



Human Trafficking Update

February 2018

EDITORIAL

We Have to Talk About Porn

This isn't a piece I want to write. Specifically for that reason, I feel that I have to.

Because one of you, my faithful readers, sent me links to stories about how much teens are exposed to pornography. Several of these stories ran in *The New York Times*, and they included quizzes about how early and often teen girls and boys are exposed to porn.

I didn't want to read the stories. I half-heartedly clicked on the quiz.

With the first question, I learned that 93 percent of males and 62 percent of females in college reported having seen porn as adolescents, according to a 2008 study from the University of New Hampshire.

With the second question, I learned that on average, boys first watch porn at the age of 13. For girls, the average age is 14.

When the third question asked me what percentage of those boys reported watching porn that shows "gang bangs" and "rough oral sex," I bailed.

Thinking about our 13 and 14 year old children watching porn makes my stomach hurt. But of course, it still happens – whether I want to think about it or not.

So the questions then become: Why are our children watching these videos? How do they affect the ways they think about sex, themselves and each other? And what, therefore, should we do about it?

I'm not sure I know the answers. But allow me to start the conversation with my own responses.

To me, the why of it seems to be the easiest question: Curiosity. Teens are exploring the world. They want to know about subjects that are taboo.

Porn is in the same category as smoking, drinking and drugs. It is a grown-up activity that grown-ups don't want you engaged in.

The question of what it does to their thinking is tougher – and more frightening.

Because teens are still trying to figure it all out, there is a great probability that teens watching porn imagine that this is what good sex looks like.

The lack of respect, and the violent – even forced – acts become acceptable. Perhaps even desirable. Porn risks experimentation that can do lasting damage to everyone involved.

Most relevant to us in this newsletter readership – it opens the doorway for people who would exploit our kids. The wide-spread availability and consumption of pornography makes it so much easier to convince young minds that treating people

this way is OK. That allowing other people to abuse you makes you attractive and desirable – even powerful. That buying and selling one another is a victimless crime.

Porn expands their boundaries of what they can do to other people – and what they will let other people do to them. And in that way, it puts them at greater risk for abuse and exploitation.

So what do we do about it?

Most immediately, we have to talk with our kids. We need to get comfortable with being

uncomfortable. We need to talk about things that are hard and answer the tough questions they have. If we aren't talking with our kids about sex and prostitution – rest assured, other people are.

We have to be attentive to their computer habits. We need to not be afraid to use parental controls. Of course, we also need to understand this won't shield them entirely – computers and access are, sadly, everywhere. But letting our children know what's not acceptable – and why – is essential to their understanding and growth.

We have to know where they are, and who their friends are. We need to trust our guts when our kids become secretive. We need to have the parental courage to step in.

And perhaps most important, we need to build their self-esteem. One common attribute among children who are trafficked, is that they have low confidence and self-respect. We need to let them know that they are loved, respected and have value.

Our love is the best defense our children have. Let's offer it loudly, and build them up with intent.



An Interview with the American Trucking Associations

Many industries have voiced their commitment to fighting human trafficking. One of the most engaged is the trucking industry. The American Trucking Associations (ATA) represents 3.5 million professional truck drivers in legislative and regulatory matters, as well as image and best practices. The association partners with Truckers Against Trafficking to educate drivers on the dangers of trafficking, how to spot the signs, and what to do if they suspect that people are being trafficked.

Elisabeth Barna is chief operating officer and executive vice president of the ATA and serves on the Board of Truckers Against Trafficking. She sat down to talk with me about why this is such a priority for America's truckers.

How large is the trucking industry?

Our industry touches 7.4 million people – in roles from the manufacturing plant, to truck stops, to administration, to security. There are over 3.5 million people on the road every day. We like to say we are the eyes and ears of the

highways. With those numbers, we feel like we can make such a big difference.

How does the industry get involved?

The most important part of our involvement is the voluntary training we offer. We offer several training modules for people to understand what trafficking is. Who is affected. The fact that the child victimized by trafficking could be their own child or grandchild. That has a real impact on our people.

Our training also provides tips of suspicious activity. And it encourages our drivers to make a call if something doesn't feel right. Our professionals work and live in all communities. Even if they just have a hunch, we tell them to make the call. It's not their responsibility to know for sure if it's trafficking. They can call in the experts to do that.

Most of the time our truckers don't know the outcomes of those calls. But often, they do in fact notify authorities of confirmed trafficking. The industry has been really active in fighting trafficking over the past 3 years. In that time, our drivers have made over 2,000 calls that led to investigations. And most important, they have helped save more than 1,100 children.

We had one case in Maryland where a driver at a gas station rest stop saw a young girl with a man. Because of his training, he recognized several signs of trafficking. He went in to the manager, and they called local police together. Police ended up arresting an entire ring of traffickers.

***Human Trafficking
Hotline
1-888-3737-888***

Who do truckers typically call?

We advise them to call the TAT hotline, which is run by Polaris, at 888-3737-888. Or they can call local police directly.

We even have an app now with built-in GPS. So our drivers can report suspected trafficking through the app, and it will automatically report the location as well as the suspected activity.

If the suspected victim seems to be in immediate danger, they should call 911. One night, one of our drivers was sleeping at a rest stop, and got a knock on his door. It was a little girl with a pimp. The driver let the girl into his truck. He asked her questions he was trained to ask if he ever found himself alone with a suspected victim. And seeing she was at great immediate risk, he called 911.

Does your training touch the demand side of trafficking?

Yes, it does. We let our drivers know that if there is no demand, there will be less appetite for anyone to be in the

trafficking business. We underscore that these children could be their own children. We also have professional truck drivers who talk with other men about why they should stay away from trafficking.

Each of ATA's 50 state trucking associations has partnered with our national association as well as Truckers Against Trafficking. We run service announcements on TV, we have ads at truck stops, hotels and fast food places. We let them know it can happen anywhere – not just at truck stops, but also at big box stores, motels, fast food places – anywhere in your community. We even heard recently that there was a trafficking ring being run out of a church. It's important to always be vigilant.

What mobilized your industry on this campaign?

We live and deliver in every community. We give back in many of these communities through safety training, delivering items for those in need, and event support. We have families too. And this really touches home.

Our industry is extremely patriotic. Many of our members are veterans. This is one more way in which we serve.

What advice do you have for our readers?

Keep doing what you're doing. In years before, no one wanted to talk about this problem. Now that the awareness is being raised, the entire society can make a difference. We are making such great headway. More organizations are popping up. So much difference has been made in the past 3 years.

It doesn't cost anyone anything but a little time. And the rewards are so rich.

[Learn more at trucking.org](http://trucking.org)



New Law Addresses Commercial Vehicle Drivers

On January 8, 2018, President Trump signed into law the No Human Trafficking on Our Roads Act. With this law, anyone who uses a commercial vehicle to commit a felony involving a severe form of human trafficking, is barred from operating a commercial vehicle ever again.

[Read the law here.](#)

An Opportunity to Give

World Vision is a Christian-based humanitarian organization that offers many opportunities to help people in need all over the world. Now they offer an opportunity to give funds to help girls who have been sexually exploited get back to a life of physical and financial security.

[Learn more here.](#)



Washington Trains Children and Caregivers

The Office of the Attorney General in Washington, D.C. is training middle school and high school children to recognize the signs of trafficking. The training also offers them with tips for how they can protect themselves.

The training is open to caregivers and parents.

[Learn more about past and upcoming events.](#)



Michigan State Police Challenge Us to Be Aware

The advertisement starts as many ads do – feel-good scenes of people working in their communities. Half-way through, a police officer points out that you may have overlooked several signs of trafficking.

The ad went viral on social media in January during human trafficking month. The message it shares is timeless. Watch the video to better spot some signs of trafficking you may see in your community. It could save a life.

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Virginia Man Sentenced for Trafficking

Michael Gunn and his wife Angel Gunn were convicted of trafficking two teenage girls. Michael Gunn was sentenced to 30 years in prison, and was ordered to pay the victims all the money they generated while being trafficked by him.

Court documents show that Gunn was already a registered sex offender when he met the girls. He posted ads for the teenagers on Backpage. The teens were driven to customers in Washington, Maryland and Virginia.

Two women - Angel Gunn and Vanessa Domingues - also were convicted of sex-trafficking minors. The women testified at trial that Gunn led the crime ring. Angel Gunn was sentenced to nearly 12 years in prison. Domingues got 10 years.

[Learn more here.](#)

Human Trafficking Update

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*Human Trafficking Task
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*Submit story ideas to
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The 12 Concepts of Understanding Trauma

[The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) offers resources to help educate child welfare professionals, families/caregivers, healthcare providers, justice system professionals, policy makers, school personnel, and survivors on the signs of trafficking and services for human trafficking survivors.

Here are 12 tips they offer for understanding trauma:

- Traumatic experiences are complex. Every traumatic event is made up of different traumatic moments.
- Trauma occurs within a broad context that includes youth's personal characteristics, life experiences, and current circumstances.
- Traumatic events often generate secondary adversities, life changes, and distressing reminders in youth's daily lives.
- Youth can exhibit a wide range of reactions to trauma and loss.
- Danger and safety are primary concerns in the lives of youth who have had traumatic experiences.
- Traumatic experiences affect the family and broader caregiving system.
- Many trafficked youth demonstrate remarkable resilience and enormous capacity to heal.
- Trauma and post-trauma adversities can strongly influence development.
- Developmental neurobiology underlies youth's reactions to traumatic experiences.
- Culture is closely interwoven with traumatic experiences, responses, and recovery. Youth may feel conflicted with by divided loyalties when cultures clash.
- Trafficked youth may have lost hope that society will protect them.
- Working with trauma-exposed youth and their families can be extremely rewarding.