfish. It's taken, not given. It works on dopamine. Happiness is long-term, additive and generous. It's giving, not taking. It is unselfish. It works on serotonin.

It's a fundamental difference in our brain wiring. Pleasure and happiness feel like they are substitutes for each other, different ways of getting the same thing. But they are not. Instead they are things that are possible to get confused about in the short run, they couldn't be more different. Both respond to direct, physical inputs, but more and more, to cultural ones.

Marketers sell pleasure. Getting someone hooked puts money in their pockets. They target dopamine....selfish, short lived, addictive pleasures: smoking, gambling, drugs, pornography.



This age group is already in the puberty stage of development (or maybe even has passed). Your children are going through changes in their bodies and on top of that - **their attraction zones have been turned on.** So now they have both the feeling brain and the attraction brain working together against the thinking brain. This is where more efforts in strengthening the thinking brain is most important.



Children's and teen's brains are much more susceptible to dopamine and this addiction process! Therefore a child or teen brain can change more rapidly and is more susceptible to the addictive effects of pornography.

As we consume various images and media, they seep into our subconscious, creating new ideas as they change our expectations and become our beliefs. **Images construct The way we think in the world.** They jump off the pages and into our lives, our identities and our sexuality.

More than ever before, we control our brains by controlling what we put in them. Choosing the media, the interactions, the stories and the substances we ingest changes what we experience. These inputs lead us to have a narrative, one that's supported by our craving for dopamine and the stories we tell ourselves. How could it be any other way?

Scratching an itch is a route to pleasure. Learning to productively live with an itch is part of happiness.

Those entering puberty or those who are already in it....DO they know or understand what they are experiencing? Do the boys understand what they will experience (arousing feelings in their private parts)? Do they know what these arousing feelings will lead to? Do they know that this feeling is like an itch that they have a great sense of compulsion to scratch. It is so powerful. Do they also know that they cannot “scratch” that itch? That scratching this “itch” is wrong? Have you had this conversation? This is very important...because that ITCH Is what becomes **uncontrollable** when exposed to pornography. If this conversation does not take place...they will find the answers to their curiosity elsewhere. They do not understand these changes...they do not have the coping skills to be left on their own to figure it out. We must walk them through this stage in order to open the lines of communication and to help them understand God’s design and the sins against it.



Plan of Action: **C-A-N-D-O**

If you ever come across pornography in any form:

CLOSE your eyes.

Seconds count when looking at pornography, and the longer one looks, the stronger the memory becomes. After closing your eyes, TURN away.

ALWAYS tell a trusted adult.

Never keep secrets. If you are at a friend's house, and they want you to look at some bad pictures or movies, and you don't want to say anything, call your mom or dad and ask to come home.

NAME it when you see it.

Say it: This is pornography or This is a bad picture. Naming it helps strengthen your thinking brain to recognize it and reject it.

DISTRACT yourself with something different.

Turn your attention to something else: a bike ride, a run, playing with a friend, saying some prayers!

ORDER my thinking brain to stay in charge.

The more rejection of bad pictures/ the stronger your thinking brain becomes. Keep it in charge.

To Conclude:

The Bishop of Arlington, Virginia gave the best theological response to pornography
Yet: “Our natural vision in this world is the model for supernatural vision in the next.
Once we have distorted or damaged that template, how will we understand that reality?
Those who engage in such activity...deprive themselves of sanctifying grace and destroys the
Life of Christ in their souls. The human person progressively builds or destroys his or her
Character by each and every moral choice. ”

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Alternatives: Facebook Messenger for Kids

