

#8 Addressing Unhealthy Choices and Sexually Explicit Images

My initial contact with Jon was through his attorney. They wanted me to see him for a psycho-sexual evaluation. Jon lived in a small town on a reservation. This area had been his lifelong home, and he had lived with both of his grandmothers over time. His family was heavily impacted by problematic alcohol use, especially his mother. Jon socialized with peers on a limited basis. He was capable of high levels of academic achievement but often did not utilize these skills and experienced problems functioning at his academic potential. He preferred to meet people online, and this included sharing explicit sexual images and information with his male acquaintances/peers. These online activities began when he was a fifth-grade student.

Online male peers frequently contacted him, and he built primary relationships with these individuals. Jon was facing federal charges involving producing child pornographic images. These images were created at the request of an older man he met online. The man exploited him by directing him to film his younger sisters and a younger female cousin while they were sleeping. He later directed Jon to film these girls while they were awake and arranged them in various poses. He commented during my evaluation that he did not view his sisters or his cousins as family members since he had not grown up with them. Jon was manipulated into believing the exploitative relationship he had with this online male was a friendship he had developed.

This exploitive relationship, unfortunately, became very important to him, and he made ongoing efforts to please his abuser by producing the types of images the individual wished to view. Jon did not understand he was also being abused by this association. The adult male also shared additional sexually explicit

images with Jon as part of the exploitation, which lasted for two or more years. Jon was seen for weekly therapy sessions for over a year. He processed his need to develop meaningful connections with individuals, and developing interpersonal skills was a major therapy topic and need. A combination of treatment methods was employed in his treatment, including the Good Lives Model and Risk-need-responsivity methods.



Teaching

Just as prevention practices and understandings exist in physical spaces, they also exist in digital spaces. Family and community conditions like alcohol abuse, limited supervision, and access to younger children must be acknowledged to prevent PSB within the context of digital access. Encourage youth to develop interpersonal skills and to develop healthy relationships with their peers both online and offline. Children must be taught what is appropriate and not appropriate in online interactions. Adults need to establish positive communication and trust with the youth as well as monitor communications and online activities to youth. Open communication and supervision within the family help youth's growth in relationships. When siblings are involved in PSB cases that involve digital exploitation it is essential that the entire family receives healing services.