

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

A Mother's story: what agencies need to know about internet porn's effects on the brain of an adolescent with ASN

THE RE♥ARD FOUNDATION
Love, Sex and the Internet



@brain_love_sex

Overview of workshop

- Vulnerability of the adolescent brain
- A mother talks about her family's experience of a conviction for sexual offending with son with ASD
(no tweeting about this item please)
- Q & A

TRF Publications in this area

- **Summary of Papers on Pornography from International Conference on Behavioural Addictions**
(see “Help” blog on TRF website)



- **The Internet Flow Model and Sexual Offending. Working with Individuals who have Committed Sexual Offences: A Guide for Practitioners.**

Davies, S. and Sharpe, M. 2017 in Wilcox, D., et al. published by Routledge.

- **Preventing Adolescent Harmful Sexual Behaviour: A NOTA Think Piece** (co-authored with Stuart Allardyce and others)

Adolescent Brain

12 to 25 years



“Our brains are wired for immediate reward. With technology, novelty is the reward. You essentially become addicted to novelty.”

Dr Peter Whybrow, Director, Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, UCLA

Short term rewards over long term benefits

“Persuasive Technology Design” Techniques

- Professor B.J. Fogg, “Persuasive Design Technology Lab” at Stanford University, mid-late 1990s; basis of the “attention economy”
- Developed techniques for internet companies to use that **deliberately** change users’ thoughts and behaviour without their knowing
- They **target the unconscious mind** via dopamine in reward centre to stimulate cravings that keep users coming back for more resulting in addiction for increasing numbers
- See “The Tech Industry’s War on Kids”



<https://medium.com/@richardnfreed/the-tech-industrys-psychological-war-on-kids-c452870464ce>

**“Predicting compulsive
Internet use: it's all about
sex!”**

Cyberpsychol Behav.
9 February 2006

Porn – Masturbation - Orgasm

- **Interactive** nature of porn use that leads to key brain changes, similar to those seen in gaming, social media and gambling
- Watching TV is a passive activity, does not make dopamine surge in the same way
- Dopamine rises for violation of expectation, novelty, shock, and reinforces those pathways

Environment: Pornography is everywhere




- Pornhub, largest provider, delivered almost **92 billion** video views world-wide in 2016
- Pornhub alone provides approximately **7 million** pornography sessions in **UK per day**
- 20-30% users are children
- Not proven to be a safe product

ICD-11 for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics (2018)

6C72 Compulsive sexual behaviour disorder

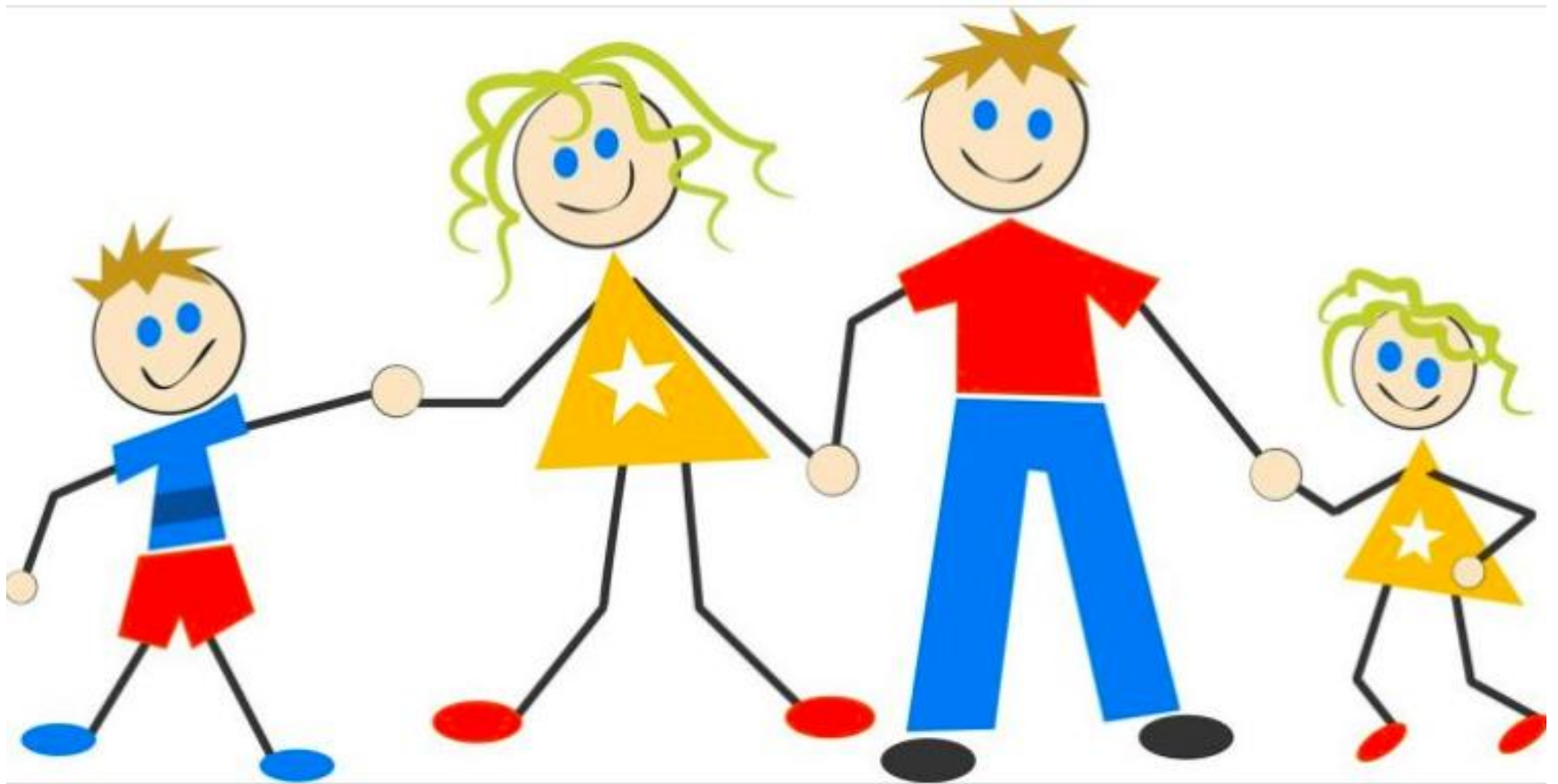
Parent

[Impulse control disorders](#)

Show all ancestors 

Description

Compulsive sexual behaviour disorder is characterized by a persistent pattern of failure to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges resulting in repetitive sexual behaviour. Symptoms may include repetitive sexual activities becoming a central focus of the person's life to the point of neglecting health and personal care or other interests, activities and responsibilities; numerous unsuccessful efforts to significantly reduce repetitive sexual behaviour; and continued repetitive sexual behaviour despite adverse consequences or deriving little or no satisfaction from it. The pattern of failure to control intense, sexual impulses or urges and resulting repetitive sexual behaviour is manifested over an extended period of time (e.g., 6 months or more), and causes marked distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Distress that is entirely related to moral judgments and disapproval about sexual impulses, urges, or behaviours is not sufficient to meet this requirement.



Free Parents' Guide to Internet Pornography

📅 19TH MARCH 2019 / 📖 EDUCATION, 🏥 HEALTH, 📰 LATEST NEWS

If you'd like a quick overview of the impact of pornography adolescents, we recommend you watch two videos for starters. It will only take 20 minutes of your time.

Young people talked about three key things that might have stopped them from sexually offending

1. Make their relationships safe

2. Reform their sexuality education

3. Help them manage their use of pornography

(McKibbin 2017)



The most vulnerable groups

- Adolescents because of stage of brain development
- People with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) due to characteristic features of brain function, disproportionately represented in crime statistics



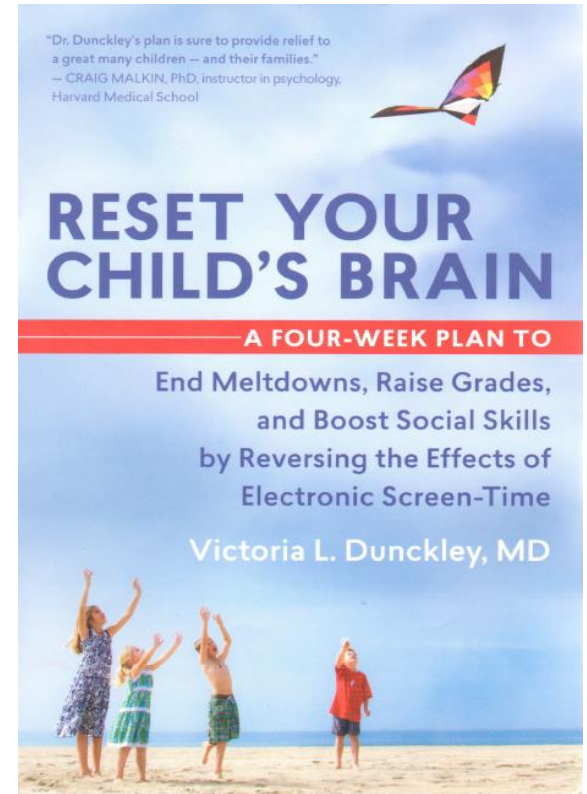
Porn & Autism

- People with ADHD: neurodevelopmental disorder
- People with additional learning needs because they have sexual desires though treated often as if they are asexual

Misdiagnosis?

Dr Dunckley “80% of children I see don’t have the mental health issues they have been diagnosed with and medicated for; they have *electronic screen syndrome*”

“mimics symptoms of ADHD”



Misdiagnosis?

Attachment Disorder and Early Media Exposure: Neurobehavioral symptoms mimicking autism spectrum disorder.

Yurika NU¹, Hiroyuki Y², Hiroki S¹, Wakaba E¹, Mitsugu U¹, Chieko N¹, Shigeo K¹.

Abstract: Many studies have reported many adverse effects of children's use of media. These effects include reduced cognitive development and hyperactivity and attention disorders. Although it has been recommended that child be kept away from the media during the early developmental period, many modern parents use the media as a way to calm their children. Consequently, these children lack the opportunity to form selective attachments by reduced social engagement. These children's symptoms occasionally mimic autism spectrum disorder (ASD). However, few studies have examined the symptoms children develop with early media exposure. Here, we present a boy exposed to the media during his early development who was diagnosed with attachment disorder. He was unable to make eye contact and was hyperactive and had delayed language development, like children with ASD. His symptoms improved dramatically after he was prevented from using all media and encouraged to play in other ways. After this treatment, he would make eye contact, and talked about playing with their parents. Simply avoiding the media and playing with others can change the behavior of a child with ASD-like symptoms. It is important to understand the symptoms caused by attachment disorder and early media exposure. (J. Med. Invest. 65:280-282, August, 2018).

Characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome

- **Difficulties in interaction and social communication**
 - failure to understand and appreciate proper, socially expected behaviour and mores
 - pedantic and monotonous speech but no clinically significant delay in language, no turn taking
 - poor eye contact
 - **Restricted interests and repetitive behaviours**
 - intense absorption in circumscribed topics, e.g. internet
 - no clinically significant delay in cognitive development
 - high-functioning AS - very clever, but little/no context understanding of words/situations
- = Can result in misinterpretation of AS's individual's conduct by criminal justice professionals

Asperger's Syndrome and the Criminal Law: the special case of child pornography by Mark Mahoney et al. 2009

Analysis from American legal perspective

“AS and Sexuality: Researchers have found that AS teens, typically delayed 5 years in their sexual and social–emotional maturity but right on schedule with puberty, often engage in behaviour perceived to be inappropriate...because of their social skills deficit.”

p35

Urgent need for an 'ASD-sensitive risk assessment guide'

“Currently used risk assessments are normed for people who are not on the spectrum. They have also not been normed for someone who simply viewed images of child pornography.”

Clare Allely, 2018 commenting on Sugrue (2017) in a blog post, Gillberg Neuropsychiatry Centre, University of Gothenburg

Protective factors

- Protective factors in individuals with ASD with relation to offending behaviour include an immediate environment which is structured and unambiguous (Murphy 2010)
- Awareness that internet pornography (and gaming use) may be compulsive/addictive and need support to quit as would with any other addiction to avoid reoffending

A mother's story: what agencies need to know to help provide better support to families, while protecting the public

Questions?



Conclusions

- Internet porn is potentially addictive, especially for adolescents
- Education about the reward system is key especially for parents and children
- Teach life skills including interpersonal communication to reduce internet usage; mindfulness; time in nature
- People with ASN can generally learn rules and strategies to reduce risk



Testing the Empathizing–Systemizing theory of sex differences and the Extreme Male Brain theory of autism in half a million people

David M. Greenberg^{a,1,2}, Varun Warri^{a,1}, Carrie Allison^a, and Simon Baron-Cohen^{a,2}

^aAutism Research Centre, Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB2 8AH, United Kingdom

Edited by Leda Cosmides, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA, and accepted by Editorial Board Member Michael S. Gazzaniga September 27, 2018
(received for review June 27, 2018)

Empathy-Systemizing dimension

Empathy: ability to recognize another person’s mental state
“cognitive empathy” and drive to respond to it with an appropriate emotion “affective empathy”.

Systemizing: drive to analyse a rule-based system

E-S = D D-scores as way to classify individuals based on those traits.

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3 common misunderstandings about theories:

1. autistic people as extreme on all male characteristics including aggression
2. lack empathy
3. misunderstood as example of “neurosexism” by those who wish to dispute that any sex differences in the mind exist

Common misunderstandings about Empathizing-Systemizing theory of sex differences and Extreme Male Brain theory

Been misunderstood as suggesting autistic people **lack empathy**.

Lower scores on empathy likely reflect difficulty primarily with 'cognitive empathy' (theory of mind) rather than all components of empathy. Experiential studies suggest that 'affective empathy' is intact in autism.

Individuals with psychopathic/anti-social personality disorders show opposite disassociation (intact cognitive empathy and impaired affective empathy)

Conclusion: Individuals with psychopathic/anti-social personality disorders and autism disordered individuals are mirror opposites

Moving Forward, Making Changes

- Suitable for individuals with ASD?
- Extreme discomfort of working in groups
- Don't understand the social rules that neurotypical individuals assimilate

The Reward Foundation's work

- Make research accessible to a wide audience
- Porn risk awareness education in schools
- Workshops for professionals accredited by Royal College of General Practitioners
- Associate of Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice
- Member of Board of Directors of SASH, Society for Advancement of Sexual Health in USA
- Campaign to raise awareness about internet pornography as a public health crisis