

Making Sense of Relationships

Lesson 3:

Pornography

Key stage 4

NSPCC

In partnership with

PSHE
Association



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4

Context

This is the third in a series of three lessons that focus on both empowering and protecting young people as they develop relationships. This lesson concerns the availability of pornographic images, the messages young people receive about sexual relationships through pornography and other media sources, the possible harmful effects of watching porn, and what to do if they are worried about their own use of porn.

While PSHE education lessons should be pacy, of course you want to meet the needs of your pupils. Since the activities take one hour to complete, this lesson is planned

as a minimum one-hour lesson. But pupils can gain more from a longer in depth exploration of an activity, so long as you are comfortable leading the discussion and you feel pupils are progressing towards the objectives. If you want to do this, you might want to extend the time to two lessons.

Note:

None of the lessons are designed to be taught in isolation. They should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme. These lessons would fit comfortably within other learning about relationships and sex education or as part of your teaching about online safety.

Learning objectives

- We are learning about the impact of pornography on relationships

Intended learning outcomes

- ✓ I can explain what pornography is
- ✓ I can identify ways in which pornographic material is not representative of real sex and can give misleading information about consent and gender roles in sexual relationships
- ✓ I can evaluate the possible impact of this on sexual relationships and the expectations people have of relationships
- ✓ I can describe some strategies and identify sources of support for anyone who is worried about porn

Resources required

- Box or envelope for anonymous questions
- Post it notes (optional)
- Resource 1: *Grounded!*
- Resource 2: *Diamond 9* (prepare a set of cards for each small group)
- Resource 3: *Features of a positive sexual relationship*
- Resource 4: *Pupil support sheet*
- Resource 5: *Teacher information sheet*

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying Resource Guidance before teaching this lesson for guidance on establishing ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, communication and handling questions effectively.

Key words

Pornography, porn, media, consent

Baseline activity

Introduction 2.5 min

Revisit ground rules and remind pupils of the importance of keeping personal stories private. Draw attention to the anonymous question box and remind them that they can submit questions at any time, whether during or after the lesson.

Next share the learning objectives and outcomes with learners. Explain that today the class will be thinking about the effect of pornography and the media on people's sexual relationships and their expectations of sexual relationships.

Stress that at no point in this lesson will pupils be asked to view or describe pornographic images.

Baseline activity and reconnecting activity 15 min

Share with the class a definition of pornography to display for the lesson. For reference, the Oxford English Dictionary defines pornography as:

'Printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity intended to stimulate sexual excitement'

Hand out Resource 1: *Grounded!* Read or display the short dialogue.

- *Nah, he won't be there apparently. He's been grounded – caught watching porn in his room last night. Said he was doing homework!*
- *Ha! That's the sort of homework I'd definitely do on time.*
- *You and me both! Dunno why they're so stressed about it though – everyone watches it and it doesn't do any harm. Everyone knows it's not real – just a bit of fun really.*

Ask pairs or small groups to discuss the following questions. They should note down their responses and be ready to feedback to the whole group, justifying their views.

- Is watching porn harmful? If so, how, why and to whom?

Circulate gauging pupils' initial responses. Use this and the feedback from the groups to establish pupils' starting point and adapt teaching. *[This could equally be carried out as an individual activity initially, with pupils keeping their sheet to revisit at the end, allowing them to demonstrate individual learning.]*

Key learning to cover during discussion:

- Though porn shows actors having real sex, they are not shown as real people with real personalities and feelings. Porn only focuses on the body bit of sex, not the feelings bit which for most people is the most important aspect.
- Sex in porn is often different to how people have sex in real life.
- People are putting on a performance so things are exaggerated.
- Real breasts and real penises are usually smaller than those in porn. Most women don't shave off their pubic hair. Most men don't have penises that can stay erect for long periods.
- Porn actors are usually paid to do what they do in front of the camera, so they agree to do things which often aren't what most people would agree to do when having sex with their partner.
- In good sex each person's feelings and arousal should be equally important, but sex in porn is mainly about giving men pleasure and women doing things to instantly turn men on.
- Most people take some time to be aroused and don't want sex the whole time, whereas porn tends to depict the opposite.
- Lots of women find it difficult to orgasm and many don't do so through penetrative sex. Again porn tends to depict the opposite.
- Porn is often violent, especially towards women and often shows women enjoying this. However, they are being paid to do so and for most people, being hurt, threatened or humiliated is a really bad experience.

You may wish to ask pupils to summarise in a paragraph what the differences are between sex in pornography and sex in real life.

Core activities

Why does it matter? 15 min

Explain to the class that while we may know that porn is fantasy, watching it can have a big effect on how people feel about themselves, their expectations of sex and their intimate relationships.

As a whole class, ask pupils to reflect on some or all of the following questions, depending on the extent to which they were already covered in the feedback following the baseline assessment activity:

- *How might watching porn impact the way someone might behave or the way they treat their partner?*
- *What sort of expectations might porn lead someone to have about what is or isn't acceptable?*
- *Would these be accurate?*
- *How else might young people find out about sex?*

In small groups:

Give out Resource 2: Diamond 9 which presents nine negative effects of watching porn. Pupils place the cards in a diamond shape as illustrated.

At the top should be the one that they see as most important for young people to understand, working down towards their 9th most important at the bottom of the diamond.

For pupils who need support:

The same activity can be done with five cards (one at the top, three in the middle and one at the bottom).

For pupils who need a challenge:

While giving a reason for their decisions, pupils could repeat the diamond activity but this time prioritising which effects would influence young people's behaviour.

Take feedback from the group, encouraging pupils to justify their reasons for prioritising the cards as they have. Through the discussion, draw out that these are all good reasons to be concerned about frequently watching porn. People might be persuaded by different reasons depending on their sex or gender, experience of previous relationships, their own priorities in relationships and so on.

The features of a positive sexual relationship 10 min

Explain that, so far, we've focused on how watching a lot of porn can lead to problematic sexual relationships. But it's important to be clear on what the features would be of a positive, equal, sexual relationship. This will help them understand what they want from their own relationships, and will help them spot any problems.

Ask pupils to work in pairs. Give out Resource 3: *features of a positive sexual relationship*. There are five sentences, describing features of a positive sexual relationship, which have each been divided into halves. Against the clock pupils should match up the sentences by numbering them until they have all five. (Sentence one is already completed as an example) A small prize could be awarded to the fastest pair.

When everyone has finished, check they have all matched the sentences correctly:

1. Both partners respect each other and want the same things.
2. The sex isn't about the positions or how long they can last.
3. Both partners want to have sex and are happy with what they are doing.
4. Both partners find each other attractive in lots of different ways, not just in appearance.
5. It isn't only about sexual arousal. People feel good about themselves and comfortable with their partner.

For pupils who need support:

Some or all of the sentences can be provided on cut up cards to be matched.

For pupils who need a challenge:

While giving a reason for their decisions, pupils could repeat the diamond activity but this time prioritising which effects would influence young people's behaviour.

Pupils could add additional features of their own, or could write their own features of a positive sexual relationship. They shouldn't use the sheet at all, checking their own ideas against the five sentences afterwards.

Reducing porn use 5 min

Still in small groups, ask the pupils to imagine a young person who is worried about their own use of porn. Ask the pupils to agree on three or four pieces of advice they would give the young person.

Take feedback. Ideas might include:

- Talk to a friend or trusted adult. For someone concerned about more serious porn addiction, they may choose to speak to a GP or therapist. (It's important to acknowledge that this might not be a topic young people are keen to discuss with a parent or teacher but that talking about it with someone can help clarify their feelings and changes they want to make).
- Make it harder to access porn, for example by going out more and finding new interests, turning off all devices after a certain time, or leaving them in another room when they go to bed.
- List all the reasons why they want to stop/cut down porn use and look back at the list when temptation strikes.
- Write down all the positive things they want from a relationship either now or in the future and think about whether using porn will make it more or less likely that they will achieve that sort of relationship.

Plenary

Plenary 2.5 min

Sum up by stressing that sometimes young people feel pressurised to watch porn.

Assessment for and of learning

While some people watch porn online, not everyone does and it's definitely not something they have to do. It's perfectly OK not to want to watch or do something that makes them feel uncomfortable. They should never be pressured or forced into anything.

Assess (demonstrating) progress 5 min

Return to the pupils' responses to the questions in the baseline activity at the start of the lesson. Ask pupils to add to, or change anything they wish to, in the light of their learning this lesson, using a different coloured pen. This can be used to demonstrate learning and inform future teaching.

Signposting further support 5 min

It is important to signpost support for learners who are concerned about the issues raised in the lesson. Give out Resource 3: *Pupil information sheet*

At the same time, hand out post it notes and ask learners to write either a question or a comment to add into the anonymous question box as they leave the classroom. Encourage learners to write 'no question' if they do not have any questions to ask, so nobody is put off by being seen to ask a question.

Extension activities and home learning

Extension activity 1:

In charge for a day: if you were in charge for a day, what law would you create (or change) to help prevent the spread of pornography? Learners may consider:

- What would the law be?
- Who would enforce this law and how?
- What would be the consequences of breaking the law?

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Resource 1

Grounded!

In pairs or small groups, read the following conversation and discuss your responses to the questions that follow. Be ready to feedback to the whole group, justifying your opinions.

Nah, he won't be there apparently. He's been grounded – told them he was doing homework then got caught watching porn in his room last night!

Ha! That's the sort of homework I'd definitely do on time.

You and me both! Dunno why they're so stressed about it though – everyone watches it and it doesn't do any harm. Everyone knows it's not real – just a bit of fun really.

Are they right?

1. To what extent is pornography 'real'?
2. Is watching porn harmful? If so, how, why and to whom?

Jot down your ideas in pairs or small groups and be ready to feedback to the whole group, justifying your views.

Resource 2

Why does it matter? Diamond 9



When people watch lots of porn it often makes them enjoy real sex less.

Watching lots of porn often makes people feel less happy in their relationship.

Porn can lead people to think about sex a lot more of the time. This can make it harder to enjoy things like spending time with friends and having other interests.

Porn can lead to people seeing others, especially women, as 'objects for sex' and not as people with their own thoughts and feelings. This means they respect them less and that both partners get less from the relationship

People who've been watching porn for a long time can develop an addiction to porn and may have problems enjoying real sex. They're desensitised to what they see and are no longer aroused by things they would once have been turned on by.

Seeing the bodies of people portrayed in porn puts pressure on people, especially girls and women to look a certain way, and can affect how they feel about their body.

People can feel under pressure to do things they or their partner have seen in porn. This will usually lead to them feeling uncomfortable, under-confident, and less sexually satisfied.

Porn almost never shows negotiated condom use, which can make people think unsafe sex and not discussing contraception are the norm.

There's a lot of aggression and violence in porn, often towards women. This can lead people to believe that women in particular enjoy aggressive sex, when for most people, most of the time, aggression towards them makes them feel bad and can hurt them.

Resource 3

Why does it matter? Diamond 9

Match up the five sentence halves against the clock! Number 1 is done for you.

1

Both partners respect...

...the positions or how long they can last.

...in lots of different ways, not just in appearance.

2

The sex isn't about...

1

...each other and want the same things.

...feel good about themselves and comfortable with their partner.

3

Both partners want to have...

4

Both partners find each other attractive, ...

...sex and are happy with what they are doing.

5

It isn't only about sexual arousal. Both partners...

Resource 4

Pupil support sheet

It's always important that people know where they can go to seek help, support and guidance about any concerns they might have, especially those concerning relationships, including worries about porn.

For many young people, the first place they turn might be to trusted friends and family members, who can talk through a situation and suggest ideas. But it is also helpful to know there are lots of other places for you, including:

In school

Your form tutor:

Your head of year:

Your PSHE teacher:

The school counsellor / nurse / behaviour mentor:

The school safeguarding lead:

Organisation	Phone	Website
Childline	0800 1111	childline.org.uk
Thinkuknow		thinkuknow.co.uk
Brook		brook.org.uk
BBC Advice (Radio 1's online advice pages)		BBC Advice



Resource 4

Teacher Support sheet

[Information taken from nspcc.org.uk unless otherwise stated]

Porn and the law

You can legally buy porn magazines and videos at 18, and all regulated porn websites try to prevent under 18s from accessing them. The government has recently clarified existing obscenity laws to ensure that materials rated only suitable for 18 year olds (and above) have controls in place to stop children under 18 from accessing them.

There are certain types of porn that are illegal – even for an adult to be in possession of. These are called "extreme pornographic images", and include acts that threaten a person's life, acts which are likely to, or, result in serious injury, degrading porn, violent porn (which includes rape and abuse) or anything involving those under the age of 18.

It is illegal for a person under 18 to send explicit images or films of themselves, or of another young person. By sending an explicit image, a young person is producing and distributing child abuse images and risks being prosecuted, even if the picture is taken and shared with their permission.

Young people and porn

Studies have shown that when children and young people are exposed to sexually explicit material, they are at greater risk of developing:

- unrealistic attitudes about sex and consent
- more negative attitudes towards roles and identities in relationships
- more casual attitudes towards sex and sexual relationships an increase in 'risky' sexual behaviour
- unrealistic expectations of body image and performance.

There is a growing body of research looking into the impact that porn has on the brain. Watching porn can become a high similar to the way addicts feel when they take drugs (Voon et al, 2014²). Scientists are discovering that excessive porn use can have a negative impact on key parts of the brain (Kühn and Gallinat, 2014³). For children and young people, these effects can be greater as their brains are still developing (Voon et al, 2014).

² Voon V., Mole T.B., Banca P., Porter L., Morris L., et al. (2014) Neural correlates of sexual cue reactivity in individuals with and without compulsive sexual behaviours. PLoS ONE, 9(7).

³ Kühn, S. and Gallinat, J. (2014) Brain structure and functional connectivity associated with pornography consumption: the brain on porn. JAMA Psychiatry, 71(7): 827-34.



Infographics from NatSal (natsal.ac.uk) exploring sexual attitudes and behaviours in the UK

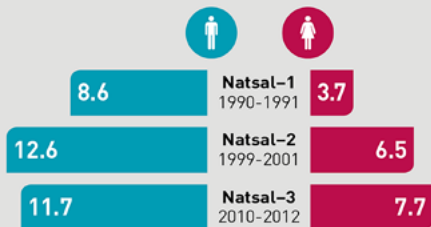
This information is provided for teachers to develop their understanding of sexual trends in the UK. Teachers should use their judgement about whether these statistics should be shared with their learners during class discussion or when questioned. **(See next page)**

Changes in sexual behaviour

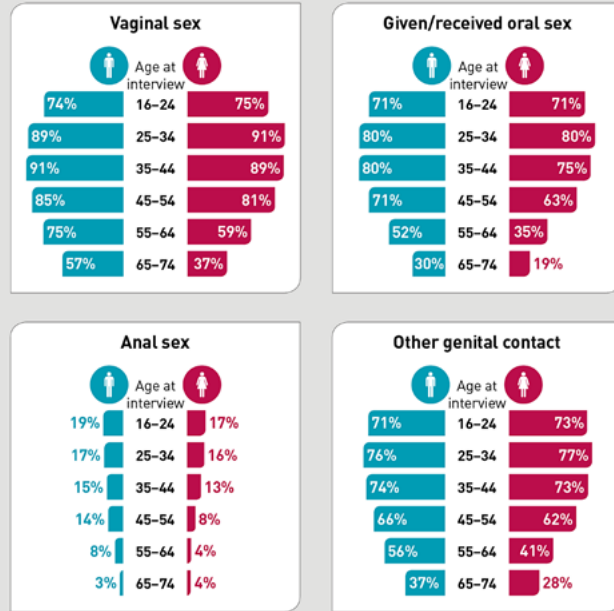
This is the third Natsal survey that has been carried out in Britain: the first survey was undertaken in 1990–1991 and the second survey in 1999–2001.

Over the 1990s, we saw an increase in the number of opposite-sex partners people reported, and more people reporting same-sex experience. Over the last decade, we have only seen further increases for women, so the gender gap is narrowing.

Average (mean) number of opposite-sex partners, lifetime (people aged 16–44)



Different types of sex with people of the opposite-sex, past year



Median (middle) number of occasions of sex in the past 4 weeks (people aged 16–44)



The bars represent the interquartile range: 50% of the population were in this range, 25% were below the lower value, and 25% were above the higher value.

On average over the past two decades there has been a decrease in how often people say they have sex.

And finally...!

TV was introduced in 1995 to a remote part of Fiji (Nadroga). Traditionally, the Fijian aesthetic ideals reflected a preference for a robust (larger) body shape, and they did not pursue thinness. Individual efforts to reshape the body by dieting or exercise thus traditionally have been discouraged. However just 10 years after introducing TV, the population has begun to desire thinness and were demonstrating signs of eating disorders. This example demonstrates how even when we think certain media isn't influencing our behaviours or attitudes, it almost always is.

Together we can help children who've been abused to rebuild their lives. Together we can protect children at risk. And, together, we can find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening.

We change the law. We visit schools across the country, helping children understand what abuse is. And, through our Childline service, we give young people a voice when no one else will listen.

But all this is only possible with your support. Every pound you raise, every petition you sign, every minute of your time, will help make sure we can fight for every childhood.

[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is a school subject that supports pupils to be healthy, safe and prepared for modern life. The PSHE education curriculum covers a range of pressing issues facing children and young people today, including those relating to relationships, mental and physical health, staying safe and aware online, financial literacy and careers.

The PSHE Association is the national body for PSHE education. A charity and membership organisation, the Association works to improve PSHE education standards by supporting over 20,000 teachers and schools with advice, training and support. Find out more at **[pshe-association.org.uk](https://www.pshe-association.org.uk)**