

The challenges of teaching school pupils about
pornography

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Overview

1. What is the The Reward Foundation?
2. Main challenges for teaching about internet pornography:
 - School policies; reluctance of teachers to teach about pornography
 - Influence of sexual politics activism on the curriculum
 - Ignorance of parents about the extent of the issues and reluctance to allow others to teach their kids about sex
3. How The Reward Foundation seeks to meet these challenges

THE RE♥ARD FOUNDATION

Love, Sex and the Internet

- Sex and relationship education charity founded in 2014, Scotland, UK
- CEO, Mary Sharpe, lawyer with psychology & science communication
- Chair, Darryl Mead, PhD in science and professional in knowledge transfer and internet technology
- Accredited by “Royal College of General Practitioners” to run workshops for professionals on impact of internet pornography on health
- Follow the research and make it accessible to non-scientists
- Teach in schools; develop lesson plans for teachers
- Speak to parents, provide materials to help them speak to children
- Respond to government consultations and raise awareness

Challenge 1: Schools

- Internet promoted - school policy & government policy
- Teachers' Union, pornography is taboo subject, not been trained
- Overburdened with responsibility for teaching on social problems - who will teach it? Groups with political agendas?
- Brain science best but too hard unless we can make it accessible
- Children want lessons about pornography including career options
- Online security = “stranger danger” only; ignorance of escalation
- Few resources in terms of time in timetable & money

The Reward Foundation Response

Pornography

- Teach as **science**/technical subject at age-appropriate levels
 - In PSHE class, IT, modern studies, biology, & citizenship
 - Neuroplasticity; adolescent brain; sexual conditioning; habits
 - Risks to mental & physical health including Erectile Dysfunction
 - No blaming or shaming
 - No pornography shown
- “Persuasive Technology Lab” & **attention economy**
- Effect on **attainment**: sleep-deprived; decreased functional connectivity; poor attention; 6 months’ later

The Reward Foundation Response

Digital detox exercise for pupils

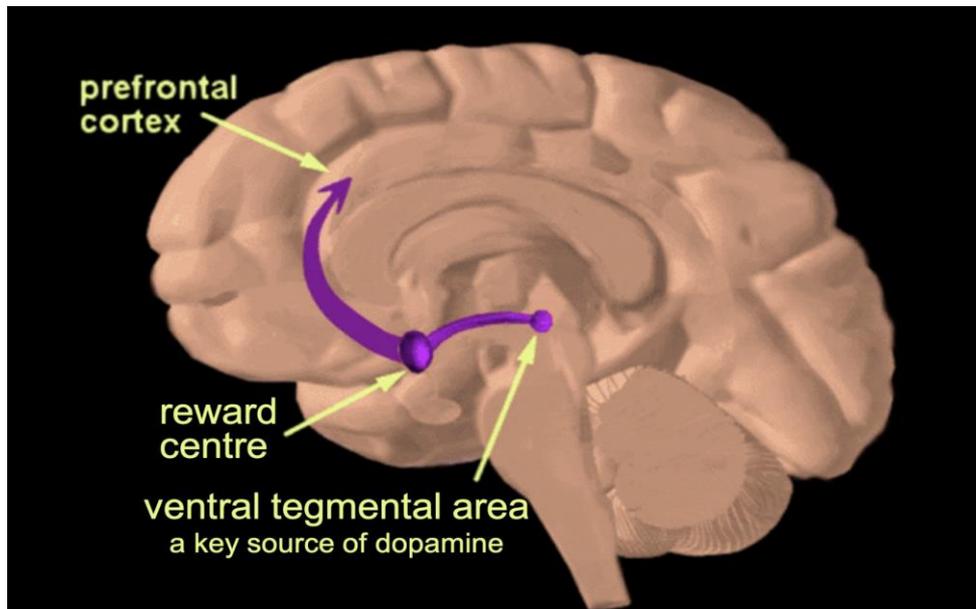
- 2 part - teach about research so teachers can hear it
- Make it fun and interactive to overcome pupils' reluctance

Approval from Teachers' Unions and local authorities

Educate school leaders and policy makers at conferences with research on health and attainment; workshops about various impacts of internet (pornography) and how to build resilience

Media : TV, radio, newspapers, online; website; blogs- teach **parents**

Risks and Rewards



Vital pathway

linking **emotional** &
rational brain areas

The Reward Foundation Response

Pornography

- **Inexpensive lesson plans**
 - co-designed; video interviews; interactive exercises- “porn on trial”; research-based; signpost help. Train the trainers
- Provide a **safe space to talk** – “How many times a day...?”
- Risks around **criminality** e.g. laws on sexting: risks and rewards exercise with case studies and criminal law statutes; attitudes to coercion and rape myth; Brief Pornography Screener; free online resources – Your Brain on Porn; recovery websites



Example of Case Study



A, age 13 has a boyfriend L, age 15. L says he loves her and sent her a naked selfie. He said if she loved him back she'd send him a naked selfie from the shower. He pleads with her every day asking for a naked photo. He says if she doesn't send him one, he'll commit suicide.

Scots Law and Sexting

Criminal Justice and
Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010
Section 38

Threatening or Abusive Behaviour

It is an offence where that
behaviour would be likely to
cause a reasonable person to
suffer fear or alarm.

Criminal Justice and
Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010
Section 39

Stalking

Publishing any statement
relating to a person or
purporting to originate from
that person or from any other
person, that causes them to
feel fear or alarm.

Communications Act
2003
Section 127

Offensive messaging

It is an offence to send a
message which is grossly
offensive or of an indecent,
obscene or menacing
character.

Abusive Behaviour and Sexual
Harm (Scotland) Act 2016
Section 2

"Revenge porn"

It is an offence to disclose
or threaten to disclose an
intimate photograph or
film of a person (without
their consent)

Civic Government
(Scotland) Act 1982
Section 52

Indecent photographs of children

It is an offence to **take**,
distribute or have in your
possession with a view to
distributing an indecent
photograph, or pseudo-
photograph of a child under
the age of 18.

Civic Government
(Scotland) Act 1982
Section 52a

Indecent photographs of children

It is an offence to have in
your **possession** any indecent
photograph, or pseudo-
photograph of a child under
the age of 18.

Sexting & Law of England and Wales

Protection of Children Act 1978 Section 1

It is an offence to take or permit to be taken any indecent photo or pseudo photo, of a child; or distribute or show such; or have in his possession with a view to their being distributed or shown by him; or advertise indecent photos.

Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 160

It is an offence to have any indecent photo, or pseudo photo, of a child in his possession unless he had a legitimate reason; he had not seen the photograph; or photograph had been sent without his request, and he did not keep it for an unreasonable time.

Communications Act 2003 Section 127

It is an offence to send a message which is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.

Sexting & Law of England and Wales

“Revenge Porn”

Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 defines revenge porn as “photographs or films which show people engaged in sexual activity or depicted in a sexual way or with their genitals exposed, where what is shown would not usually be seen in public.” The law states that such images are classed as revenge porn when disclosed without the person’s permission and with intent to cause harm or distress.

Challenge 2: Sexual Politics

- Sexual politics and internet industry activism in past 10 years to minimise or ignore health risks; age verification
- ‘Respect and consent’ agenda compromise
- Ignores neuroscience evidence about risks to children of compulsive use and real life practices
- Half of children with porn problems are virgins
- Criminal consequences of acting out porn – Ana Kriegel

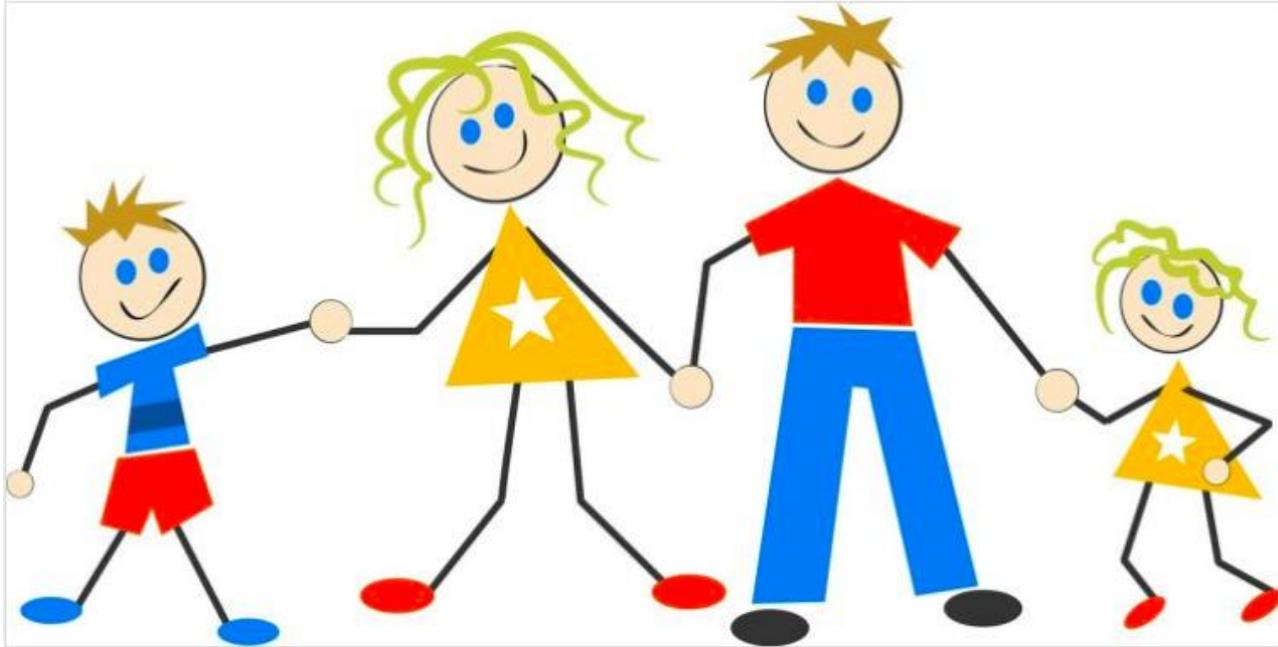
The Reward Foundation Response

- Lobby local authorities and government with evidence of harms, e.g. child-on-child sexual abuse; rise in mental health disorders
- Leading psychiatrist says “consent & respect lessons are totally insufficient”
- Run workshops for healthcare professionals; social workers; teachers etc. to communicate research about brain changes and effects on behaviour
- Make best, evidence-based lessons available so schools can choose what works for them
- Make training available for teachers to learn material and feel comfortable teaching it

Challenge 3: Parents

- Ignorance about effects of too much exposure to internet in general, porn in particular
- Reluctance to have others teach about sex, especially if it is counter to religious doctrine e.g. promoting active homosexuality
- Provide as many easy-to-understand materials as possible: videos; interviews with other parents; blogs; discussions to deal with specific challenges of stroppy teenagers who “know it all” and ridicule parents who are not tech-savvy
- Encourage fathers to be involved; connect with third sector fathers’ organisations; educate them about the risks and how to talk to their sons in particular

The Reward Foundation Response



Free Parents' Guide to Internet
Pornography

The Reward Foundation Response

PORNOGRAPHY

- Run workshops and informal discussions for parents
- Do talks in schools on parents day
- Modify lessons for mainstream schools to include religious concepts e.g. temptation
- Allow free discussion to air concerns
- Focus on child safety and evidence of health risks, social risks, brain changes from excess use and where to get help (e.g. free guide)

Questions?

