COMING OF AGE ONLINE

by

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- Sex Negative:
  - Exploitative
  - Violent
  - Disrespectful
  - Coercive

Sex Positive:

- Respectful
- Power Equal
- Authentic
- Mutual

We live in a sex-saturated culture where sex sells everything from cars to ice cream. But take an informal poll. Friends, young adults, single, partnered , and swinging paradoxically report that they are dissatisfied with their sex lives. Despite the cornucopia of sexual expression available in cyberspace, sexuality researchers at the 1st International World Congress of Sexual Health in Sydney, Australia believe that cybersexual activities are altering sexual behavior, relationships, and redefining sexual norms. Online sexual experiences are pushing boundaries of gender, sexual identity, and intimate relationships. While there are both positive and negative effects of cyber sexual activities, we have not enough frank and informed discussions about how sex negative models affect us, both on- and offline.

Cyberspace can sexualize young people before they have developed the social skills necessary for good judgment, making them easy targets for sexploitation both on- and offline. Access to online sex may help to fill a void for adults or become easier than struggling to find intimacy in real life. The potentially for positive effects lives right next to the harmful ones largely driven by the three A's of cyber psychology (access, autonomy, anonymity) making sex online possible for anyone 24/7.

Sexuality educators recognize that curiosity and sexual exploration are necessary for healthy development but frequent exposure and arousal to unusual, violent, and exploitative sex sites and interactive media does increase the potential of altering arousal mechanisms towards these kinds of sex scripts. Cyber space allows us to be voyeurs as well as participants, experimenting in an ever-expanding world of sexual diversity ranging from the everyday erotic to beyond depravity. Exposure to interactive, digital, and exploitative pornography with the aid of teledildonic technology may contribute to paraphilias (incurable and difficult to treat sexual impulse control problems). Healthy, authentic, and respectful sexuality can be uploaded to cyberspace but only if we address the what's never worked offline: the difference between sex negative and sex positive in media and in life and how these shape identity, relationships, and behavior on individual, community, and now global levels.