

Talking to Kids About Porn and Human Sexuality

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A growing concern today involves the role of pornography as the next generation's instructor in human sexuality. For many young people, pornography has become the only guide to sexuality they have ever known.

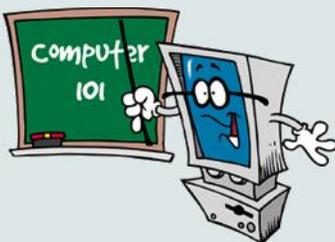
For Catholic parents, this raises the critical challenge of how best to approach these matters with their children, given that kids as young as 8 or 9 may already be acquiring information and viewpoints about human sexual behaviors from internet pornography. I would like to present six practical suggestions for parents, culled from parental testimonies and insights, from other experts in the field, and from ex-users of pornography.

First, steer away from “The Talk” toward a more integrated approach. Having “The Talk” relies on the misguided notion that parents have educational content or factual knowledge that they are duty-bound to try to deposit into their children's brains. This approach is not only awkward and paternalistic, but can convey a sense that sexual education is a one-time, get-it-over with ordeal. Kids require ongoing guidance and support from their parents—an expressed willingness to enter into these important discussions that stress the beauty of sexuality in marriage and what it is really for, rather than just telling them what not to do or scaring them away from sexually transmitted diseases.



Second, be attentive to opportune moments to share wisdom and stories. Because we live in a highly pornified culture, opportunities for parents to share and discuss important value assessments regarding human sexuality with their children arise often. Driving by a billboard with a risqué picture or seeing something on TV might, for example, serve as an opportunity to note how it's against the love of women to use them as sex objects. Passing through a part of town where prostitutes are plying their trade might spark a discussion about how many women involved in prostitution are victims of human trafficking and the vast majority wish they could break free of it, etc.

Third, avoid internet access in the bedroom. Sometimes parents will say, “The kids have access at school and everywhere else, so I let them have unrestricted access at home—they've got to learn how to handle it anyway.” But the home setting needs to differ from the outside world, serving as an oasis and a protected environment for children. If someone offered to install a pipe into our child's bedroom that could be turned on to pump in raw sewage, you would not agree to it. Yet, many parents fail to restrict what is entering their children's bedrooms through the internet and TV.



N.B. These are the first three points in Father's article. His fourth, fifth and sixth points will be featured in the October issue of this newsletter. To be continued.....