

PORNOGRAPHY: KEY MESSAGES

NO ONE CAN FORCE YOU TO WATCH PORNOGRAPHY

You might have come across pornography accidentally, or on purpose. Some people your age have—others have not seen pornography before. Friends, peers or girlfriends/boyfriends may wish to share sexually explicit media with you. You have a right to say ‘no’ if you don’t wish to receive, or see, pornography.

YOU MIGHT HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY - AND THAT'S OKAY

Not everyone watches pornography. And not everyone who has seen it wanted to, or wants to see it again. It is perfectly normal not to want to watch pornography—not everyone does. Or, you might feel negative and positive feelings about pornography. For example, you may feel aroused or entertained, but also uncomfortable or embarrassed. You are entitled to your own feelings about pornography.

CONSENT IS CRUCIAL

If you watch pornography, you might get the impression that everyone wants to have sex all the time. But that just isn’t true. Working out if you and your partner both want to have sex can be difficult – but it is a must. Having sex without the other person’s free agreement is never okay. Learn to communicate well and check in with your partner with questions like ‘Would you like to...?’ or ‘Are you sure?’ It’s important to be really clear that consent is mutual, ongoing, given voluntarily and enthusiastic! For more on what consent looks and sounds like, see [Consent – do you get it?](#)

VIOLENCE ISN'T SEXY

Pornography often shows men being rough and in control while women are dominated and hurt. A lot of pornography is highly aggressive and almost all of the aggression is directed at female performers. Pornography suggests that violence and humiliation are sexy. With huge numbers of women around the world experiencing violence, that’s not something we want to celebrate, encourage or eroticise.

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PORNOGRAPHY REINFORCES STEREOTYPES

Pornography commonly portrays – and reinforces – racial and gender stereotypes. It conveys rigid and limiting ideas about gender (such as that there are only two genders) and about how men and women and people of different ethnicities “are supposed to” look and behave. Stereotypes reinforce prejudices and create the conditions for other injustices. Pornography suggests that stereotypes are sexy – but injustice is not something we want to be eroticising.

SEX IS NOT JUST ABOUT PLEASING MEN

The vast majority of pornography is made for men, so pornography focuses on men getting what they want (or what pornography tells them they want). Though there might be lots of fake orgasming from women, they’re generally depicted as though all they want is to please the men – and they’re often treated terribly in the process. But, like men, women are thinking, feeling human beings, and sex can and should be an emotionally and physically pleasurable experience for them too – not just men.

GAY AND LESBIAN PORNOGRAPHY IS ALSO LIMITING

Some people assume gay and lesbian pornography is liberating and free from the sexism and aggression seen in heterosexual pornography. But gay and lesbian pornography can also communicate concerning messages about bodies, sexual health, pleasure, performance and consent. Often it also communicates messages about gender, power and aggression. Much pornography showing women having sex with women is really made for heterosexual male consumers. This suggests that women are there to perform for men’s pleasure rather than their own and contributes to the objectification of women.

THAT’S NOT PLEASURE

Pornography focuses on particular types and ways of doing sex which are not reflective of what most people – particularly women – like or want in real life. Pornography performers are paid to act like they’re enjoying what they’re doing, even if it’s something they find uncomfortable, painful or humiliating.

PORNOGRAPHY: KEY MESSAGES (CONTINUED)

PORNOGRAPHY SEX IS NOT SAFE SEX

Pornography shows people doing all sorts of unsafe things and it's pretty rare to see condoms being used in pornography. Often pornography shows multiple partners having unprotected sex. Some performers also experience long-term damage to their bodies from the extreme acts they have to perform.

SEX IS NOT A PERFORMANCE

In pornography, people perform sex for the viewer. And they often follow a script, for example they may have a 'pornography checklist' of sex acts. In real life, sex is not for a spectator – and it's not a set script you have to perform. Sex shouldn't be something you just do for your partner (or just for yourself). For most people, sex is not about how it looks or about ticking certain boxes – it's about the whole experience, for both people, and that means working out together what feels good.

PORNOGRAPHY PERFORMER BODIES DO NOT REPRESENT DIVERSITY

The bodies of pornography performers – like those of models and sports stars – do not reflect how most people look. The men in pornography almost always have very large penises and often look like bodybuilders. Many of the women look super-young and thin with very large breasts and their genitals look small and 'neat'. Pornography performers need to train to look a certain way to get work and will even have surgery to look the way they do. In reality, people come in all shapes and sizes – and have body hair – and that's okay!

SEX CAN HAVE MEANING

Pornography communicates that sex doesn't require relationship or affection – it's just something people do with anyone. But for most people, sex is something they do with someone they care about or love. Sex can be a way of feeling close to someone, expressing love and enjoying each other.