

Three Strategies to Help Girls Reject Porn

This article is taken from cpyu.org (Center for Parent/Youth Understanding). It is written by **Cassy Hulse** who, as a young girl, became addicted to porn.



Since opening up about my addiction, I've had the opportunity to hear from hundreds of women and teenage girls who have silently struggled with pornography addiction. In an effort to prepare parents to protect and guide their children, I offer 4 important strategies that I wish my own parents had known. I want you to be able to counter the dangers girls can face when dealing with pornography (these principles can generally be applied to helping boys as well).

#1. Regularly affirm that your daughter's worth is more than skin deep.

Although my parents never intentionally made me feel bad about how I looked, that was the message that I was receiving on a regular basis. Here's why: **All day, everyday, girls are being reminded of what is "good" about their body or appearance and what's "bad" about it.** The pressure to have a hot body, look sexy, etc. starts as early as elementary school. It's these social pressures that often drive girls to find both interest and temporary refuge in the world of pornography, only to have the social pressures enhanced a hundredfold by the images they see.

For me, that pressure was often too much to handle. Whether I was watching pornography to escape to a world where I could put myself in the "hot girl's" shoes or watching to see what I was "supposed" to look like, using pornography reinforced an unhealthy expectation of how I should see my body and how I should see the bodies of those around me.

It's important for your daughter to have a strong self-image, and in the beginning a lot of that influence lies with you, in both how you treat her and how you treat yourself. Tell your daughter, frequently, how beautiful she is (for example: Daughter: "Did, do you like my dress?" Dad: "That is a lovely dress you're wearing, but you look beautiful all the time")

According to Timothy Rarick, PhD, fathers play a huge role in contributing to their daughter's self-esteem. Daughters will often seek the same kind of love in future relationships that they received from their father. By being emotionally available (like frequently complimenting their daughters), and showing physical affection, fathers can often fill an emotional void that their daughters might end up trying to fill with harmful things like pornography later in life.

It's also important to focus on compliments that are not centered on appearance. Notice her talents and strengths and point them out to her on a regular basis. Help her to see that she has more to offer to the world than what her body looks like.

Finally, be a good role model—treat yourself like you would want her to treat herself. If you are constantly putting yourself down for how you look ("I'm so overweight," "I look horrible in a swimsuit"), then you can expect your child to develop that same attitude toward themselves. Self-love is a necessary trait. If you don't have self-love, it's very likely your daughter doesn't either, and it's very hard to receive and give love to others if you're struggling to feel love for yourself. One place to start is to be vocal about strengths, not insecurities or weaknesses.

#2. Combat isolation and fear by making it easy for your daughter to open up about her struggles or conce

When the time comes that she does open up to you, prove what you said to her in previous conversations by responding with love. You don't need to express punishment or disappointment because she's already expecting it and has most likely been feeling major disappointment and shame on her own. Opening up to you is one of the scariest things she's probably ever done, and the best thing you can do to help her is to:



- ◆praise her for her bravery and trust,
- ◆empathize with her plight, and
- ◆express your unconditional love for her.

No matter how much it feels like your world might be shattering when she tells you, I assure you that that moment will pass, but she will remember your reaction forever, and that's something you can't take back.

#3. Recognize that the many types of pornography girls use may not be the same as what boys use.

It is common knowledge that males are more visually stimulated than females are. Among other things, this has been a major contributor to the current cultural isolation that women and girls who are trapped in addiction to pornography may experience. For years, pornography has been seen as a guy problem but as we now know, it's a human problem. Take apples and oranges, for example—they look different, taste different, have different nutritional value, but in the end, they're both fruit. It's the same for pornography. Pornography can take various forms.

It's likely that your daughters have heard the same message that you've taught to your boys, but girls can still fall into the trap of pornography simply because they've been avoiding only one medium of it. You've taught them to stay away from "bad pictures" but it's very possible that your girls are struggling with "bad words" (although "bad videos" and "bad sounds" are becoming that main medium of pornography use).

Previously, the definition of pornography only applied to visual depictions of erotic acts. **Today, the definition includes all mediums of expressing erotic sexual behavior (Webster defines it here)** In the beginning, "bad words" played a huge part in creating my addiction. As I've spoken with countless other women about their struggles with pornography, every single one of them confirmed that this was a shared experience. Whether it's erotica found online, a romance novel picked up in the public library, or a text message (sexting), girls can be exposed and drawn to this form of verbal or textual pornography at an early age, and the best way to combat it is to make it a part of your conversation about pornography. Written pornography can be just as addictive and emotionally damaging as visual pornography, and it is generally far more appealing to women. Eventually, as dopamine levels decrease with repeated exposure to the same "drug" (erotic literature) that type of pornography can lead to a "harder drug".

As a young girl, I often rationalized that there was nothing wrong with what I was doing because I wasn't actually watching "bad" things. Don't let your daughters fall into that same trap. Awareness and communication are key in this battle. If you're aware of this danger, then you can make your daughter aware, and she'll be able to make wiser decisions based on recognition from the open communication and discussions you have with her.

Parents & Church together CAN protect our youth!