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200 W. Third St., Ste. 502 • Alton, IL 62002 • (618) 433-8990 • Eagle@EagleForum.org • EagleForum.org

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Perils of Pornography

TEACHING PURITY IN AN IMPURE WORLD

by Chris McKenna, Founder, CEO, www.protectyouneyes.com. This content is reprinted with permission from waituntil8th.org.

We live in a porn-saturated digital world. The Google Play Store, which distributes apps to Android tablets and smartphones, discovered over 60 gaming apps for young people that display pornography. Did you know that it's possible to search for pornography through the Bible app by accessing Twitter? Were you aware of the backdoor on Kindle Fire tablets to a web browser if you do not disable pop-ups?

In the digital age, it is not a matter of IF my child will see pornography. It's only a matter of WHEN.

Today's pornography is so much more graphic and damaging than the now-boring, still, 2-D images I was exposed to in magazines when I was a young boy. According to Fight the New Drug founder, Clay Olsen, "This material [today's pornography] is more aggressive, harmful, violent, degrading, and damaging than any other time in the history of the world."

Today's pornography glorifies violence toward women. A 2010 peer-reviewed study in the National Center for Biotechnology Information database found that 88.2 percent of scenes contained physical aggression toward women. Pornography turns unique, unrepeatable human be-

ings into objects to be used and discarded and then teaches its viewers to do the same. A 2016 study of 600 Australian teen girls found that young men routinely harass girls, comparing them to the bodies of porn stars. One young lady commented, "To them, no just means 'persuade me'."

With this digital backdrop, what can parents do?

It is naïve to parent a child as if you can prevent every possible inappropriate exposure. I'm not saying don't try, but the kids who navigate the digital culture successfully are those who know what to do WHEN they see something inappropriate.

Does this mean that I talked to my five-year-old about pornography? Absolutely. This horrifies some parents but imagine this exchange between my son Blake and me.

Talking to a 5-year-old About Porn

Dad: "Hi, Blake! I see you're using the iPad. That's great. You like using it, don't you?"

Blake: "Yeah, dad, I love this thing."

Dad: "Well, put it down for just a second. Cool. Blake, you know what your private parts are, right?"

Blake: "Um, yep. I sure do."

Dad: "Okay, great. Now, mom or dad

will usually be with you when you're using the iPad, but if you ever see anything weird, scary, uncomfortable — if you ever see someone else's private parts, do you know what to do?" [Now he's really listening]

Blake: "No, what?"

Dad: "I want you to put it down and tell someone. That's it! Can you say that back to me?"

Blake: "Sure, put it down! Tell someone!"

Dad: "That's awesome, buddy! Can you give me an example of a someone you might tell?"

Blake: (thinking) "Aunt Susie, Dad, Grandma McKenna, Mom."

Dad: "Yes! Exactly! Awesome job, Blake. You can always tell me."

I would ask him, "Hey, Blake, what do you do if you ever see something strange or any private parts on the Internet?" And, he would answer, "I put it down, and tell someone."

I just taught my 5-year-old son what to do when he sees pornography and I never said the word. Now that he's six and sometimes rides the



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school bus, he knows the word “pornography” and what to do if he ever hears it. “Tell someone!”

Dad: “Blake, do you remember when I told you about seeing weird things on the Internet? Like someone’s private parts?”

Blake: “Sure, dad.”

Dad: “Well, there’s a word for that. It’s called pornography. And, if you ever hear a kid say the word pornography, do you know what to do?”

Blake: “What, dad?”

Dad: “Same as before! Just tell someone. Tell me! Sound good?”

Blake: “Yep!”

Keep the Parenting as They Grow Up

Talking to your kids about pornography is not a one-time event. Chances are, many of you, like me, were “victims” of a one-and-done sex talk. One conversation was not enough back then and in today’s 24/7 Google environment, it definitely is not enough today.

We must embrace regular opportunities to ask our kids if they have

seen anything unusual online. During the middle school years, incorporate discussions about sexting and how sending nude photos not only violates the law, but crushes our dignity and privacy as we relinquish control of our private parts to a very “un”private Internet.

Parents can equip our kids with facts and information about what porn does to impair our brains, our ability to love each other well (instead of seeing each other as objects to use), and how it infects the world by fueling sex trafficking and the abuse of children.

Don’t worry about using the perfect words. Just keep using words. For as long as they live under your roof, look them in the eyes, and speak openly, directly, and persistently about why they are so much better than the shallow and distorted stories that porn tells them.

Don’t Let Your Parenting Be The Reason They Look At Porn

Parents often make the porn talk so much more difficult than it needs to be. Our parental silence might be

the greatest contributor to minors being hooked on porn. Don’t expect parental controls to replace your role as a parent. Don’t be afraid of stumbling through it. But do it.

A 2015 study performed by a student in the Behavioral Science Department at Utah Valley University surveyed 238 women and 132 men from 17 countries and 41 states. The average age of the respondents was 35.7, and the average age that they were exposed to pornography was 9.66 for women and 9.95 for men, which was well before the prevalence of Wi-Fi and smartphones.

Does this mean every 6-year-old is ready to have a conversation about porn? Most are ready. Would you rather they hear it from you or from the 8th grader on the bus? If the conversation is done properly, in the context of a loving conversation where you explain not just why porn is bad, but why real love is good, then you are giving your child powerful tools for their digital belt — confidence and knowledge. Plus, you have prepared them for their first smartphone. 

WE CANNOT IGNORE PORN

by George Collins, founder, director, Neulia, Compulsion Solutions, www.neulia.com

I own an addiction counseling center designed to help those who struggle with compulsive porn watching or acting out sexually. I receive phone calls every day from people who have reached a crisis point in their lives, but one particular call stopped me in my tracks.

The person on the other end of the phone was a young boy. He had stumbled upon an exceptionally explicit pornographic image before he was prepared to process it mentally or emotionally. He was so distraught that he actually sought out my phone number to ask about what he had seen.

For decency’s sake, I won’t repeat what he said, but with all the direct-

ness of a child, he asked about why a certain body part was being used in a certain way. Even at this young age, he understood that the woman in the image was being demeaned, which upset and confused him.

I listened to his question and told him it would be best if I spoke to his mother before I spoke to him. He became nervous and reluctant to put his mother on the phone, because he was certain his mother would beat him if she found out what he had seen. I reassured him that I would not let that happen, and when he felt ready, he went and found his mother.

When I explained the purpose of the phone call, the first thing she said

was indeed, “I’m gonna beat him for this...” but I was able to reason with her about the reality of the situation. Her son had come across this image by accident, and the most important thing right now was navigating this the right way. Punishing him was not the solution.

Later on that evening, I was back on the phone with the boy, his mother, and his father. We spent some time talking about what intimacy is, and why what he saw that day was not representative of a respectful and loving relationship. The parents were still upset, but I commended them on raising a little hero. To have the presence of mind to reach out like he did made him an exceptional child who did the right thing in a bad situation.

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