

**Title:** Pornography: What’s the problem?

**Level:** SENIOR

**Code:** S.15.2



**Links to Curriculum for Excellence**

In terms of Curriculum for Excellence this level is concerned with extending or deepening what is described at Fourth Level.

Experiences and outcomes	Benchmarks
I recognise that power can exist within relationships and can be used positively as well as negatively. HWB 4-45a I know that popular culture, the media and peer pressure can influence how I feel about myself and the impact this may have on my actions. HWB 4-46b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguishes between a balance of power and abuse of power in relationships, for example, respect, trust, coercion, consent.</li> <li>• Explains how positive and negative body image can affect health, self-worth and behaviour, for example, self-reliance, beauty industry expectations, body building.</li> <li>• Evaluates how the media, including social media and pornography impact on physical and mental health.</li> </ul>

**Learning Intentions**

- Young people recognise the pervasive/ubiquitous presence of sexual imagery and pornography.
- Young people understand that what is represented in pornography is not ‘real’ but staged and performed.
- Young people consider the impact that excessive exposure to pornography has on attitudes and brain development
- Pornography is viewed as a medium through which people are objectified.
- Young people think critically about their own relationship with pornography.

**Success criteria**

- Young people can describe the affect that excessive exposure to pornography can have on the individual.
- Young people identify examples of the pervasive/ubiquitous presence of sexual imagery and pornography.
- Young people can explain that pornography presents behaviours that can be violent or degrading, and that these behaviours are not appropriate in real-life relationships.
- Young people debate issues surrounding pornography.
- Young people formulate their view on pornography.

**Resources to support this activity**

- Slides/PowerPoint
- Porn sex vs real sex: The differences explained with food <https://vimeo.com/71729262> (duration 1 minutes 45) *The animation is funny and direct and supports the delivery of key messages about pornography. Although direct, please remember that young people will have viewed pornography and will understand the use of humour to make the point about reality v’s pornography.*
- How Porn Affects the Brain <https://youtu.be/qBtgA0ZLWo0> (duration 4 minutes 50 seconds)

**Activity**

1. Start with a quick review of what young people remember from the last session. Share the slide ‘**Porn is everywhere**’ and ask if anyone noticed sexual imagery or pornographic images, adverts etc in the past days/week. As facilitator, share anything you have noticed. Explain that whether the young people think that ‘porn is everywhere’ or not – it is certainly very available, that will have been recognised by now. Explain that because porn is so prevalent, so accessible, there is an increasing amount of reaction against it. This is what this activity will explore.
2. So, the idea of today is really found in this quote from Maya Angelou – share the slide – explain that a few of the main worries about pornography will be presented for discussion.

**“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.”** Maya Angelou

**3. Problem 1: Porn and reality**

Share the slide. This is something that was established in the last session. After reading check: do young people agree?

**Problem 1: Porn and reality**

Pornography is fantasy, and not realistic. People who act in porn do not have realistic bodies. Porn can show some extreme and uncommon sex acts. It does not show the kind of sex that most people enjoy in real life.

Share the film: **Porn sex vs real sex: The differences explained with food**

<https://vimeo.com/71729262> (duration 1 minutes 45) The film will get some reaction and laughter – what do young people think of the actual messages?.

**4. Problem 2: Porn and sexual objectification**

Share the slide: explain that this is really an extension of the point about porn sex not being ‘real sex’. Check understanding, explore with the class/group initial responses to the slide, then explore:

- *When it comes to porn, and thinking about men and women, do you think they are equally objectified or is it different?*

<p><b>Real sex is about sexual respect</b> Both partners are able to express their feelings and respect each other’s boundaries about sex. In a healthy sexual relationship a partner respects your decisions about what kind of sexual activity you want to have. You can decide you don’t want sex. It also involves respecting a partner’s body and using contraception or condoms as you decide.</p>	<p><b>Porn sex is about sexual objectification</b> Porn sex is the act of treating a person as an instrument of sexual pleasure. Objectification means a person is a commodity or an object. They have no dignity. They are a body and body parts, to be looked at or touched. Once sexually objectified, someone’s body or body part is judged by its physical appearance or potential sexual function. Then the body/body part is treated like it exists for others to use or consume.</p>
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### 5. Problem 3: Porn and the brain

Explain that there is lots of research being done now about how porn affects the brain. Stress that as young people now they are the first generation of humans exposed to such levels of porn – so the question is *if you watch it does it change more than your attitudes towards sex, does it actually change your brain?* Share the film, get some reactions. **How Porn Affects the Brain**

<https://youtu.be/qBtgA0ZLWo0> (duration 4 minutes 50 seconds)

Take any initial responses, then share slides to confirm the main points

#### How does porn affect the brain?

- As a young person you have a developing brain, compulsive viewing of porn – so watching a lot of porn - distorts the person's idea of a healthy sexual relationship. Young men report that "the script" of porn was always playing in the back of their minds when they were with a real partner.
- If an image or scene is no longer stimulating enough for someone looking at a lot of porn they will look for variety, surprise factor in the content, more hard-core and stranger material, anything they haven't seen in order to attain a sexual climax. One result is that some brains are being "digitally rewired" in a totally new way to demand change, excitement, and constant stimulation.
- Sometimes you just have to hit the "reset" button and stop using porn completely for a few months. In fact, even if you're not struggling, you might experiment with a break from porn, just to see if there are any hidden powers you never knew you had.

Source: [https://www.skeptic.com/reading\\_room/how-porn-is-messing-with-your-manhood/](https://www.skeptic.com/reading_room/how-porn-is-messing-with-your-manhood/)

### 6. Social action on Porn

Share the earlier slide again: **"If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."** Maya Angelou

Explain that some people are trying to change how young people think about porn and get them to think about how they use it. One example is this new global movement called Fight the New Drug. It's just an example but have a look at the short film – and discuss! (including the tag line #PornKillsLove <https://youtu.be/VHPTV1OLkss> (duration 2 minutes 53)

7. **Porn – the debate.** In the remaining time have a discussion, thinking about this spectrum, where do the young people stand? Young people could physically position themselves on a continuum and discuss from that standpoint. Then after hearing views decide to stay in the same place or re-assess.

**PORN Harmless Fun ----- PORN Harmful to all**

8. **To end**, encourage young people to keep thinking about what they really think about pornography, and that they can make decisions about how much it impacts on their real lives and relationships.

### Further learning activities are available that connect to this RSHP curriculum content

- S.15.1 Pornography: What is porn and what is it doing to us?

### Additional material:

These powerful quotes could be used when talking about pornography:

- “Pornography is about power and sex-as-weapon – in the same way we have come to understand that rape is about violence and not really about sexuality at all”. Gloria Steinem (writer)
- “There is no dignity when the human dimension is eliminated from the person. In short, the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much of the person, but that it shows far too little.” Pope John Paul II
- “Consuming pornography does not lead to more sex, it leads to more porn. Much like eating McDonalds everyday will accustom you to food that (although enjoyable) is essentially not food, pornography conditions the consumer to being satisfied with an impression of extreme sex rather than the real.” Virginie Despentes (writer)

### Practitioner Notes