

How can I stop porn impacting on my relationships with trans women?



This tip sheet is for men who date trans women or trans feminine people who want to understand how to enjoy porn featuring trans women without it impacting on sex and intimacy.*

Summary

- Some men may first discover their attraction to trans women through porn. They may talk about it being a positive way to explore their sexuality.
- However, trans women often talk about men who have learnt inappropriate behaviours from porn.
- This can lead to trans women having sexually unfulfilling experiences with men. It can also cause trans women harm.
- Good sexual experiences are based in consent and mutual respect.
- Ask your partner what you can do to make her feel comfortable – or if there's anything that makes her feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

* "Men" in this resource refers to cisgender men. "Trans women" refers to trans women, trans feminine people, women who have a trans and gender diverse history or experience, but do not identify as transgender - and other trans feminine culturally-specific identities such as Sistergirls, Fa'afafine and Kinner.

Watching porn that features trans women can be an enjoyable experience. Being attracted to trans women is a healthy part of many men's sexuality. Some men may first discover their attraction to trans women through porn and talk about it being a positive space to explore their sexuality.

However, some porn presents very limited ideas about trans women and the sex they like to have. This can perpetuate negative and sexist stereotypes. This is particularly true for trans women of colour.



@noahdeart

How can I ensure the porn I'm watching doesn't negatively impact on trans women or me?

Everybody wants a good lover, and most men want to know how to pleasure their partners. However, porn can also sometimes lead to behaviours where trans women may feel they are reduced to an object of sexual desire, rather than being seen as a whole person.

For example, trans women often talk about negative sexual experiences they've had with men attempting to re-enact porn scenes.

Trans women may find these experiences offensive or degrading, may choose not to hook up with you, may not want to see you again, or feel that the experience was not pleasurable or enjoyable.

"Often, I find when I'm chatting to men, they fixate on what I'm wearing. They'll often ask if I'm wearing a skirt or what kind of underwear I'm wearing, or whether I'd wear stockings when I meet them. So, they're building up a fantasy in their head of what I look like, but in a very forceful and blunt way. That doesn't feel great." Eva

Tip: Separating out the fantasy of pornography from how you interact and treat people in real life is essential. Consider the porn you're watching and reflect on what you may be expecting or need to unlearn. Are you trying to act out scenes from porn? How is it impacting your ability to connect with and show respect for your partner?

The language featured in pornography often uses words that many trans women may consider to be highly offensive.

“I can tell that their only experience with trans people has been through porn, when they use outdated and offensive language, or they're being very pushy to see or interact with certain body parts on myself that I'm not comfortable with. That's a huge red flag. It happens too often. Generally, if I feel fetishised, I usually cut it off and stop speaking to that person.” Nicole

Tip: Don't use offensive terms such as “she-male”, “tranny”, or “chicks with dicks”. Ask trans women what language they use to describe their gender identity and use that instead, e.g. trans woman, trans feminine, non-binary, woman.

Porn that features trans women often only depicts trans women with particular types of bodies, usually those who have had breast augmentation but have not had genital reconfiguration surgery (sometimes known as lower surgery, gender affirmation surgery or genital reconfiguration surgery). Whilst this is a beautiful body so are all other trans women's bodies regardless of the surgical or medical interventions they may or may not have had.

Tip: Trans women and their bodies are incredibly diverse. It's important not to make assumptions about the type of body a potential date might have, or to pressure her around what medical procedures she may or may not have had. There is no one ‘right’ way to be a trans woman, and everyone's journey is unique.

“Look I had my lower surgery (vaginoplasty) almost six years ago and I still often get men asking me for dick pics. That always made me feel really gross—and then once I'd had surgery the interest from some men just disappeared. It was like I'm no longer desirable to trans feminine attracted men because I now had a vagina.” Crystal

Tip: Take the time to get to know someone and see over time if you're the right match. However, if you are looking for a trans woman with a particular type of body – rather than demand trans women disclose private information about their bodies, be upfront about what you are looking for. Let trans women choose whether they are the right match for you.

Good sexual experiences are based on consent, mutual respect and pleasure. A lot of porn marketed to men often solely centers on men's experiences of pleasure or desires. This often includes themes of men always being in control and trans women always being passive or submissive.

Trans women often say that this can lead to men not meeting their needs or desires and having sexually unfulfilling experiences or relationships.

“My experience of dating men who objectify trans women is that my pleasure is never centred. I couldn’t date them because when you’re objectified, when you’re fetishised, you’re the object so you don’t have desires yourself. It’s like you’re not even there, you’re an object of a fantasy in their mind.” Crystal

Tip: Ask your partner what they enjoy or how they experience pleasure. Check-in before, during and after sex to make sure she’s feeling good, enjoying herself and that her needs are being met too.

Some porn features rough, degrading or humiliating sexual acts. Without enthusiastic consent these are acts of sexual assault. In interviews with trans women many shared common experiences of men wanting to engage in rough or violent sex acts. A lot of them said they only went along with it because they were frightened and didn’t feel safe to say no.

Tip: Question your assumptions about how trans women like to have sex, then ask her what she does and doesn’t enjoy. Don’t use degrading language, rough play or humiliation unless she explicitly invites it. During sex, look for subtle signs of discomfort such as zoning out, silence or signs of pain. Check in regularly to see if she is enjoying herself, or if there is anything she needs to feel more comfortable.

If you’re looking for support in Australia:

Qlife

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service (including partners)

Website: qlife.org.au

Phone: 1800 184 527

Opening hours: 3PM to midnight, every day
Telephone and web chat support service

Say It Out Loud

ACON’s sexual, domestic and family violence website *Say It Out Loud* provides information and guidance relating to sexual, family and intimate partner violence in the Australian LGBTQ+ community.

Website: sayitoutloud.org.au

Men’s Referral Service

A free, confidential telephone service for men

Phone: 1300 766 491

Open any time.

For men outside Australia looking for counselling support, try searching online for “trans friendly counselling in my local area”.