

February 27, 2017

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dallas Kornelsen and I am excited to hear that the Standing Committee on Health is undertaking a study on the public health effects of sexually violent and degrading imagery online. I believe that motion M-47 is important due to the impact this imagery is having specifically on adolescents.

In my recent experience, violent and degrading online sexual imagery is often introduced into a youth's life when they are either on the cusp of adolescence or during their adolescent years. These are tremendously important years in terms of developing your values and beliefs around sexuality. Online pornography presents adolescents with a distorted view of sex and leaves them with confusing and negative messages in regards to sexuality.

I am a youth educator that speaks to adolescents about healthy sexual choices, and have been in my current position for the past eight years. I present a modest twenty to thirty times per year, reaching anywhere from two to three thousand youth annually. Pornography is one of the topics I deal with and here are a few of the anecdotal stories that youth have relayed to me about how online pornography has negatively affected their own lives. (\*Note: Actual names of children have been altered but their ages have been kept.)

"I became addicted at around the age of 11. I would sneak away and view porn without my parents knowing what was going on. I did this for several years and unknowingly became addicted. Often, due to circumstances beyond my control, I wouldn't be able to access porn when I wanted to. This caused extreme anger in me and I would respond with bad behaviour. I began keying cars in our neighbourhood, smashing windows, picking fights

and a lot of other really aggressive and destructive behaviour. My parents had no idea why their 'perfect' child had become such a problem. Over the next few years, my parents spent thousands of dollars on counselling for me in an effort to figure out what was going on. None of it helped because I never told anyone about my addiction. Finally, quite by accident, my parents discovered I had been looking at porn and took steps to see that I'd stop. Within three months, my aggressive behaviours stopped completely as I recovered from my addiction to porn."

- Michael, age 15

I first saw pornography on my friend's phone. Later, I figured out how to look at it on our family computer without my parents finding out. I started out with pretty tame stuff, just pictures of naked girls. Then I found a few video sites and I became addicted very quickly. At first it was just simple sex, like one guy and one girl, but that didn't last long. Within a year I was accessing 'rough sex' videos, domination stuff, and women having sex with animals. It messed me up a lot and I'm still trying to heal from all those years of terrible images.

- Jeff, age 15

I was spending 4 to 5 hours a day looking at porn when it was at its worst. I was totally addicted and didn't know how to stop. Then one night, I think it was around 2 am, my mom saw my light on and came into my bedroom. She walked right in on me right in the middle of ... of it all. It was the worst moment of my life, but also the best. It took that crazy incident for me to face my addiction and get clean. I want all of the guys in this room to know that their lives will all be so much better when they quit watching porn.

- Steve, age 17

I started watching porn because the boys in my class were talking about it all the time. I couldn't believe what the girls on the video were doing, but I thought this is what guys expected me to do. So I did. I felt awful doing some of the things, it wasn't very fun at all, but I thought I needed to do it all to keep my boyfriend.

- Brittany, age 15

I first saw porn when I was about eight. I started looking at it regularly by the time I was ten. By eleven I was completely addicted. I don't know how to stop. Can you help me?

- Billy, age 14

My mom gave me a phone for my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday and I started looking at porn videos right away. I now look at them every day, sometimes for hours, and my mom has no idea. She thought she was being a good mom when she got me my phone, but all she really did was get me addicted to porn. I don't know what to do.

- Heather, age 15

I hate myself when I look at porn. I feel strong feelings to want to look, but then I just feel bad about myself after I do. I sometimes look for 6 hours a day. I've lost friends to pornography and my school marks have dropped a lot.

- Mark, age 16

At a recent weekend high school boys retreat, I spoke to approximately eighty grade eleven and twelve boys about healthy sexuality and pornography. A survey I did revealed that a startling 85% of these boys were watching pornography to the extent that they felt 'trapped' and were unable to say no to their urges to view more pornography. The boys felt that their viewing was unhealthy as it consumed large portions of their time and it felt 'out of control.'

These are just a few of the dozens upon dozens of negative stories I have heard youth relate to me over the years. Many of these youth are addicted due to the ease of accessibility, the affordability, and the anonymity that online porn offers them. I know this as the 'triple a' porn effect. The youth often know that they are trapped but cannot bring themselves to reach out to anyone because of the shame that they feel.

Their revelations to me about their pornography issues are probably due to my own history with pornography and my openness in sharing my story with every presentation that I do.

I became addicted to pornography in my early twenties. After many wasted years, I finally began to take the first steps towards recovery. Up until this point, the addiction had been restricted primarily to magazines as well as videos that I needed to purchase or rent at adult video stores. In the midst of my recovery, I discovered internet porn and my addiction ascended to another level altogether. I discarded my recovery and dove into a dark world of pornographic images that I never knew existed. The increased exposure led me to seek out videos that were increasingly violent and certainly degrading for all the actors involved, but especially for the women. I found myself becoming angrier more easily and was more irritable in general. My temper would flare often and I became more and more distant from family and friends. Then, a crisis entered my life and I hit rock bottom. I nearly committed suicide but instead chose to reignite my long dormant recovery. In a matter of a few months, my irritability and bouts of anger disappeared as recovery took hold and my pornography viewing stopped. I now tell youth about my addiction as a warning of what can happen if they view porn excessively. I also tell my story to give them hope. Hope for those that are addicted to violent and degrading images online that freedom is possible.

I've heard countless stories from buddies recovering from addiction how horrible online pornography has been for them. I know from a professional viewpoint how damaging pornography can be to the lives of youth. I know at a

personal level how pornography has lead to devastation and destruction in my own life.

I would welcome the opportunity to appear before the committee when the study takes place to share the stories and experiences which have led me to write this letter.

Sincerely,

Dallas Kornelsen