

FIGHT THE NEW DRUG'S

5 TIPS

TO FOLLOW WHEN TALKING TO TEENAGERS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY

1

BE AWARE

This is huge. Too often we hear parents say, “Not my kid,” or “My kid would never do that.” The sad reality is that the majority of teenage boys and a growing number of teenage girls are not only getting exposed to pornography but seeking it out. Hiding behind our fears and discomforts regarding this topic only perpetuates the issue. We have to wake up and recognize that it is more a part of our youth’s lives than ever before. Rather than hide from it we must deal with it head on and speak with our youth openly.

Most parents know very little about the issue of pornography. Very few know how prevalent it is among teenagers. They are unaware of the many ways in which teens access the content and how the pornography industry specifically targets youth. Parents rarely know that this issue is often times happening within the walls of their own homes. We know that nearly 80% of unwanted exposure to pornography takes place in the home.

It’s hard to prevent a problem from happening without awareness and understanding, which is why we encourage parents to take the first step by becoming aware and learning about the issue. As parents take active steps in educating themselves about the very real risks their children face with exposure to pornography, they put themselves in a better position to be able to offer council and comfort as their children seek help.

2

BE OPEN

A common myth surrounding “the talk” is the assumption that if you are open about the topic and discuss it with your teenagers they will become curious and get involved with pornography. The truth is actually quite opposite. Studies show that parents who are more willing and comfortable to talk to their teenagers about pornography are more likely to have teens equally as comfortable talking about the issue with them. When parents hide behind the issue and close the doors to communicate with their teens, their children are more likely to struggle with addictions down the road.

We often tell parents that if they don’t educate their kids about pornography the porn industry will. Young people are naturally curious about sex and will look for ways to learn about it. Traditionally, this was a one time discussion about the “birds and the bees”. We no longer live in a time or place where that is sufficient. This can no longer be a one-time event. In today’s world young people are bombarded with pornography.

If teenagers can feel like there is a culture of openness, trust, and transparency in their family they will be more willing to follow suit and be open with their parents.

It’s only natural to want to judge your own flesh and blood more harshly than you would others. When they have done something you find unacceptable it is difficult to avoid falling victim to a knee-jerk reaction and passing a swift and harsh judgment. We plead with parents to not judge. If parents remove judgment and fear from the conversation their teenagers will more likely come to them when they’ve come across pornography accidentally or if they’ve started to develop a habit of viewing regularly. Discuss it often, layer the discussion of healthy sexuality as they age, and look for opportunities to create more openness and honesty about the issue. This increases the chance that parents will be able to offer help in the moment their teen needs it most.

3

SCIENCE & FAMILY VALUES

Family values are essential. They define who we are and what we stand for. We rely on them to make good decisions and get through challenging situations. However, teenagers are at the age where they want to explore new horizons and question everything they've been taught. They start to rely less on family values and more on their peers and other media influences. The good ole' days of telling them they should do something just because they've been told are long gone. When it comes to teaching and educating teens, they need the "why" and if its not given to them they'll start distancing themselves from family and trusting in their judgments less.

Currently, we generally do a good job openly talking about drugs and the harmful effects associated with use. We are taught the "why" at an early age. We talk about how smoking will turn your teeth yellow and heroin will mess up your life. But when it comes to pornography, most parents only approach it from a moral standpoint, shying away from hard facts. The problem: teens need facts. They need to know "why" pornography is harmful and how it can negatively impact the rest of their lives.

We recommend that parents blend their family values with the power of scientific evidence. The more concrete reasons kids have to NOT participate, the more likely they won't. Give them the "why" and not just... "because I told you so".

4

ESTABLISH AN AGREEMENT

Parents should establish an agreement with their teenagers with regards to Internet use in the home. The word to emphasize here is 'establish'. Whether that means setting time limits or establishing rules for guided use, that's a decision each household must make. But make the decision concrete. Even the most defiant teens often recognize that principle that rules generally exist for their safety, even if they choose not to admit it. Establishing an agreement feels less authoritative while still showing them that their parents care how they view it, how often they view it, and when they view it. Establishing media standards in the home can also help by decreasing exposure to inappropriate material.

5

SUPERVISE DEVICES

All parents should be aware of the many ways their kids get access to pornography. Most parents understand that pornography can be viewed through computer internet access but few realize that it can also be accessed through the TV, an iPod, iPad, cell phone, most gaming devices, Blu-ray players or any other internet enabled device. It's important that parents are supervising the use of all devices in the home. Remember that all supervising of devices has to be done with the right intent. Parents are responsible to protect their teens, not police them. If they feel policed then the effectiveness of supervision, including filtration tools, can have a negative effect.

