

Understanding the role of Pornography in the development of Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Children and Young People





The Australian Childhood Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of this land and we pay our respect to their Elders past, present and future.



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Quick Poll: Who is with us today?



Agenda

- **Part 1:** Pornography and what it teaches children and young people about sex
- **Part 2:** Pornography & Harmful Sexual Behaviours
- **Part 3:** Responding to Children and Young People

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF



PART 1

Pornography & what it teaches children and young people about sex

Young People and Pornography

- Need to consider children and young peoples pornography viewing from a developmental perspective
- Children and Young People's brains are still developing , particularly in terms of their capacity to make wise decisions and think about the consequences of their actions.
- Adolescence is also defined as a period of risk taking and sensation seeking
- Young People may also be accessing pornography at time of their sexual development as well as an exploration of identity , gender roles and relationships

Words matter... what is pornography?

- The term "porn" or "pornography" is still commonly used describe non-consensual violence such as "revenge porn" or "child porn"
- It is important to note that **content** that is produced and distributed without consent is sexual abuse material
- A helpful definition of pornography offered by social researchers Sarah Ashton & Maggie Kirkman is:

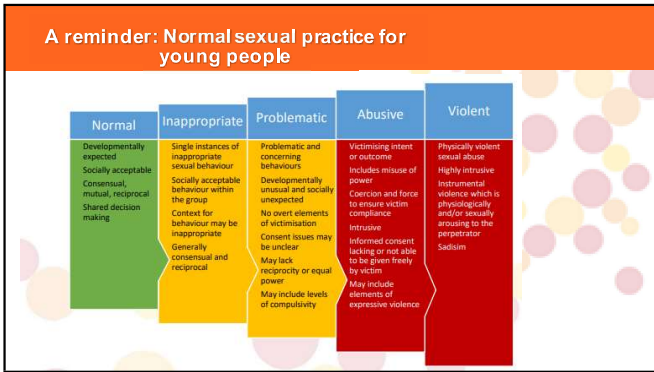
Material deemed sexual, given the context, that has the primary intention of sexually arousing the consumer and is produced and distributed with the consent of all persons involved

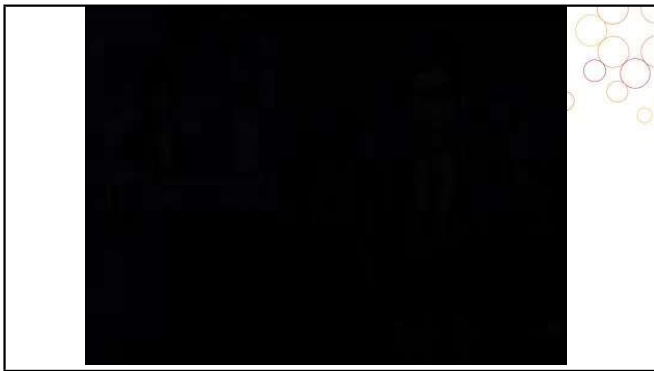
Harmful Sexual Behaviours

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

- The term 'harmful sexual behaviours' covers a broad spectrum of behaviours. They can range from those that are developmentally inappropriate and harm only the child exhibiting the behaviours, such as compulsive masturbation or inappropriate nudity, to criminal behaviours such as sexual assault.
(Royal Commission, Vol. 10, 2017)

- Perpetrated vs engaged in harmful sexual behaviour
- Victim vs young person targeted??





Poll # 2: How do you feel about the topic of porn?

What do we know about young people's use of pornography?

- Average age young people have viewed pornography is 13 years for young men and 16 years for young women(Lim 2017, Our Watch 2020) .
- Research suggest that significantly more boys and young men access pornography, view it more positively, consider it a valuable source of sex education and sexual arousal (Horvath et al 2013, Lim 2017, Our Watch 2020)
- Young People more likely to access pornography to gain information on sex than to gather this information from parents, healthcare workers and family members (Our Watch 2020)
- **1- 5 of young people who viewed pornography reported they have tried something they have seen in porn or would like to do something they have seen (NZ Youth and Porn 2018)**

Pornography and Young People

- Among young women more frequent pornography use, associated with ever having had anal sex (Lim 2017)
- Increased rates of viewing amongst LGBTQIA+ The viewing of pornography in this group relates to learning about sexual function, mechanics of same gender sex and to understand how sex should feel in terms of young people (Lim 2017)
- Research suggests high levels of exposure to pornography amongst children and young people in some Indigenous Communities (Bryant and Willis, 2009),



What do young people think?

- Recent research indicates that young people are starting to express both positive and negative views of porn (NZ Youth and Porn 2018 Our watch 2020)
- Some common concerns include that they portray false and unhealthy views of sex and that it normalizes violence and other harmful behaviours.

"Porn is bad, teaches men to be abusive and controlling . No women wants to wear heels in bed"



What do young people think?

- 89 % of Young People agreed that it's not ok for children to look at pornography
- 71% of them also agreed that access to pornography should be restricted

"Yes, it needs to be more regulated now everybody has phones and tablets u can go past a W i-Fi hot spot and access any thing " Female aged 13(Martellozo et al 2013)

But, what about for vulnerable young people ?

- There is little data or evidence about how the digital lives of young people such as in out of home care and how this differs from the general population
- But we do know that:
 - Children and young people in OOHC are highly vulnerable to online risks
 - Their social isolation, poor impulse control, and sensation seeking behaviours, play out in real time and online. Young people with unmet needs will seek to meet those needs in different ways, including online.

Research shows us that

- Childhood emotional abuse has been shown to predict problematic internet use (Dalbudak et al. 2014) and problematic social media use (Worsley et al. 2018)
- Problematic social media use may constitute a maladaptive coping strategy to cope with emotional trauma (Kircaburun, Griffiths & Billieux 2020)
- They also often do not have trusted adults to help them make sense of what they have seen
- There is a digital divide emerging between where non-vulnerable young people are becoming increasingly safer, skilled and aware of online risks while vulnerable young people are becoming less safe and increasingly targeted' (Adam & Katz 2018)

- Digital media is an intrinsic part of how we conduct relationships as well carry out our work, school and many aspects of our life
- Digital media also make it easier and faster for children and young people to access pornography, even though this is illegal
- Access to sexually explicit material can occur accidentally, curiosity, for sexual pleasure, boredom and sex education



Our watch 2020, NZ Youth and Porn 2018

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Porn is everywhere...?



At times, we may not even consider porn's influence as being present



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Pornography seems to have 'influenced' both the images around us, and the agenda of what we are 'allowed' to see..

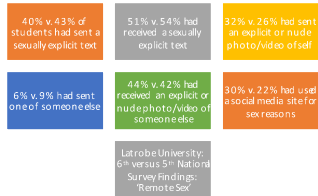


What is data telling us is changing for young people?

	2008	2013	2018
Intercourse: Year 10:	27%	23%	33%
Year 12:	56%	50%	53%
Deep kissing (all):	79%	68%	74%
Touching genitals (all):	65%	52%	65%
Oral sex (all):	44%	39%	52%
Anal sex (all):	n/r	9%	13%

Latrobe University 4th, 5th & 6th National Survey Findings: 'Real Sex'

Social Media



Latrobe University, 6th versus 5th National Survey Findings: 'Remote Sex'



A clear lack of sexual education for young people

Student respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of sex education received within school settings:

"...the education I received didn't prepare me at all for a sexual relationship. I learned how to use a condom and that only bad things happen ever [should you engage in sex]. Now I am too scared to have sex from fear of getting my partner pregnant".

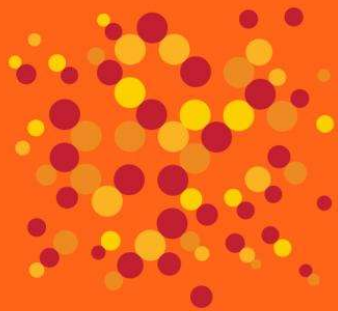
"...please teach students that sex is a healthy part of growing up and they should practice it safely and they shouldn't feel ashamed of themselves for enjoying it"

"...I was left with so many questions that I had to watch Porn to understand what exactly sex was"

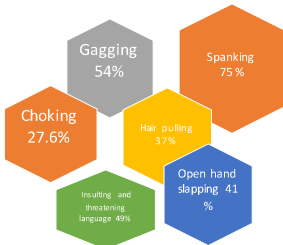


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Poll # 3 Your views on effectiveness of sexual education for young people



What is the actual content of pornography?



94% targets of aggression are women
Bridges et al. 2010 Content of Best Selling Pornography



• “ When you see they don't love it and they are in pain, the director immediately starts.....no, noWe don't want to see that kind of face reaction . We want to see you enjoy it , enjoy it “ So I know that many times they don't enjoy it “
(Anthony Harwood . Porn Actor ,
Maree Crabbe 2021)

Content of Pornography- from a Young Person Perspective

69% violence and aggression	72% non-consensual activity
91% Controlling and Domination by men	80% seen romance and affection


NZ Youth and Porn, 2018

Potential Problems of Pornography Use

- Research indicating that ongoing use of pornography is associated with stronger permissive sexual attitudes
- Adolescent pornography use is also associated with stronger gender stereotypes in relation to sex
- Some evidence of a strengthening of attitudes supportive of sexual violence against women (Quardarra et al 2017)

Porn Addiction

- Some research indicating that more frequent use of pornography can lead to dopamine surges in the brain
- Over time, there is a craving for harder core pornography to achieve the same dopamine results leading to dependency (Fight the New Drug 2013)
- Addiction Model may not be useful in increasing our understanding of underlying needs that pornography maybe meeting (Bengis et al 2014)
- A more helpful way to view problematic pornography use might be thru a lens of preoccupation (Quadara et al 2017)



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PART 2

Pornography & Harmful Sexual Behaviours





Pornography and Harmful Sexual Behaviours

- There is no direct evidence to suggest that pornography leads to children and young people engaging in harmful sexual behaviours
- Limited evidence that children who viewed pornography before the age of 10 contributed to a negative effect later in life including being more sexually aroused by violence and consumed more pornography (Skau and Barbour 2011)
- Exposure to pornography at a younger age also associated with poor health outcomes later in life (Lim 2017)



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Pornography and Harmful Sexual Behaviours

- Younger children were less likely to engage with online pornography critically than older children and are more likely to report feeling upset by what they have seen (Martellozzo 2017)
- Children lack the context for understanding explicit sex and may be reluctant to seek adult support ...leading to pornography have a disproportionate influence in a child's life(Skau and Barbour 2011)



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Pornography and Harmful Sexual Behaviours

- For some young people repeated exposure to pornography may lead to a desensitisation of the material and distorted views of healthy relationships.
- Viewing pornography may increase the likelihood of engaging in coercive sexual behaviours , sexually aggressive language and bestiality for at risk young people (Owens et al 2012)
- Pornography provides them with a skewed template of sex and may lead to them engaging in harmful sexual behaviours that replicate what they may have seen (Lim 2017 ,Pratt & Fernandes 2015)



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Pornography and Harmful Sexual Behaviours



- Conducted a worldwide survey of professionals about the link between pornography use and harm sexual behaviours
- No findings of a 'causal' link between viewing porn and engaging in harmful sexual behaviour (i.e.: "It was the porn that made me do it!" was not a consideration),
- Most respondents indicated that their clients had most likely re-enacted what they had seen in pornography. Also, that this had heightened/driven their sexual arousal.
- "Our" respondents clearly noted their beliefs that, for most young people engaged in Harmful Sexual Behaviours, pornography "...played a significant role" in the behaviours that had occurred.

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Pornography and Harmful Sexual Behaviours – Pratt and Fernandes




Clinicians also requested further support in working with this cohort of young people

"As the prevalence of pornography has increased ...clinicians are operating in a space of unknowing or base their decisions on a small sample of clients that they have worked with"

"More evidence-based understanding of pornography use and tools to work with adolescents who sexually offend"

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Case Study: Jacob

- Jacob is fifteen and has been placed in residential care as a result of his long-term foster care placement breaking down due to his aggressive behaviour towards his carer.
- Jacob has a diagnosis for autism
- Jacob appears hypersexualized. He constantly makes sexual comments towards staff and asks them if they like anal sex and has touched them in ways that have made them feel uncomfortable



Case Study: Jacob

- He spends a lot of time in his room and other parts of the house masturbating making loud noises and has also harassed several other residents for sex. Staff have recently found a home-made sex toy in his room. Staff have become concerned for their own safety as well as other residents
- His previous carer has indicated that Jacob spends a lot of time online viewing pornography and chatting to unknown people

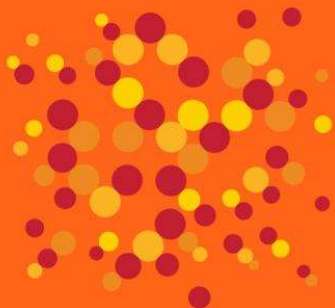
Questions to Consider

- Do you think Jacob's pornography use is contributing to his Harmful Sexual Behaviours ?
- As a team ,develop a plan to address Jacob's pornography use and his harmful sexual behaviours ?
- Would you consider confiscating Jacob's phone and i-pad and block his internet use as part of this plan?
- You will need to consider a plan that works towards the safety of all but is not overly punitive restrictive towards Jacob?



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Break Out Room



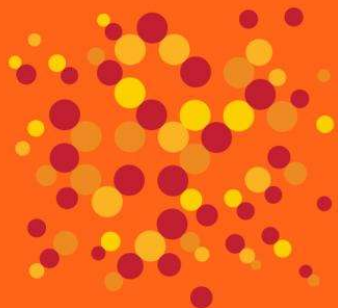
Suggestions to manage Jacob's Harmful Sexual Behaviour

- Important as a staff group you meet and discuss a plan on how to best manage Jacob's harmful sexual behaviours
- Consider what specialist support you may consult/ include with when coming up with a plan
- When responding to Jacob's sexual comments to staff, important that staff are clear and direct that the language and behaviours is not ok
- When dealing with Jacob's masturbation, important to set clear boundaries around where he can masturbate e.g., bedroom and bathroom
- What are the underlying needs of Jacob's harmful/ problematic sexual behavior (connection , love , expression of sexuality) and how can this be met in other ways

Suggestions to manage Jacob's harmful sexual behaviour

- Consider what other diversions/ activities can be put in place to reduce his preoccupation with sexuality and engaging in harmful sexual behaviour
- Are there other sensory tools that can be provided to Jacob which may assist him in meeting his needs of comfort?
- In terms of internet use , can this be supervised or will you adopt a total abstinence . Will there be time limits on this and reviewed ?
- Who will talk to Jacob to help him start to understand that what he is seeing are actors following a script ?-
- Who will talk to Jacob about healthy respectful relationships ?
- Are there any safety issues in terms of online sexual exploitation ?

PART 3
Responding to Young People



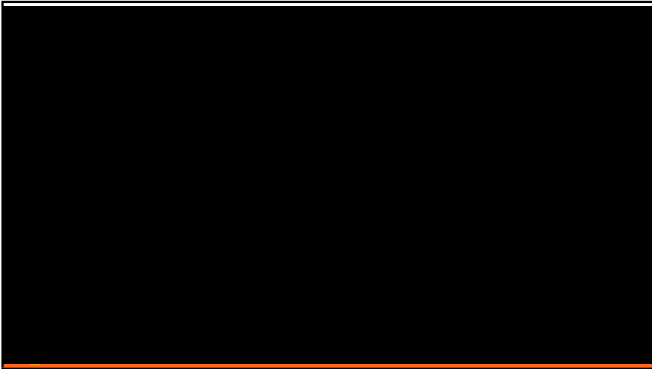
Practice Ideas on Talking to Young People

- **Abstinence & confiscation** not realistic or sustainable
- Help young people **critique what they are seeing** – and see it images in pornography are not realistic and don't represent healthy, consensual relationships
- Inspire young people that relationships and sex can be better than what they have seen on pornography(Crabbe 2021)
- **You can use light-hearted videos** (like the ones today) to open discussion with young people
- **You might ask:** Who makes pornography? Who is it for? How do you think women might feel seeing themselves like this? Do you think these things would be pleasurable in real life? (e.g. Kitty Flanagan ... OWWWW)

Key Messages to Young People about Pornography

- Pornography is a distant cousin to real life sex
- Pornography depiction of women is often degrading and displays sexual practices that are often violent and aggressive towards them
- Pornography displays unhealthy sexual practices that can cause physical and emotional injuries and sexually transmitted diseases
- Pornography often depicts unrealistic body images which can affect a young person negatively

• *“ Girls my age feel they need to shave all their pubic hair because that is what is in porn and that is what is considered normal . Boys feel they should take charge of sexual situations and have to last as long as porn stars”. Porn star bodies are far different from everyday life so girls feel they should be hairless and big breasted, and boys think they should have large penisanything different is not good enough”*
 (16-year-old girl NZ youth and porn 2018)

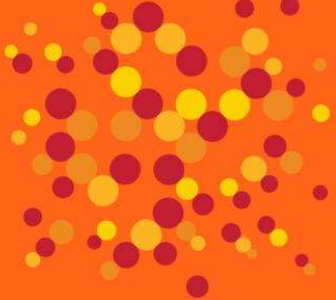


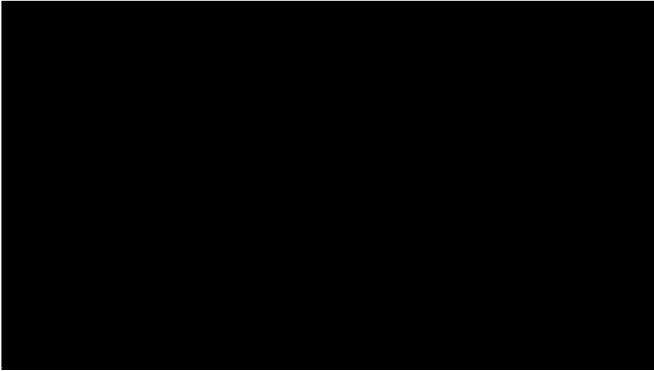
Practice Ideas on Respectful Relationships

- An awareness and sensitivity of a young person's trauma history and that these conversations may be triggering, shameful and embarrassing.
- Initiate "brave" conversations with them when its safe and you can manage triggers that may arise (Mackillop 2021)
- When talking to young people important to be inclusive of gender and sexual diversity
- Be curious ask questions but do not interrogate
- Admit you don't have all the answers, but you will follow up with them
- Be aware of your own values and beliefs and allow young people to explore theirs in terms of their sexuality

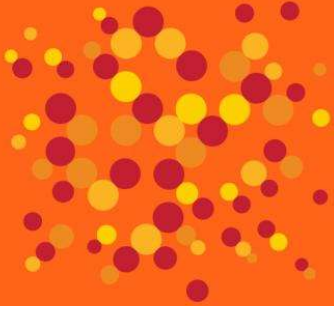
" Although enjoyable there are a lot of blurred lines in what is real and fake , if younger people had a better and safer education in and about porn it would help a lot. Telling people to stop watching porn or to never watch it is as harmful as watching it"

(Young Woman aged 19 Our Watch 2020)






Break Out Room



CASE STUDY – PART 2

- You have been nominated to speak to Jacob in relation to his pornography use .
- As a group develop some ideas about how you would do this and what questions you might ask him ?
- Consider how comfortable you feel in being able to talk to Jacob about this and what supports you may need to do this effectively?

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Some ideas on talking to Jacob

- Stay calm and remain neutral and low key when having a conversation
- Try and find out what he has viewed , how often he has have viewed it and how he felt viewing it (e.g., was he trying to learn about sex or was it for arousal)
- How hard did he need to work at to get to viewing this material ? (Was there any filters on that stopped him viewing- did he break any rules?
- What did he think about the material , he was viewing , was it realistic , has it helped or got in the way of getting a girlfriend ?
- Does he feel he needs some help to cut down on his porn usage?
- Has he chatted to anyone online and have they made him feel uncomfortable ?

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Some idea on talking to Jacob

- Important to address underlying needs that pornography is meeting
- Focus on aspects of healthy sexuality , relationship , consent , mutual respect and pleasure

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Remember the CARE principles

- C= Consent
- A= Age
- R= Respect
- E= Equality

Consent- Comic by Allie Kirkham

1. You are asking for it like
2. You are asking for it like
3. You are asking for it like
4. You are asking for it like
5. You are asking for it like
6. You are asking for it like
7. You are asking for it like
8. You are asking for it like
9. You are asking for it like
10. You are asking for it like
11. You are asking for it like
12. You are asking for it like
13. You are asking for it like
14. You are asking for it like

7. You are asking for it

Hey you, c'mon, take this!

Soon...

Oh! I don't want to carry this stuff!

Well, you're dressed like a weight-lifter and showing off your muscles. You're asking to be handed heavy stuff! Don't blame me!



A model to work with – The Savvy Consumer (Pratt and Fernandes)


The **Savvy-Consumer** model is a relationally-based approach to sex education which aimed to both increase awareness of overall Internet-safety (when used developmentally from a young age), as well as to assist children and young people to critique and contrast what they had seen in pornography and how they felt that related to real-life sexual and romantic relationships

The 'Savvy-Consumer' Model

- A set of practice principles proposed to assist both mainstream youth and youth who engaged in HSBS in order to 'better-manage' pornography consumption,
- Thus, the *Savvy-Consumer* model could be seen as both a developmental (from a young age) model and a crisis-response model (for youth who were currently engaging in HSBS and were in treatment for such behaviours),
- The *Savvy-Consumer* model is a relationally-based approach to sex education which aimed to both increase awareness of overall Internet-safety (when used developmentally from a young age), as well as to assist children and young people to critique and contrast what they had seen in pornography and how they felt that related to real-life sexual and romantic relationships.

The 'Savvy-Consumer' Model (Pratt and Fernandes)

- Adopts a harm-minimisation approach acknowledging that pornography is widespread and with easy access to the internet make a zero-tolerance approach unviable,
- The *Savvy-Consumer* model sits nicely alongside trauma-informed and developmental approaches and takes into account gender and cultural issues when working with children young people and families,
- Can be utilised by parents, teachers and professionals working with children young people who sexually harm as well as a preventative measure to teach children and young people to be more critical of what they may have seen.



The 'savvy-consumer' model (Pratt and Fernandes)

1. Zero-tolerance for pornography viewing under-12 (prior to puberty)
2. Education regarding pornography must start in early childhood. It commences with education about safe internet usage and does not mention sex or pornography
3. Net-nanny (net filtering), password protection, age-verification and parental monitoring must all be utilised to protect the 'accidental' user

The 'savvy-consumer' model: (Pratt and Fernandes)

- 5. When sex education commences, (around age 11 to 12 years), it must include both relational aspects of sexual activity, and simple information about internet-based pornography because by 13-14 most young people have viewed pornography
- 6 By 16 at latest, sex education must include discussion of 'what women want' and 'what men want' and ;'what porn suggests men and women want

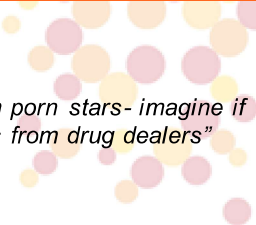
The 'savvy-consumer' model: Pratt and Fernandes

- 7. Sex-ed must include skills building in the ability to 'critique' pornography,
- 8. Programs should not be heteronormative, or assume female do not view of enjoy pornography
- 10. Adolescents should learn to treat pornography like a Bruce Willis 'Die Hard' film (fun to watch from time to time but in no way depicting reality...).

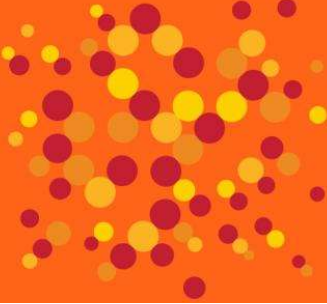
Summing Up

- Most young people have viewed pornography by the age of 14 and it appears to influence their beliefs , desires and sexual practices .
- There is some research indicating that children who view pornography at an early can have long term effects
- Young People particularly those who are vulnerable and in care require our support and help to develop the skills to consider and critique the influence of pornography and become 'SAVVY CONSUMERS'
- They also need the support to develop skills and knowledge to build safe and respectful relationships that are mutually desired.
- It is important that relationally based sex education , addressing the influence of pornography occurs both at home, care settings and at school

"Kids are learning about sex from porn stars- imagine if I left my kids to learn about drugs from drug dealers"
(Eric Lust Porn Producer)



Poll: How do you feel now?



Resources

- Potential resources for workers/ carers:
 - o Comics on Consent https://www.boredpanda.com/consent-rape-comics-all-kerkham/2/itm_sources.google&itm_medium=organic&itm_campaign=organic
 - o How to report illegal or harmful content <https://www.esaftey.gov.au/report/illegal-harmful-content>
 - o E-Safety – some videos on pornography <https://www.esaftey.gov.au/parents/big-issues/online-pornography>
 - o <https://www.actforkids.com.au/positive-or-negative/>
 - o <https://itstimetalked.com/young-people/>
 - o https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Onlineaccess000r45/Report/L02
- <https://www.esaftey.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-09/summary-report-parenting-and-pornography.pdf>

