Porn-induced erectile dysfunction, and other problems facing Gen-XXX

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When Gabe Deem was eight years old growing up in small-town Texas, he found a copy of a Playboy magazine and decided naked ladies were the best thing ever. Then, when he was 12, his family got high-speed Internet. Suddenly the naked ladies he craved weren’t just intermittently available, they were infinite and on tap. And they were doing stuff he’d never even imagined. It was like he’d gone looking for his first sip of beer and found an unlimited stash of Jack Daniels and unfiltered Export A’s.

Deem had hit the pornographic jackpot. All through his teens and into young adulthood, he, like most of his peers, looked at free hardcore porn whenever he felt the urge, which was pretty much every waking moment. They traded tips on the best free sites and how to hide their Web-surfing habits from their parents. Typical of his age, he masturbated. A lot.

But unlike most teenage boys before him, when the time came to have real sex with real girls, he found it difficult to perform. Deem knew his penis wasn’t broken because it worked 24/7 with porn, but arousal without a screen was increasingly difficult to come by. By the time Deem was 23 and in a relationship with a girl he loved, he knew he had a porn problem. “Ultimately it desensitized me and rewired my brain to my computer screen to the point where, in real life, I couldn’t feel anything in an intimate situation,” he said in an interview. “My generation was told growing up that porn was cool because it was ‘sex positive.’ But what can be more ‘sex negative’ than being unable to perform in bed?”

Ref to Article: Repeated exposure to porn by young males can result in real health problems for adult males.

He Googled his symptoms and found a name for the condition: Porn-induced erectile dysfunction. He decided to get help.

Today Deem is a youth counsellor who this week addressed the Generation XXX symposium in Winnipeg, a day-long public conference on the “pornification of our children” organized by the children’s rights advocacy group Beyond Borders. His organization, Reboot Nation, encourages teens to counteract the effects of porn addiction by “rebooting” – taking a break from porn to allow their neural pathways to become sensitized to real sex again.

Ref to Article: A growing # of children are exposed to internet based hard core porn.

The Winnipeg symposium, which organizer Rosalind Prober calls a “call to action” for all Canadians concerned about effects of hardcore porn exposure on children, came about after the literacy group Media Smarts released a study earlier this year that found 90 per cent of Canadians between the ages of eight and 16 have viewed porn online, usually while doing their homework. According to the study, 40 per cent of boys between Grades 7 and 11 seek it out regularly (the number is only seven per cent for girls). The study, which was released last spring, shows a seven-per-cent increase in the overall number of teens looking at porn from the year before, as well as a rise in frequency, particularly among teenage boys.

Ref to Article: Canada has no controls over who has access to what on the internet and so kids can access porn easily.

None of this is particularly surprising: We live in a country in which there are strict standards for what is broadcast on television and in movie theatres, yet Internet service providers currently bear zero responsibility for making hardcore porn freely available to any kid with a WiFi connection.

Ref to Article: Young brains damaged by negative images as first sex experience.

As Prober points out, the generation that came of age in the past decade is “the world’s greatest social experiment” in terms of what unlimited access to pornography can do to the young brain. “Porn is fake and adults have the critical faculties to discern that,” she explained to me. “But it’s very damaging for children to encounter misogynistic and often violent images as their first experience of sex.”

Evidence: Alcohol and drug consumption are policed and porn should be too. “ “

Not just damaging socially, but physiologically, too. Porn-induced erectile dysfunction is now well documented by the mainstream medical community. Dr. Oz devoted a show to the topic last year, and just a few months ago, researchers at Cambridge University found that porn addicts’ brains have similar responses to pleasure cues as the brains of alcoholics or drug addicts.

Teens being exposed to porn is nothing new (in my day there were Hustler centrefolds lurking in many high-school lockers) but it’s the level of exposure and the nature of the content that’s changed. While my generation learned to do sex by reading the dirty bits of *Sweet Valley High* novels and fumbling around sweatily in our parent’s basements, this generation will have learned to do sex by watching semi-violent six-ways involving hairy men and vajazzled strippers squealing on dirty linoleum floors.

Evidence:“ ”

Prober argues that the effect of online porn and children has actually become a public health issue. Taken in large doses, it affects the neuroplasticity and pleasure centres of the adolescent brain, to say nothing of the damaging messages it disseminates on gender roles, consent and intimacy – tricky and important topics for fertile young minds.

Body Paragraph 1 : (my) Opinion –

(Agree with article ) Controls or Policing of the internet is a necessity to protect / create an environment for the healthy development of the young today so we will have a healthy adult population tomorrow.

Evidence: Harm prevention requires policing, “ ”

Big as the problem is, the solution is surprisingly simple: The Internet is public space and we need to police it. We built it. We own it. It’s where we live and where our kids are growing up. We should be applying the same standards of decency to the Internet as we do anywhere else. When you think about it, this way it seems staggeringly obvious that the current Wild West model cannot and should not last**.**

Evidence: If the British Gov. thought this important enough to legislate then we should too. “ ”

In the U.K., Prime Minister David Cameron recently strong-armed the major Internet service providers into applying automatic porn filters to all mobile and broadband connections in the country. This means that people over 18 can choose to opt in or out of porn, and if they ignore the question, they will be automatically opted out. If children attempt to override these filters, they will be subject to identity verification to check that they are of age. The service providers resisted heavily at first, claiming such controls were a matter of parental responsibility and tantamount to censorship, but after the government made it clear it would legislate if necessary, the ISPs relented. Unsurprisingly, the move has proved hugely popular, particularly among parents.

But here in Canada, we are way behind. Currently the big ISPs – Bell, Telus, Rogers and Shaw – are doing worse than nothing. They are actively resisting requests by advocacy groups such as Beyond Borders to introduce universal “opt-out” filters for users. Why are they resisting? Because it’s expensive and a hassle and because telecommunications giants are in the business of making money, not concerning themselves with the public good. Unlike David Cameron, Stephen Harper isn’t demanding they change, so why should they bother?

So if you want to protect your public online space, contact your local MP. And if that doesn’t work, hold Harper to account in 2015. It’s our Internet. Let’s take it back.

*Editor's note: Gabe Deem's name was spelled incorrectly in the original version of this article. This version has been corrected.*

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