



# LEARNING ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY

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# 1. WHY A BOOK ON PORNOGRAPHY?

## What is pornography?

'Sexually explicit' representations include images of female or male nudity or semi-nudity, implied sexual activity and actual sexual activity (literary or graphic) that is intended to arouse.

Pornography saturates our society and surrounds our children.

## Where and how are children exposed to porn?

Try making a list before reading the following.

The internet may be the most obvious answer. Both paid and amateur free pornography is available on your child's laptop, tablet, iPhone and every other device.

What about the apps on their phones? Many like Instagram, YouTube, Musical.ly, even Snapchat can lead to porn sites<sup>1</sup>. Do you know what apps your child has access to on the phone?

Children may produce what they think are harmless pictures. But these selfies can very easily turn into explicit and pornographic pictures, and can lead to cyberbullying.

Many online games and video games have explicit sexual material. Have you checked what your child is playing?

You may think comics are harmless. No! There are some genres such as hentai and anime comics that could have sexual content.

And then there is TV, advertising, magazines, music videos, and even erotic literature. And recently, the onset of virtual reality camming.

## At what age are children usually exposed to porn?

You may want to protect your child. But, researchers tell us that the average age at which children first see porn is 12 years old<sup>2</sup>. It is probably even lower.

## Why is pornography so dangerous?

Seeing unfamiliar-looking bodies engaging in acts that a child cannot understand is a confusing and frightening experience.

1. Gallacher, C & Jenson, K 2017, 'Keep kids safe! How pornography will target your kids in 2017', *Protect Young Minds*, January 5, <https://protectyoungminds.org/2017/01/05/keep-kids-safe-2017/>

2. 'Pornography statistics: 2015 report', *Covenant Eyes*, <http://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>

A child can experience an automatic sexual arousal-like bodily reaction at the sight of pornography, which can confuse them into thinking they 'like' what they see, when in fact their bodies are reacting instinctively without the 'approval' of their brain. Or else they may be frightened and feel guilty and ashamed, not able to tell anyone because they don't have the words to describe it.

They may even start acting out sexualised behaviours with other children.

## Will my discussing porn with my child make him/her want to experiment with it?

No. Research indicates that children whose parents have discussed the dangers of porn use are less likely to search it out<sup>3,4</sup>; or be affected by what they see. Children who have been prepared by their parents and carers to understand what porn is and how to deal with it are likely to<sup>5</sup>:

- experience less shock. Kids think, 'I've heard of this before. My parents told me about this!'
- feel more trust. Their parents told them this would happen and it did! This leads them to believe their parents care enough about them to prepare them for challenges they might face.
- have more confidence. They know how to use their thinking brain and are able to look away from images that will harm them. They know they don't need to be ashamed of any of the ways pornography made them feel.
- report their experience. They know the word pornography and they know they won't be in trouble when they tell their parents they saw it.
- feel connected. They know what to say and who to tell. They don't feel alone.

In other words, kids who have been warned about pornography are prepared to reject it when they see it!

This is why we wrote this book.

3. Watson, G 2015 'Research shows early parent-child talks on pornography effective', Texas Tech University, <http://today.ttu.edu/posts/2015/01/research-shows-early-parent-child-discussions-on-pornography-effective>

4. Jenson, K 2015, 'Do porn talks work? New study gives hope to parents', *Protect Young Minds*, February 19, <https://protectyoungminds.org/2015/02/19/do-porn-talks-work-new-study-gives-hope-to-parents/>

5. Gallacher, C 2017 'The #1 reason parents fail to warn kids about pornography', *Protect Young Minds*, March 9, <https://protectyoungminds.org/2017/03/09/warn-kids-about-pornography/>



## 2. WHAT WILL THIS BOOK DO?

This book will help you to discuss:

- what pornography is, and what it is not (pp. 3–6)
  - the difference between good sex as God meant it to be and sex as portrayed in pornography (pp. 7–11)
  - places where the child may be exposed to pornography (pp. 12–13)
  - the reasons why pornography is unhealthy (pp. 14–17)
  - the effect pornography has on the brain (pp. 18–21)
  - how a child should respond if exposed to pornography (pp. 22–28).
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## 3. GUIDELINES FOR USE AND HELPFUL RESOURCES

As a parent or carer, you need to understand the dangers of pornography use before you start the conversation with your child.

*Protect Young Minds* is an excellent website for resources on dealing with pornography issues: <https://protectyoungminds.org>

*Common Sense Media* is a site that describes and rates movies, games, apps, TV shows, websites, books and music: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

*Educate Empower Kids* is another useful site: <https://educateempowerkids.org/>

There are two ways to protect your child from the effects of porn:

- Firstly, you can set up external blocks and filters on devices and phones. Some of these are described in the document '[Cybersmart Parenting](#)' attached here as a PDF document.
- Secondly, and more importantly, you need to provide your child with an internal filter, that will enable a child to recognise porn, be aware of its effects and be empowered to deal with it. This is what this book will assist you to do.



## 4. TEACHING MOMENTS IN THIS BOOK

### PAGES 3-7 A DEFINITION OF PORNOGRAPHY

Children need to hear from you what pornography is and why it is not good for them.

Here are some messages. You can frame these to fit the emotional maturity of your child.

- Curiosity is normal and a desire for knowledge of sexual matters is healthy. Never shame a child for being curious.
- Pornography is pictures or videos of people with little or no clothes on, usually doing things that are sexual to their own or another person's body.
- These people may be actors or couples doing it just so they can have people look at them. There is rarely any love or caring involved.
- A large proportion of pornography involves people being violent, and other rare sexual activities<sup>6</sup>.
- Pornography is the complete opposite of the healthy sexual activity between a man and woman who are married and have promised to love and care for each other.
- Your body and brain may react to these. There is no reason to feel guilty or ashamed about this. It is a normal reaction.
- You may feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or sick to your stomach. Or else you may feel excited and curious. Your body may feel tingly (an automatic response to nakedness and sexual activity).
- If you see pornography, you must never keep it a secret. Talk about it with me (us).

**Activity:** Collect pictures and videos of the family and discuss how these are good and healthy pictures. You *do not have to show kids unhealthy pictures for them to be able to recognise them.*

**Discuss:** What makes a picture unhealthy? Ask if they have seen this kind of picture before. (TV? Music videos? Billboards? Did they see anything on their device? Did a friend show them anything?)

6. 'Pornography Statistics: 2015 Report', *Covenant Eyes*, <http://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>

### Phrases you may have to explain

Page 3: 'Many of these pictures that aren't good and healthy have to do with sex' You may like to discuss that this is because these pictures and videos don't show sex as a loving and caring act between a man and woman in marriage as God intended it to be. You don't want your child to feel that all sex is bad and unhealthy.

Page 7: You have probably discussed the genitals in an earlier book. If you have not, this is something you need to do now. Use the diagrams of [male](#) and [female](#) genitals.

### PAGES 8-11 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD SEX AS GOD MEANT IT TO BE AND SEX AS PORTRAYED IN PORNOGRAPHY

This is an opportunity for you to review with your child the joy and purpose for sex as God created it. This is best covered in 'Learning about Sex'.

**Activity:** Draw two columns and write down 'Sex as God made it' in one and 'Pornography sex' in the other. Using the text in these pages, help the child to understand why pornography sex is the complete opposite to sex as God intended in marriage between a man and a woman.

If you think the child is mature enough, you may want to discuss the following points:

- Most pornography is produced by people who are actors. They are not actually involved in or enjoying what they are doing.
- Some pornography production is associated with sex trafficking<sup>7</sup> (be careful however as this is a difficult concept for a child to think about).

**Activity:** Share some of your child's favourite Bible stories that describe how Jesus loved people in difficult circumstances.

7. 'An online epidemic: The inseparable link between porn and human trafficking (infographic)', *Fight the New Drug*, <http://fightthenewdrug.org/the-internet-can-be-a-very-unsexy-place-we/>



## PAGES 12–13 PLACES WHERE YOUR CHILD MAY BE EXPOSED TO PORNOGRAPHY

**Activity:** Repeat and explain to your child the definition of pornography.

Ask them where they have seen these types of pictures and/or videos. (Prompt: see ‘Why a book on pornography?’ earlier in this resource.)

Ask them how it made them feel.

Assure the child that they should not be ashamed or afraid to talk to you about what they see.

## PAGES 14–17 THE REASONS WHY PORNOGRAPHY IS UNHEALTHY

To make the most of this section you need to have shared the books ‘Me and My Body’ and ‘Learning about Sex’.

**Activity:** Go back to the activity you did earlier on ‘Sex as God made it’ and ‘Pornography sex’. Talk about this with your child.

## PAGES 18–21 THE EFFECT PORNOGRAPHY HAS ON THE BRAIN

To make the most of this section, you need to have read the book on ‘Me and My Brain’.

**Activity:** Identify the ‘feeling brain’ and ‘thinking brain’ in the [diagram](#).

**Discuss** why looking at pictures and videos of people without clothes doing things may make the child feel a range of emotions: yucky, afraid, embarrassed, excited, ashamed and many other feelings. (Helpful prompt: this is the feeling brain reacting quickly to the body and activity.)

Explain how these pictures and videos, because they cause these feelings, can get fixed in the brain and be difficult to forget. To forget them, they should do two things:

- Firstly, talk to a trusted adult
- Secondly, do something interesting to take their mind off what they have seen.

**Activity:** Ask the child to think of a food they love.

Now encourage the child to do something else interesting to get their mind to think about something else. Better still, do this with the child.

Now, go back and ask them how they feel about the food.

Discuss how doing something else used the ‘thinking brain’ and that pushed the feeling brain emotions to the back. This is how it is with pornography too.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Pornography addiction ‘The science of pornography addiction’, AsapScience, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ya67aLaaCc>
- An article on the impact of pornography on children: ‘The impact of pornography on children’, American College of Pediatricians, <http://www.acped.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/the-impact-of-pornography-on-children>

## PAGES 22–28 HOW A CHILD SHOULD RESPOND IF EXPOSED TO PORNOGRAPHY

Read the book ‘Me and My Brain’ with your child.

Read (for yourself) the following article:

Kristen Jenson, 2015, ‘Ultimate parent hack: Teach kids to use their “Thinking brain”’, *Protect Young Minds*, <https://protectyoungminds.org/2015/04/02/ultimate-parent-hack-teach-kids-to-use-their-thinking-brain/>

**Activity:** Practise the steps your child should take if confronted with pornography (remind the child that this could happen by accident when they are looking for something on their laptop or iPhone; or somebody could show them pornography).

Step 1: *Recognise* that it is not good.

Say aloud ‘This is not good for me, it is pornography/porn’.

Step 2: *Remove* yourself from it.

Turn away.

Put the device or TV off. If you cannot (as when you are with friends), leave the room. Or look away until you can leave.

Step 3: *Replace* the thoughts and feelings with other things:

- Talk to someone you trust.
- Do something you enjoy.
- Instruct your thinking brain to take charge.

## CONCLUSION

This book has covered difficult material. Why not end on a light note by singing a song or playing a game. Some suggestions are:

- ‘Jesus loves me’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-ryg9plBM4>
- ‘A gift to you’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3iG1gkW9R0>

