

What to do • What to do • What to do

When Children Seek Out Pornography: Ask...

If you realize that your child has been purposely viewing pornography . . .

The realization for parents that their child has viewed pornography is often difficult and challenging. Parents must address the situation and actively participate in the solutions. Children mistakenly understand parental silence to be support and endorsement for inappropriate activities.

Initial discussion starters may be:

- “I have noticed inappropriate images (pornography) on our computer and...”
- “I am interested in what you know about this.”
- “I want to get to the bottom of this and need your help.”
- “I am concerned about the effects this may have on us. We need to talk about it.”

Remember that children are bombarded with sexualized messages and images in media each day.

They can become desensitized to their inappropriateness and harmful effects. Images and messages offensive to parents may seem a normal part of culture to children. (Parents often hesitate to begin conversations about sexuality.)

These questions may help parent use media for family discussion:

Who’s behind it?

Who’s responsible for this song, commercial, television show or movie? What is their motivation -- to amuse, entertain or persuade? Why did they choose to make it this way? (US Department of Health and Human Services)

Who’s in front of it?

To whom is this message directed? Young people or old people? Males or females? How can you tell? What clues does it give you? Does this message rely on stereotypes about different groups of people? (US Department of Health and Human Services)

What do they want from you?

How does this song, movie, television show or commercial make you feel? Is this on purpose? Why would strangers want to make you feel this way? What might they get out of it? What’s being left out? (US Department of Health and Human Services)

What values does it portray or support?

What values of our family are portrayed or supported in this song, movie, television show or commercial? What values of our family are disrespected or disregarded? Who is being harmed? How can we change this?

What to do • What to do • What to do

Strategies for Effective Family Communication:

Know your own issues and how they contribute to your reaction. Process the situation with someone you trust and decide your approach before speaking with your child. This support will help you stay calm, firm and compassionate with your child.

Utilize Non-Verbal Communication Cues

- Use open body gestures. Avoid crossing your arms, pointing your finger or putting hands on your hips. Use positive facial expressions—smile and nod affirmations. If needed, sit or kneel to be at eye-level with your child.

Establish Clear Expectations

- State your values. Don't assume your child knows what is important to you.
- Decide non-negotiable limits. Strive to negotiate the others.
- Write down expectations, limits and action plans.

Use an Upbeat Tone in Your Voice and Speak Slowly

- While emotions provide valuable information, try to keep them from overwhelming conversations.
- Volume often affects the meaning of your words.

Use Active Listening Skills

- Stop any other activity you are doing.
- Look at your child.
- Listen and avoid interrupting.
- Comment on what you heard.

Seek Professional Help

- Trust your instincts. If repeated viewing is suspected or if family communication strategies seem ineffective.



Photos By Corbis©