



MEDIA RELEASE

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Watching Porn is viewing Bruised, Drugged Prostitutes

The recent debate about a possible 24/7 porn channel on national television, with lack of strict and clear guidelines on pornography in South Africa is a matter of grave concern for Doctors For Life International (DFL). A growing mountain of evidence are pointing to the extremely harmful effects of pornography. Research done by Dr Mary Ann Layden of the University of Pennsylvania indicates that about 60%-80% of women, who work in the sex industry, are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

These are women who, when they were little girls would get into their beds each night and roll themselves into a fetal position and every night he would come in and peel her open. The physical and visual invasion of little girl's bodies damages them psychologically and gives them a psychologically unhealthy view of sexuality. Often as adults they reenact their childhood trauma by working as strippers, Playboy models, and prostitutes. The men, who, now as customers, physically and visually invade the adult women's bodies, reenact the role of the perpetrator. These women work in the sex industry because it feels like home.

Another study done by Shelley Lubben former pornographic actress who is now an activist against the pornography industry stated that it was very rare to find Porn stars which started out of a free-willed love of sexual exhibition. Many porn star actresses admit they've experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect by parents. Some were raped by relatives and molested by neighbors. Others turned out to be teenage runaways and were picked up by pimps.

Lubben describes the scene of a hardcore porn film as devoid of intimacy, and describes it as "all mechanical and beastly". women are vomiting off the set, and most of the actors are doing drugs and alcohol. In fact porn stars

must use sexual enhancement drugs and are often on film to pay for their habit."

The brutality of most porn videos is so obvious however porn users only see a well-edited film. They don't see what happens behind the scenes; the girls that are crying and throwing up because they can't handle the hardcore acts they are being told to do. She claimed that the sex acts that girls "have to do" on the porn sets are physically harmful and psychologically traumatizing.

Studies found that 35% of strippers have Multiple Personality Disorder, 55% had Borderline Personality Disorder, and 60% had Major Depressive Episodes. Among strippers, eating disorders are rampant and strippers are often substance abusers.

Their personal lives and relationships suffer as well. Women who work in the sex industry have only a 25% chance of making a marriage that will last as long as three years. If the sex industry and pornography made us sexually healthy and improved marriages, one would expect that those most involved would have the healthiest marriages but just the opposite is true.

Self-esteem damage is invariable in this profession but, because these are survivors of abuse, some of the strippers claim to feel better about themselves by stripping. This level of denial is typical of untreated survivors and addicts. They are so disempowered and so damaged by their early abuse that they have no concept of healthy self-esteem or of self-respect for the human body and spirit. This lack of self-esteem mixed with their unhealthy attitude about sexuality causes them to think that selling their bodies will make them feel better. Many strippers move on to become prostitutes. Much of their thinking and behavior is conceptually similar to the thinking and behavior of other addicts.

The partners of porn addicts are often depressed, low in self-esteem, have eating disorders, and sexual dysfunction brought on by body self consciousness or sexual numbing and who fake their orgasms. The damage caused by the addict is not just to the women with whom they are partners. The damage is also seen in the damage to the general respect of women, inability to be intimate in healthy ways, and inability to interact with women in a professional environment in respectful ways. This encourages sexual harassment on the job.

Doctors For Life International (DFL) is strongly opposed to pornography and supports campaigns opposing pornography. In a country like South Africa where rape is rampant, sexual molestation of minors is at the order of the day, DFL is convinced that the government would do well to keep in mind that many pornography-fueled fantasies eventually gives way to action, which includes sexual abuse, rape, and sometimes even murder.

Doctors for Life International, represents more than 1800 medical doctors, specialists and professors of medicine. Since 1991 DFL has been actively promoting health care that is safe and efficient for all South Africans and has made submissions to the Film and Publications Board regarding these issues. For more information visit www.dfl.org.za