



Lepage Associates
Solution-Based Psychological Services

ASK THE EXPERT
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QUESTION: Are there dangers of Internet pornography use by adults? Should adults be concerned about their own use of Internet pornography, or even of sexual "relationships" with other adults in chat rooms? For example, I have little time to get out of the house with raising a child by myself and find myself being lured by all the chat rooms for companionship. Do you think developing friendships that could even be considered sexual "relationships" with other adults in chat rooms could be ok?

There are two different issues in this question: pornography use by adults and chat room sexual relationships. Let's look at each of these briefly and separately. To some extent the question of whether an adult should be concerned about their own use of pornography is a personal values question that is not best answered by a neutral, outside expert. However, I will speak to some concerns one might want to keep in mind. Internet porn can be limitless and thus more likely to draw one into an addiction. Unlike a pornographic magazine or video, Internet usage is limitless, and one can spend hours barraged by images. If your child mistakenly learned of your Internet pornography use (and kids are better with computers than we are!), not only would it open up the world of pornography to your child's awareness, it would also put you in the position of having to explain to your child why you chose to view porn. Pornography tends to give one an unrealistic view and expectation of sex, and it can cause distance, dissatisfaction, and raise concerns within relationships. Whether viewing porn or engaging in an on-line sexual relationship, both take you away from the real world, that is, from getting out and meeting people and pursuing a real relationship. Two dangers of Internet chat room relationships are that with anonymity comes deception, and with anonymity boundaries are more quickly crossed. You never really know who you are talking to, or even if the self-photo they sent is real! This fantasy world can give you a false sense of intimacy and attachment, which in the long run will not meet your needs for a healthy attachment and relationship with another person. Perhaps the most important question here is how to address the problem of having so little time to yourself out of the house that you feel lonely and thus look for Internet relationships. For suggestions on how to provide time for yourself to pursue "real, live" friendships and intimate relationships, see previous Ask the Expert question that addressed this issue. (That question was: I have school age children. How can I make time again for me and find my own identity when I have to often play both roles of mother and father as a single parent? Can you give me some suggestions before I pull ALL of my hair out?)

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