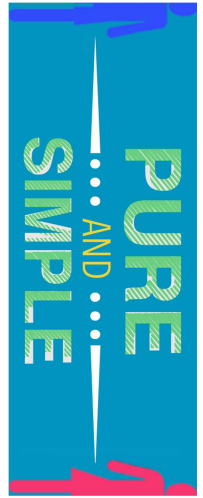


## WHAT TO TALK ABOUT

- **The culture could destroy your child's life.** The negative realities of having sex with someone you aren't married to should be talked about, even if they are not a focus. Pornography can quickly become habitual for adolescents and a beginning to seeing others only as objects for their gratification. Pornography cheapens the reality of sex and can fracture any future meaningful relationship.
- **Your children's souls are worth it!** Ultimately it is not a no, but a YES to GOD. A yes to their dignity as they were created and yes to the beauty and dignity of the sexual embrace between husband and wife as God intended.
- **Your kids want you to help them.** For a child, the most important people in their lives are their parents (even if they never admit it). So, when your child initiates a conversation about sex, relationships, or any other important topic - drop everything else and focus whatever time you need to listen. This starts from the earliest ages and continues through life.
- **This should not be a one-time conversation, but an ongoing series of conversations.** So, make sure this isn't the only topic of conversation you talk with your kids about. Spend time talking about their lives, likes, and dislikes in order to teach your kids communication within the framework of the family. There is no "birds and bees talk" that covers everything. Make this formation a part of your family.
- **Be ok with the conversation feeling a bit awkward or your own limitations.** Do your best and give your child what you have. There is nobody else who can take your place in this conversation.
- **It isn't about you.** Your own personal sexual baggage need not be a part of the conversation nor should it ever keep you from talking to your kids about sex.
- **Teach them what love really is.** True love = choosing what is best for another, despite what it might cost me. This kind of love is not easy, but worth it. It takes sacrifice and effort and it is the kind of love we are created by and for. This is the kind of love that says "yes" to loving another person, by not having sex until marriage. Your goal isn't to impose an external control, but to bring about an internal conversion.
- **Focus on what is most important.** While you need to talk about biology, the conversations you have with your children should focus on God's plan for our lives, character, virtue, morality, and relationships. Not biology.
- **Teach them the "big picture" of sex, using the language of gift and love found in the Church's teachings on sexuality.** There is a reason God made us sexual beings and a healthy human is a person who has integrated their sexuality in a healthy manner. We need to teach our kids how to do this.
- **Our bodies are a reflection of God.** We are made in God's image and likeness and this includes our bodies, not merely our souls. Our bodies and passions can be used for great good (imaging God, worship, love, etc.) or great evil. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit made for good.
- **Sex has a dual purpose.** As the Church has always taught, there is a dual purpose to sex - babies and bonding (aka- unitive and procreative purposes of sex). Talk about both.



## **Talking to Your Kids About Pornography**

Pornography is the most dangerous epidemic for our children today. As parents we must recognize this and face it head on.

When speaking to a child who has seen pornography remember:

1. Stay calm- in most cases the initial contact with pornography is accidental and more a form of sexual abuse on the part of those who look to promote this type of material.
2. Remember, the typical response after having viewed is one of shame, sadness, and very often depression.
3. Tell them you love them and you want to share with them the true joy of sexuality and to protect them from any harm.
4. Remind them first that:
  - a. Pornography can quickly become habitual for adolescents and a beginning to seeing others only as objects for their gratification. Pornography is a counterfeit to love and sexuality that is devoid of a lasting or meaningful relationship. They may not realize it until it's too late. Once they get addicted they will feel compelled to keep doing it, not in control, and that it is too hard to stop.
  - b. Pornography cheapens the reality of sex and can fracture any future meaningful relationship. Eventually the things that would naturally create sexual excitement will no longer have that effect. A boy or girl will no longer be able to see in their future spouse the beauty of God's creation.
5. From here begin what would normally be a part of "The Talk"
  - a. Use positive language to describe sex.
  - b. Remind them that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore we all need to be protected in our dignity and not be seen merely as objects to use for pleasure.
  - c. Continue learning as parents this sacramental language. Go to <http://ascensionpress.com/> and <http://www.covenanteyes.com/blog/for-parents/> more resources.
6. Remember this is an ongoing conversation that must be kept up over time. Your child's recovery depends on you. You may not be able to keep them from viewing it again, but you can shape them and the foundation on which they stand. If this is an open conversation then you will have the opportunity to address them again. Be sure to recognize when addiction appears or if there is one already present. In some cases it may be necessary to consult a psychologist trained in this area.