

Innocence Act Testimonial

Prior to the year 2020, the idea of giving a child a smart phone with no discretion, parental controls, or oversight was much more controversial. Post-2020, after many children and teens were faced with on-line school and quarantines, the culture overwhelmingly shifted, as adults and grandparents were replaced with apps and websites. The tide had been heading this way, and now it is the cultural norm.

Being a mental health counselor for children and teens for the past five years, and having worked with this population for almost fifteen years, I have witnessed drastic changes in their mental, physical, and emotional states. I attribute many of these negative effects to the “smart phone”. Mental health can be affected by what we think and feel and do, and is fed by what we watch, who we are around, what we listen to, and what we consume. If a child’s brain is not fully developed until early to mid-twenties, how can they make proper judgment on his or her online consumption?

The imagery of pornographic images is addicting, as we now know pornographic addiction changes the brain similar to the way illicit drugs affect its composition. If we believe this supposition and thus disallow drugs to minors, why then are pornographic images ok?

My experience in the counseling field has taught me that, the older siblings may have access to porn, and more and more, they are acting out what they see on their younger siblings. This happens more than people think. Increasingly more, thanks to the “open playground” of the internet, parents and lawmakers have indiscriminately invited our youth to partake in the sexual perversion of young minds.

I invite everyone to consider adopting real change to protect the mental and emotional health of these susceptible young minds and invoke an age limit on the internet. Please help protect the brains of the innocent.

Thank you for your time,
Kristen Ashenbach, M.A., LPCC

References

Gallinat, Dr. Jurgen and Kuhn, Dr. S. July 2014. *Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated with Pornography Consumption*. JAMA Psychiatry. 2014.

Capdevila, A. MD, Jungue C. PhD., Marti-Vilalta, J. MD, Pujol, Dr. J, Vendrell, P., PhD. 1993. *When Does Human Brain Development End? Evidence of Corpus Callosum Growth up to Adulthood*. Annals of Neurology. 71(7):827-834.

