

Online Pornography: Intervention and Treatment

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Intervention & Treatment

Treatment plans for pornography addiction in children and youth vary greatly based on individual circumstances. Many youth do not ask for support from adults about their pornography use, often because they are ashamed. A non-judgmental, supportive therapeutic relationship will help reduce feelings of shame that may interfere in the treatment process [1]. Intervention and treatment for pornography addiction in youth should be similar to that of substance use; e.g., do not promote an abstinence or a “just say no” approach [1]. The pervasive nature of sexually arousing stimuli that is readily available makes it almost impossible to avoid pornography. Pharmacological treatments are less effective for pornography addiction than for other sexual disorders [2].

Research has not identified specific evidence-based treatments for online pornography use. However, given the similarities between substance and process addictions, service providers can use the same therapeutic approaches as for substance addictions, hence counseling including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Trauma Informed Care, Mindfulness, Stimulus Control and Gradual re-exposure to the internet can be helpful.

Parents and youth need to be reassured they are not alone in their struggle with pornography use or sexting. It is vital that youth and their families receive reassurance and timely access to education, support, counselling and treatment that address the ease of access to pornography, including its hardcore nature, along with the development of problematic sexual script for youth. More research is needed to understand the impacts of pornography, sexting and the negative emotional, social and legal impacts this may have on children and youth.

Research in this area should be conducted from a cultural and community health perspective. These efforts will ensure that intervention, education and policies are developed that reflect the issues that children, youth and families are facing from a trauma-informed and culturally responsive lens.

Prevention

Digital citizenship education is important for children, youth and families to ensure that the internet is not used to provide sex education in the form of pornography. Pornography as a means of sex education fails to provide a realistic portrayal of intimate relationships and partnered-sex for youth who are sexually inexperienced.

References

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2. Blaszczyński, A. (2016, June 29). Excessive pornography use: Empirically-enhanced treatment interventions. *Australian Clinical Psychologist, 2*(1). Retrieved from <https://acp.scholasticahq.com/article/803-excessive-pornography-use-empirically-enhanced-treatment-interventions>