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How #PornHurtMe and My 8-Year-Old Son

MADISON MCQUEEN 6 MIN READ SEP 3RD, 2021 PORNOGRAPHY, PROTECTING KIDS ONLINE

Raised on Porn is now live! WATCH THE FILM HERE.

A few months ago, we made space for our followers to share their experiences of seeing porn for the first time and how it affected their lives. Hundreds of stories flooded our inbox from people who had been exposed to porn at a young age, sharing how it drastically changed their relationship with others, with the world, and with themselves. For many, it led to years-long struggles with addiction. For others, it groomed them for abusive relationships or led them to

The Problem

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We are sharing these stories in order to personify the reality of childhood exposure to porn and its dire effects. The images of graphic, violent porn cannot be erased or unseen. The implications are vast and far reaching. The unfortunate reality is that most parents are oblivious to what their children are facing. According to a study by the BBFC, 75% of parents thought their child hadn't seen pornography online, but 53% of their children reported that they had.

Below is a story of a mom who, to her horror, found that **her son had watched hardcore violent porn at the age of 8**. Despite setting up parental controls to protect her child from porn exposure, it still happened.

*"We'd seen the statistics that on average, kids as young as 8 were seeing internet porn for the first time. But **I never thought it possible that MY 8 year old would be one of those stats**. My husband and I are no dummies when it comes to the harms of porn. We both struggled with porn as pre-teens who hit puberty during the dawn of the internet. We've worked as youth pastors for 15 years so we've counseled countless teens on the dangers of porn. We set up protections in our home so that our kids don't access dangerous content on their devices. We're no dummies.*

***But none of that prevented my 2nd grade son from an innocent Google search that led to one of the most traumatic 45 minutes his young brain and soul had ever experienced.** At a Thanksgiving gathering at his grandma's house, my son grabbed my phone from my pocket and went to sit down in the play room for a bit of screen time after a long day of playing with cousins. As a curious young 2nd grade boy (unsupervised because mom was busy chatting it up with the holiday guests) he eventually decided to do a Google search for "girls", "naked," and then "naked girls."*

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His Google search instantly brought up a few thumbnails on the results page of naked women's backsides. He clicked on one of those out of curiosity, and after a short series of clicks—pretty much ended up on Pornhub within SECONDS. Later that night on the drive home, I decided to check my iPhone history to see what he had been up to. **I instantly felt like I needed to throw up once I saw the videos he had viewed on Pornhub in that 45 minutes.**

Like I mentioned, I'm no dummy when it comes to what porn looks like. But **I had never seen such graphic and violent content** as his little brain had to try and make sense of in that short timeframe. I still shudder at the content of some of those clips. And each time he clicked on one of their videos, the page simply "recommended" new videos that were more and more graphic—including clips of gang banging, group sex, and terrible depictions of racism unlike anything I could've imagined in my darkest nightmares.

The Problem When we brought it up to him that night, my son completely broke down. We could tell he was so devastated, confused, shocked. And **as a loving mama, I too was completely devastated that his first sexual images would be of this violent Pornhub content.** I knew that wasn't something that could be erased from his memory, especially as a child who was experiencing sexual imagery for the FIRST time. I prayed so hard to God that night that he would take those images from my son's

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I did a complete search on all of our devices that night and quickly realized that I didn't have the Google search options set to "restricted" on my phone's internet browser. Thankfully, I didn't find any other explicit content from previous weeks of online activity. So I was able to see that this wasn't yet a pattern or a habit for our 8-year-old.

*What I did find was that a few days earlier, Caleb had stumbled onto a Youtube video about a popular video game he enjoys called "Fortnite." In the video, different players would have to take off an item of clothing if they lost a round of the game. This was a mild video targeted at teens, but obviously was not appropriate for kids, and most likely sparked Caleb's curiosity in the realm of nudity. But even so, **we'll never be able to take back the trauma that Google and Pornhub specifically caused my sweet boy that Thanksgiving.***

*I've now seen firsthand how easily accessible Pornhub's MOST GRAPHIC content is and how they peddle in sexist, racist, violent, abusive sexual imagery. It makes me so angry to think they have no concern for the sexual health of Generation Z, which my son is a part of. **Young people who grow up accessing this horrific sexual imagery will only be damaged by the LIES that Pornhub sells about sex—that sexual violence is a norm.***

We are incredibly grateful for brave moms like this who are speaking out and calling Big Porn and Big Tech to account.

How have you been hurt by porn? We're inviting you to post an Instagram story/post, Facebook post, or tweet about how porn hurt you while underage. Use the hashtags #PornHurtMe and #ProtectChildrenNotPorn to share how you've been affected by childhood exposure to porn. We plan to highlight many of your stories on our social accounts. Or, if you prefer to remain anonymous, you can email your story to us at this link.

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You are not alone and together we can break the silence to help protect children from exposure to porn. Let's put the stigma back on Big Porn and Big Tech, where it belongs.