

# Talking to Your Kids About Pornography, Masturbation & Sexual Purity

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## Recommended Resources for Parents

1. **Covenant Eyes Blog: [covenanteyes.com/blog](http://covenanteyes.com/blog)**  
*Excellent, up to date articles and research about parenting teens in the internet age, pornography, breaking free... Covenant Eyes is much more than a filtering and accountability service – they have one of the best blogs I can find on the subject.*
2. **[www.xxxchurch.com](http://www.xxxchurch.com)**  
*This is a resource for those dealing with pornography and masturbation addiction. It includes separate sections for men, women, those struggling with same sex attraction, and other groups...but in particular it includes a great section for parents. To access the parent resources, go to [www.xxxchurch.com/parents](http://www.xxxchurch.com/parents). Though this website isn't Catholic, I haven't run across any material contrary to Church teaching.*
3. **[www.theporntalk.com](http://www.theporntalk.com)**  
*GREAT resource for parents to help you have “the talk” with your kids, including the background information you need, conversation starters, and age-appropriate topics and suggestions for age-appropriate internet use. Although its focus is pornography, I found that it can be very useful as a resource for any of the difficult sexually-related talks that you need to have with your teens. This is not a Catholic, or even Christian website, however the resources are spectacular.*
4. **[www.fightthenewdrug.com](http://www.fightthenewdrug.com)**  
*Fight the New Drug takes a non-religious, non-legislative, non-judgmental approach. They seek to educate about the negative effects of pornography on individuals, families, and communities. Their message is based strictly on scientific fact, and explain why porn is harmful by educating people about its negative psychological and physical consequences.*
5. **[www.chastityproject.com](http://www.chastityproject.com)**  
*This is Jason Evert's site. There is a TON of great research, videos, Q&A on a variety of different subjects, and it all comes from a Catholic perspective.*
6. **[www.theporneffect.com](http://www.theporneffect.com)**  
*This is another great resource for you coming from a Catholic perspective. It offers articles, resources on building an “action plan” to break free, and more.*
7. **The Cyber Safety Lady: <http://thecybersafetylady.com.au/>**  
*This website helps parents understand cell phones, social media and other technology in order to keep their kids safe online through articles, how-to videos and more.*

### Resources for “The Talk”

- [www.theporntalk.com](http://www.theporntalk.com)
- <http://xxxchurch.com/get-help/parents/talk>
- Focus on the Family: Talking To Your Kids About Sex:  
<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/socialissues/defending-your-values/talking-to-your-kids-about-sex/talking-to-your-kids-about-sex>

## Books

1. **Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Raising Sexually Whole and Healthy Kids** by Greg and Lisa Popcak  
In this thoroughly revised version of Beyond the Birds and the Bees, Greg and Lisa Popcak empower you with the tools needed to move well beyond “the Talk” by offering a comprehensive guide to raising sexually whole and holy children. Using the riches of Saint John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, the Popcaks help you safely navigate your children from infancy through the teenage years and beyond.
2. **Raising Pure Teens** by Jason Evert & Chris Stefanick  
10 Strategies to protect (or restore) your teenager’s innocence
3. **Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain** by William Struthers.  
*Available at Borders.com, Amazon.com, etc. This book examines the brain science and morality behind pornography, masturbation and sexual purity for men.*

## Internet Filters & Accountability Software

*Several options are listed here, you should investigate all of them to decide which one is best for your family situation. Be sure that if your family has mobile phones that you choose a product that will protect your particular device.*

1. **Open DNS: <https://www.opendns.com/home-internet-security/>**  
Open DNS is the only service that will filter every device on your home network – computers, tablets, game systems, and phones (using wi-fi), including any device someone brings into your home. It works through the internet router, not the individual devices, blocking the content you choose from being accessible through your internet connection. This service is free. *Please note, it does not have any effect on cellular data, so you still will need something on your children’s cell phones to block or monitor usage.*
2. **[www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)**  
Accountability and filtering software for Mac, PC, Android and iOS ( iPhone/iPod Touch/iPad) devices. Also includes a great blog and resources for parents to help their teens. The family plan is \$13.99/month for an unlimited number of users. Accountability and filtering are both included.
3. **[www.mobicip.com](http://www.mobicip.com)**  
Full featured suite of filtering and accountability for Mac, PC, Android, and iOS (iPhone/iPod Touch/iPad) devices. The free version is somewhat limited, but you can upgrade for \$39.99 per year for up to 5 devices.
4. **[www.x3watch.com](http://www.x3watch.com)**  
Accountability software that works on the PC, Mac, iOS, and Android devices. There’s a free version, and a more robust version for \$6.99 a month or \$64.99 per year for unlimited devices.
5. **Windows Family Safety & Mac Parental Controls**  
*Both Windows and Mac operating systems offer some parental control features that may be helpful. These are free – included with your operating system. This approach may be enough if your children don’t have other devices to access the internet.*

# Talking to Your Children about the Gift of Human Sexuality

*List compiled by Mr. Kevin Bohli. Kevin is the Diocesan Director for the Office of Youth Ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington. He has spoken to thousands of parents and 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade boys about the topic of Human Sexuality since 2004. He is married with five children.*

## **1. Relax.**

Your children are sexual beings. It is normal for them to have sexual curiosity and desires as they develop. It is not our job to **prevent** these feelings, it is our job as parents to help form them into healthy young men and women by providing the appropriate information and assisting them to **process** the feelings. Many parents feel so overwhelmed and anxious that they do nothing, rather than something.

## **2. Pray.**

God has entrusted you with your children and says that you are the best person to teach them about sexuality. The Church believes this wholeheartedly. Pray for your children to make good choices, and pray for the graces to know how to guide them.

## **3. Find a good resource.**

Regardless of your background, it is helpful to have a book or resource to assist you with forming your children and provide some basic images to aid your discussion. "Beyond the Birds and the Bees: The Secrets of Raising Sexually Whole (and Holy!) Kids" by Mr. Gregory Popcak, MSW, LCSW, is one excellent resource. It is written as a handbook to assist parents in having discussions with their teens. Read it first as a parent, and then work through it with your children.

## **4. Find teachable moments.**

Your children will be bombarded with issues of sexuality from a very early age. Use each of those moments as you see them to have discussions with your child. For example, when you see a commercial that is inappropriate, discuss it with your children. Explain how it did not treat our body or another person with respect and dignity. Teaching human sexuality is a series of hundreds of small conversations over many years...not just one "talk".

## **5. Protect them.**

If you decide to purchase an electronic device to bring into your house, then you need to be responsible for learning how to use the device and how to protect your family from it being a free connection to the internet. Nearly every video game system, portable gaming device, computer, mp3 player, cell phone, and tablet now has the ability to surf the internet. If it has a screen, assume that your family can use it to view pornography.

## **6. Don't wait.**

Choose the time to discuss specific topics on human sexuality with your children – do not let their friends choose the time. The Church has provided excellent tips and recommendations on age-appropriate discussions through the document, "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality." The USCCB and many solid Catholic psychologists have made us aware that the 5th or 6th grade is when many of these discussions begin in your children's social relationships. This is when young people have begun puberty and the sexual discussions and curiosity really takes off. Your child may be a late

bloomer, but they are often surrounded by kids who are developing. You want to be the first to have these discussions

### **7. Stay positive.**

Remember that human sexuality is a beautiful gift from God; a most precious gift that we should be protecting and saving for our spouse. It is not dirty, gross, or bad. Pay attention to your language and how you describe this beautiful gift. Furthermore, teens learn from rewards, not threats. Do not concentrate on mortal sin, sexually transmitted diseases, or pregnancy...these do not scare kids into being good. Rather, focus on the rewards of living a sexually pure life.

### **8. Surround your child with great Catholic adults.**

In Campus ministry I discovered that what kept college students from making bad moral decisions was often the fact that they would be letting down somebody at home; a parent, a youth minister, a priest, a coach, or some other adult from the parish. The adage, "Faith is more caught than taught" is true. Do everything you can to get your child active at the parish and surround them with Catholic adults who are modeling a love for and commitment to Christ.

### **9. Remain realistic.**

Each child is different. What works with one of your children may not work whatsoever with the next.

### **10. Share your stories.**

Many parents are not sure how to start conversations about human sexuality. Talk to your children about how you and your spouse met, how you fell in love, your marriage, your honeymoon, how you discovered you were pregnant, and the story of their delivery. Few boys know if they are circumcised. Few girls know if they were a natural delivery or C-section. These stories can lead into more important discussions about dating, true love, how babies are created, the miracle of life, etc.

### **11. Teach what is important.**

Contraception, abortion, masturbation, pornography, same sex attraction, etc. are important at the appropriate age and growth in human development. These topics are often being taught or discussed in secular venues, but are rarely taught by the Church. Parents should not be surprised if strong Catholic teens end up with a very secular understanding of sexuality as a result. It is up to you to make sure they understand the truth and beauty of human sexuality as God designed it.

### **12. Be their parent, not their friend.**

They need you to teach them the truth. They need you to set boundaries and stick to them.

### **13. Set a good example.**

If a movie, song, joke, or website is inappropriate for your teenager, then it is probably inappropriate for you.

### **14. Get to the sacraments on a regular basis.**

If your son or daughter is struggling with pornography or a sexual relationship, they will probably never tell you about it. However, if you participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis as a family, then your parish priest will assist you in guiding your child towards purity.

### **15. Your authority comes from God, not from your past behavior.**

Many parents feel that they cannot teach purity to their children because they made many mistakes during their high school and college years. Go to confession for your sins, and then help guide your child not to make the same mistakes. Nobody is perfect, but that does not mean that we cannot teach our children to strive for perfection.

#### **16. This is your job, Dad.**

Mothers are typically the parent that is most concerned about teaching the children about purity. They have a big role in teaching their daughters. However, boys need to hear from their dads and girls learn how to be treated by a man by watching how their fathers treat their mothers.

#### ***A closing challenge...***

“Some parents, seeking to protect their children’s innocence, go to great lengths to shield their children from any sexual information at all. This is foolish. What these parents forget is that there is a difference between innocence and ignorance. Children raised by parents who mistake the two are easy prey for those looking for a lamb to lead to the slaughter. I am aware of too many young men and women who led seemingly chaste lives while they lived with their parents but became seduced by the atmosphere of alcohol and sex that is alive and well on most college campuses. They simply do not have the tools to cope with these circumstances. Out from under their parents’ thumbs, these young adults first treat the sensuality and sin that surrounds them with suspicion, but once their initial shock wears off, they are too easily convinced to join the ride. They become like children set loose in a toy store.”

-Gregory K. Popcak, MSW, LCSW in “Beyond the Birds and the Bees”.

## **A Parents Responsibility** ***from theporntalk.com***

We believe in you. The team here has incredible faith in the power of a parent, especially when it comes to influencing and instilling values in their kids. We could have built a site offering technology to block your kids from looking at porn. We could have dedicated ourselves to just instructing young people on the dangers of porn or lobbying government bureaucracies. We could have done a ton of different things but we came to the conclusion from our research and findings that parents are the most significant factor in combating porn exposure. Sure all that other stuff is important but not nearly as important as your role in your child's life. Don't ever forget that. You're it. You're in charge.

Our children are a gift from the Almighty and with this gift comes enormous responsibility. Sadly to say, there has been a scary trend developing in our culture. Mom's and dad's have stopped being parents in lieu of being their kids friends. Your kids have enough buddies and pals. They don't need you to be cool, hip, or part of their posse. They need you to parent them. Lead them. Instruct them. Correct them and point them towards a healthy way of life.

### **A Parent's Basic Responsibilities: The Must List**

1. You must know what's going on in your child's life. Get in there and engage with your children no matter how much they fight it or try to isolate themselves from you. But what about their privacy? In most cases we have found that parents extend too much privacy to their kids. Place a higher value on parenting your kids than your child's right to privacy.
2. You must understand the basic issues at hand when it comes to pornography and kids' exposure to it. Keep learning and seeking out resources that will help you grow as a parent. This site is great but it's not enough. It's only the first step in the learning process.
3. You must have a basic working knowledge of the technology you are giving to your kids. You must also understand the dangers associated with that technology.
4. You must set boundaries, rules, and clear expectations with your kids. Especially when it comes to the computer, the Internet, and technology. Set rules and expectations and stick with them. Enforce accountability for actions.
5. You must be willing to have tough conversations involving tough issues. Someone is going to talk to your kids about porn. It's your choice whether or not it's going to be you or some other person you certainly would not approve of. You see there are pornographers who are more than willing to chat with your children about their product and its "benefits."
6. You must not give up your authority as a parent. You're in charge. Don't be a wimp. Grow a spine and get some courage. And listen, it's okay if your kid doesn't like you. You're meant to lead, not necessarily be liked. But it's always nice to have both.

7. You must not bury your head in the sand and live in a state of denial. “My precious one would never look at dirty pictures. My child isn’t interested in that type of stuff. He doesn’t know how to work a computer. They are involved in the church youth group so they know better.” These are statements heard from parents officially checked into the La La Land hotel. Denial is a dangerous thing folks. Deal in reality.
8. You must have an ongoing dialogue with your kids about pornography, the Internet, and healthy sexuality.
9. You must use whatever technology is available to you to help protect your family computers. There are some great companies out there offering some wonderful products that will help protect your kids and help you know better what is going on with their computer.

## **Porn Talk Tips**

### ***from theporntalk.com***

As parents we have the ability to be proactive. In the following section we will discuss various do's and don'ts when talking to your kids about the issue of pornography. The goal is to help you in your overall journey as you become more educated in the dangers of pornography, the internet, and the lack of communication between you and your kids.

## **Do**

### **Map out an appropriate plan.**

Talk to kids about sex from a very early age. Establishing an open and honest dialogue with your kids will create an atmosphere where they will come to you with questions. Do not wait until topics like dating and sex become major issues; decide your guidelines early and articulate them. In fact the earlier and more often the better!

### **Set guidelines for the internet.**

Only public chat rooms...

Keep computer in a highly visible area...

Time limits...

### **Be proactive about helping your teens make healthy choices when they use the internet! Give your kids alternatives on the internet.**

### **Do talk about dangers.**

Do talk about the dangers of the internet and pornography

### **Talk to your kids about their online activities and friends just as you would talk to them about their other activities.**

### **Discuss all avenues where pornography is being found.**

### **Encourage kids to come to you if they come across any material or messages online that make them feel uncomfortable.**

**Get connected** in your kids lives. Know what is happening in the major media that shapes their world. For example browse through *Rolling Stone* and *Entertainment Weekly* magazines, watch VH1. Sit down with your kids and watch what they are watching! Sit down at the computer and go right to MySpace, they need to know you know what's up! If they believe they can pull one over on you they will.



## **Listen...do not lecture.**

- Look at your teen when he or she talks to you. If your eyes are focused somewhere else it will look like your mind is elsewhere too.
- Eliminate distraction. Turn off the TV, etc.
- Listen with eagerness...lean forward.
- Repeat back to them some of the things they said... this is validating and confirming.

## **Provide a safe atmosphere for your teen to share.**

Show your appreciation, let them know you appreciate their sharing. Always build your child up. Compliment them on their wisdom and insight.

## **When it comes to pornography talk to teens like adults.**

Treat kids with respect and courtesy. Explore with them the differences between normal, healthy sexual expressions and the exploitive and deviant activity that is so prevalent online. Sexual predators live online. They are out to exploit and harm children. Explain to your kids the truth of what is happening today.

## **Discuss sexual messages in all media. Help your kids understand the impact that the media has on today's culture through their use of exploitive and degrading images of women and girls.**

## **Check up on them!!!**

## **When talking to your kids about porn in their world they want seven things from you.**

1. Your full attention
2. To be listened to from beginning to end
3. For their secrets to be kept
4. To express their feelings
5. To be asked their opinion
6. To hear about your own failures
7. To not be made fun of, to be judged or ridiculed

## **Give these things to them!**

# **Do Not...**

## **Don't overprotect teens.**

Instead, allow them to experience natural consequences. If they break something let them pay for it. Make sure your kids are fulfilling their commitments. This will help them learn the role of discretion in decision making. Do not fix everything for them. If you do, they will never learn what a consequence is and no consequence will be large enough to detour them when it comes time to make serious decisions about pornography. They will easily be swayed to participate in bad behavior simply because they misunderstand or somehow believe that they will not suffer bad consequences for their bad choices.

**Don't run for your life.**

When overwhelmed with the dangers of technology and media, some parents “overact” and do not allow any television or computers into their homes. This separation tactic actually ends up backfiring when teens occasionally slip out of the house or when they grow up and escape for good. They can then overload on all the forbidden fruit.

**Do not freak out! Do not overact!** Stay calm and collected when you are talking about sensitive issues.

**Don't interrupt. Even if you are not interested in the subject matter.**

**Don't give solutions unless they ask for them!**

**Don't crowd teens out of your life.**

Make time and space for them. If all you do is talk about you, your day, your work, your problems, kids feel left out and tend to find someone else to talk to or listen to. This may make your kids vulnerable to peer pressure and predators.

**Don't make rules you can't enforce.**

Say what you mean and mean what you say. If not, your word means nothing and they will not respect you.

**Don't be in denial.**

Face the truth. Kids today are exposed and they are smart, savvy, and getting more independent everyday. Parents who think their kids do not know how to use a computer are slowly finding out one by one that they do.