

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](http://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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## Healthy Relationships are Learned

We now live in a world where Internet pornography can sneak up on an unsuspecting child and parents need to be aware. You do not want your child's first impression of intimacy and sex to be a XXX video that some jokester linked on a website to a favorite video game.

The first images of intimacy your children see should be of you and your spouse. Holding hands, hugging, touching one another respectfully, looking into one another's eyes when you talk together — through these everyday actions, we have a wonderful opportunity to teach our children about healthy relationships.

We all want our children to grow up and enter into healthy relationships themselves. We don't want them to be seen as objects — as a collection of body parts — nor do we want them to see other people in that way.

Yet this is exactly what happens when children are exposed to pornographic content, especially if they have no context in which to place what they saw. Yes, talking to your children about sex and intimacy can feel uncomfortable, but it is an essential part of your job as parents. Kids are curious about everything, include sex. They will begin seeking out information on their own and the answers found online are the wrong answers.

## Porn is Traumatic

I take calls all the time from men whose lives are falling apart due to online pornography. They compulsively watch and act out. They watch so much that they are incapable of being with a real woman. They watch at work and lose their jobs. They watch at home instead of being with their wives. They hide out and sneak peeks whenever they can, no matter how dangerous or how ill-advised. These men are true addicts.

In every single case, this crippling addiction began in childhood. Some of these men come from bro-

ken homes where they never had the advantage of seeing what a positive and functioning relationship could be. Some men were abused as children and are struggling with the terrible things that happened to them. But there's another group of men: men who had too much access to pornography too early and with too little guidance.

I cannot stress enough how traumatizing and damaging that experience can be. The little boy who called me was traumatized, and kids all over the country are being traumatized too. Their innocence is being shattered by the things they see and



read online, and the sad thing is that it could have been prevented if only a few precautions had been taken.

## My Best Advice for Families

Our parents were able to shield us from inappropriate content by simply keeping it out of the house, but today's children have a constant stream of content — some good, some not — coming at them all the time.

I urge parents to monitor Internet time, and to let your children know that you are monitoring. Do not be secretive about it, because that only reinforces the idea that sneaking around is acceptable. You want to be open, so that your children will hopefully be open with you if they see something they shouldn't.

Second, look into filters which can help keep inappropriate content away from your children. You can also take this opportunity to teach them how to use the Internet properly. At this young age, they are forming their values and habit patterns. If they get into the habit of uninterrupted Internet use without proper guidance, they will fall into negative or even addictive behaviors.

Third, and most important, talk to your kids about sex and intimacy. As

conservatives we can struggle with this concept, especially if such talk wasn't encouraged in our own homes growing up. But believe me, this is one of the best things you can do to help keep your kids safe. Talk to them about it and answer their questions. Let these important life lessons come from you, not the Internet.

An intimate relationship is a covenant. It's sacred and meaningful. I often break down the word "intimacy" as "into me you see." Teach your children what it means to respect others and to be respected. Let their first memories of intimacy be holding hands with some-

one special or dancing at their prom or reading love letters, not flashes of lewd and degrading images from the Internet. You can help build this positive and wholesome framework for their lives.

I work with a lot of men who never had these advantages as children, and they're struggling a great deal with getting their lives back on track. I counsel men who know that this cycle has to stop, but have no idea how to stop it themselves.

If your child comes across these images, it has nothing to do with your child. Whether they stumbled upon something or sought it out through curiosity, that's all very normal. We should not shame them, but help guide them through this confusing experience.

If your children know they can come to you, if they know it's safe to talk to you, then they will. If they have seen you and your spouse modeling a loving and respectful relationship, then they will be able to pick out "wrong" when they see it. Give them every opportunity to grow into adults with solid values and a true understanding of what a positive and flourishing relationship looks like. 