

MEN RESTORED

NINE

Helpful Tips On

Talking to Your Son About Pornography



The Conversation That Could Change Everything

Talking to your son about pornography can be a challenge. It doesn't have to be. While a parent can range from extreme discomfort to the ease of bringing this up, this conversation is essential for young people in today's world.

There's a more-than-likely chance your son has either been exposed to it or is actively consuming it. This will probably not be the first time he's talked about it.

But it will be the first time you do. I understand this is difficult and know it can be nerve-wracking. When I started talking to my son, I felt it all!

Based on a conversation I had with a good friend, here are some tips to help.



"Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions."

-U.S. Department of Justice

"Research reveals many systemic effects of Internet pornography that are undermining an already vulnerable culture of marriage and family. Even more disturbing is the fact that the first Internet generations have not reached full-maturity, so the upper-limits of this impact have yet to be realized."

-Jill Manning, Sociologist

"A warm and communicative parent-child relationship is the most important factor [in reducing porn use among children]. In addition, open parent-child channels for communicating about sexual and media experiences, sex education at home or school, and parental participation with children on the Internet are constructive influences. Finally, for boys already at risk for antisocial behavior, parents should carefully monitor and severely limit access to pornography on file-sharing networks and elsewhere."

-Dr. Patricia M. Greenfield

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1 Normalize Talking About Healthy Sexuality

The leading factor I have found in talking to men about a pornography habit (because this is my story) is shame. It alone is powerful enough to keep even the strongest from bringing it up in conversation.

Our world is bent on normalizing the consumption of pornography in our society. Pornography sex is not normal sex. Pornography is not normal nor a form of healthy sexuality.

A conversation about healthy sexuality for a son best starts with his father, who should be modeling it for him. Of course, if both parents are in the home, it should also include mom and dad. At the very least, it should be with dad when possible.

2 Create a Safe Container

If young boys live anything in those crucial years, it is the balance of feeling safe around the people he spends time with. As parents, he should not have to question whether you are safe for him to talk to.

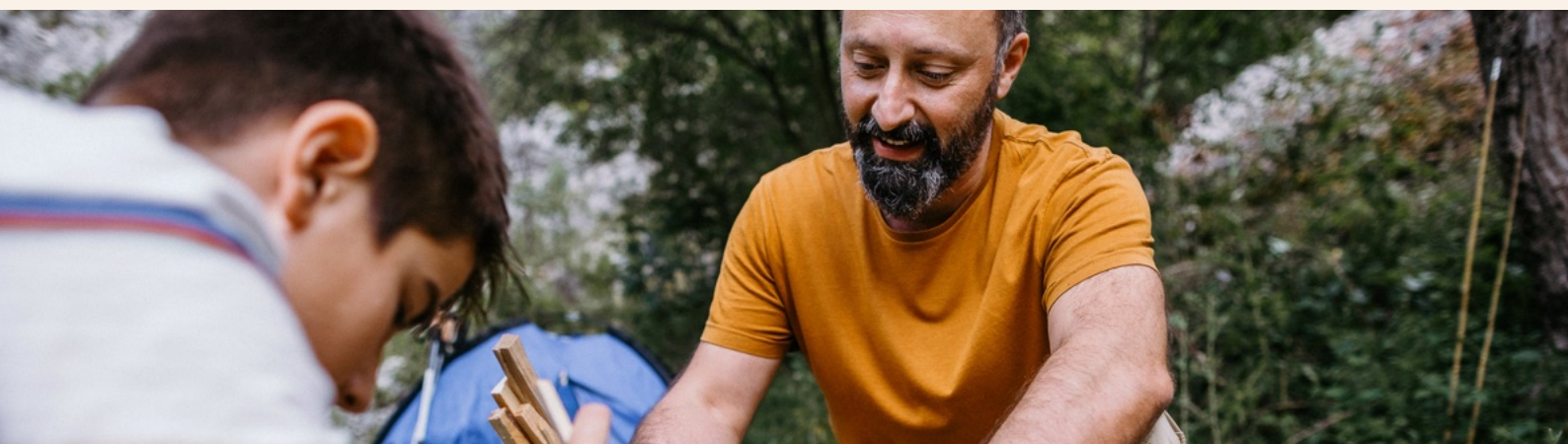
Home should definitely be a place he is free to speak unfiltered, bring up things that feel scary, or bring shame. The door should be open for conversation to happen whenever he needs it.

One result of his knowing about and experiencing a safe emotional container is his vulnerability. And mom or dad, when you see him open up – affirm him! Affirm the risk it took to share a part of himself with you: "Son (or his name), saying what you just did wasn't easy. Thank you." It's no more complicated than that! And it will go a long way to strengthen the connection you have with him.

3 Plan the Environment

This one is closely connected to the previous tip. Make sure there's nothing pending in the immediate future, i.e., sports practice or school event. Be where he is comfortable in the home. Is it the front porch? The kitchen table? His favorite food for a meal might also help.

If there are siblings, try and plan to not have them in the house. Of course, depending on their ages, do your best if they must stay home, so distraction is minimized – do everything in your power as a parent to keep dialogue private so no else can hear the conversation. Relaxation is key for this tip.



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4 Be Transparent

One way to make sure he is in a safe environment is to risk being vulnerable yourself. Tell your story, if you have one, of how your compromised sexuality – whether it was a series of bad choices as a teenager with partners or consuming pornography.

He will likely respect what you have to say more and trust you to be whom you say you are. Obviously, there is a chance this could go wrong. That is why it's a risk.

5 It's Not About Pornography

It's not – as much as we want our sons to stop and as much as we know why. Consuming pornography is a form of intimacy.

The foundation to healthy sexuality is healthy intimacy. This is especially true for a son to see modeled by his parents. It's true for sons and daughters in general.

Whether he can express it or not, your son needs to know the deeper reasons why pornography is so appealing, beyond the thrills and excitement of finding "forbidden material."

Gaining the skill of non-sexual intimacy will help him learn how to be present for friends of both genders early in life and in the workplace when he is on his own. Personally, this one was the hardest for me growing up.

6 Treat This Like Peanuts and Loaded Guns

Allow me to ask a couple of questions:

- Knowing your son had a peanut allergy, would you let him go to school without educating him on the importance of avoiding being around peanuts during lunch?
- Would you allow your son to casually carry a loaded weapon without spending hours teaching him proper gun safety?

The answer to both questions is a resounding "NO." The similarities carry over to consuming pornography. It is just as dangerous and can have life-altering (even life-threatening) consequences. Decide as a parent whether your son can handle something this risky.

This goes beyond adding filters or scrutinizing his phone usage. Those are helpful, but they will last only as long he is under your roof and directly within your sphere of influence.

The power of a 6-inch screen is every bit as dangerous as one peanut to the person deathly allergic to it or a single bullet exploded out the barrel of a pistol to the chest.

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7

Try the Indirect Approach

This tip may require some extra patience. Find out about his world. Be curious and allow him to approach the topic (or at least the realm) at his pace.

In fact, the conversation may carry over to another one. The risk here is as a parent staying in the vague space becomes the comfortable space.

The goal of this conversation is not more data. It's connection with your son and encouraging more dialogue. And it's in the context of your relationship he will find courage and feel the safety of sharing.

8

Mom, Share the Female Side

Most sons don't want to hurt their moms. Share the feelings of being objectified. Even if you haven't experienced it yourself, there is power in bringing in the woman's side here.

Share how it could feel for girls and women to be seen as objects to consume rather than human beings to relate to and who have feelings and dreams.

9

Begin to Move Away From Only Consuming

Boys need to know that constantly consuming isn't the answer – in fact too many grown men need to learn as well! Mom, dad, are you going to step up and begin with the shift yourselves to produce more than you consume?

As noted in tip eight above, human beings are not for consuming! And, pornography feeds the consumption beast almost more than anything else on the planet right now.

This tip can help pivot the discussion from avoiding pornography to finding creative ways to do other things together. The sky is the limit when it comes to what a family can do together and no one knows the moment a boy makes a shift from consumer to producer in his head. It will eventually manifest itself in his favorite activities.

Remember, these tips are meant to get you sitting down together. They aren't meant to be hard and fast rules, but a way to at least begin the conversation. Think of it this way: starting is better than not having started and talking openly about it is better than the vast majority of parents who never do. Be patient – you have the time and time with you should be what he values.

Make his valuable time worth it.



Help Isn't Far Away

Making a plan for this crucial conversation will help ensure its success and a stronger relationship with your son. Let's talk and together, help make it great.

That conversation I mention at the beginning?
You can find it at FreeIndeedPodcast.com

www.MenRestored.com

Mike@MenRestored.com