

# Safe Environment of the Archdiocese

October, 2018

Newsletter



## ARCHBISHOP COAKLEY:

"In 2002, the bishops of the United States met to address the scourge of sexual abuse of minors committed by clergy. Meeting in Dallas, the bishops produced and endorsed the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Charter establishes a framework for educating, monitoring and report abuse committed by clergy. It is a pledge of greater oversight, accountability and transparency in dealing with these crimes. It is a step in the right direction "

(Statement issued July 20, 2018)

Archbishop's statement on the left serves as a reminder to us all of our obligation to educate about abuse, monitor our procedures in keeping children safe and to report even the suspicion of abuse.

## Did you know that the State of Oklahoma, starting on November 1st, has changed its law on reporting

Existing law requires every person having reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 is a victim of abuse or neglect to report the matter *promptly* to DHS. On November 1st the law will require us to report the suspicion of abuse *immediately*.

This may seem like a minor distinction but it is an important one. We are all required to report *immediately* (HB2259, Section 1(B)(1)). The law continues in Section 1(B)(2)(a) to specify that "every teacher having reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 is a victim of abuse or neglect to report the matter *immediately* to DHS.

The law specifically identifies teachers (which includes catechists) as having this serious obligation. Therefore, please advise your catechists and Catholic school teachers of this change. If they suspect abuse of any kind, **there cannot be a delay** in reporting.



## OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

The September 23rd issue of the *Daily Oklahoman* had an article about "adverse childhood experiences" (ACE). The article stated, "State health officials said recent studies show **Oklahoma ranks as the worst in the nation** when it comes to the number of adverse childhood experiences. Such experiences include neglect and abuse, drug use in the home, exposure to domestic violence...". The article goes on to say that "a child with several adverse child-

hood experiences is more likely to do poorly in school, get in trouble with the law as a juvenile or adult and may have a reduced life expectancy."

In the March, 2018 Newsletter I wrote of a new organization called *Palomar*. If you know of someone who is a victim of abuse or domestic violence, Palomar brings together a multi-disciplinary team in one location. For further information visit: [www.palomarokc.org](http://www.palomarokc.org)

In addition, a new hotline was established last year called “**Stronghearts Native Helpline**”. It is geared towards helping American Indian and Alaska Native women, since there are unique challenges they face, such as tribal sovereignty and jurisdiction issues.

The helpline reaches people in OK, Kansas and Nebraska. The advocates who answer the helpline understand American Indian culture, tribal sovereignty and jurisdiction issues. Here is the link to the website: [www.strongheartshelpline.org](http://www.strongheartshelpline.org)



As you know, annually in April, we provide an in-service for all of our Safe Environment Facilitators and other parish staff members. The date has been set for this event. Please put on your calendar:

***April 4, 2019***

If you were at last year’s in-service you may remember our speaker Father Sean Kilcawley recommended several books. One was Good Pictures, Bad Pictures, Porn Proofing our Kids. The co-author of that book is Gail Poyner, a clinical psychologist from Choctaw, OK. I am happy to announce that she has

consented to be our speaker on April 4th. We will begin with registration at 9:00am, presentation at 9:30am and adjournment at Noon.



**New to the newsletter is th Kudo’s Corner!** We have several facilitators who stand out to me from my time answering their questions, cleaning up the database, searching parish websites, and parish site visits. I wish to acknowledge their hard work and dedication to the SE Program

**The Norman Ninja’s** - Aimee Bradley (St Mark’s), Jerry Lang (All Saint’s School), Marlene Stapp (St Joseph’s), and Marcia Messner (St Thomas More) joining forces and scheduling 14 trainings between now and December to tackle volunteers trained prior to 2014. Outstanding teamwork!

**Database Diva** Marlene Stapp (St Joseph’s, Norman) for maintaining a clean and well-organized database! Awesome job!

**Wonder Women** Maria Villines (St. Mary, Ponca City) and Mariavis Fitzmorris (St John Nepomuk, Yukon) in-

cludes the monthly SE newsletter on the parish’s website. Wonderful!

**High school Honors** Bishop McGuiness staff have already retrained on the 2014 DVD and paperwork! A+ BMHS!

**Thank you, Fr. Byrd at Epiphany,** for including the USCCB SE logo with the Oklahoma and Archdiocesan reporting contact information, Circle of Grace information and ministries requiring SE training with the parish directories!

Great Job parishes and facilitators! Each month, I will list other great ideas and work that I have observed or brought to my attention. Keep up the great work to ensure the safety of all children and vulnerable adults!

**FYI:** I have been making site visits to several parishes. If you need help with files, training or database, please contact me to get on the schedule. It is my goal to visit all of you before May.

***Maggie Beckham***

# The Real Experts (Kids!) Inspire Parents to Talk About Porn

by Marilyn Evans

[www.protectyoungminds.org](http://www.protectyoungminds.org)



If only you could peek into a child's mind when talking to them about the dangers of pornography! Are they feeling anxious or upset? Is the conversation making them more curious? Today you're in luck! **We've got answers to those questions (and more) from six field experts — real kids! — who share how learning about pornography has helped them.** Plus, hear their advice for other kids and parents!

The families we talked with have been discussing pornography in their home for at least three years. Their children now range in age from 5 to 14, and they were first taught about pornography between the ages of 2 and 11.

Each of the parents had a slightly different motivation for providing kids with a safe place to discuss this important topic. Janelle (name changed) admits it was a trial by fire for her. At first she wasn't comfortable bringing up the subject at all. **In time, she realized something needed to change if she wanted to protect her kids.**

## Janelle's story

"Four years ago I would have said, *'I'd rather have my teeth pulled than talk to my kids about pornography.'* I couldn't wrap my head around the idea that this could be a family discussion. Today, I have a completely different perspective. Let me explain why I think every parent, no matter how awkward or inadequate they feel, should start this conversation today

For many years **my husband and I were oblivious to the fact that our older kids were struggling with pornography.** Although different experiences lead them to look, they were only between 9 and 11 years of age when they were first exposed. From there, they discovered that pornographic content could be easily accessed through our home computer.

I really can't describe the flood of emotions I felt when we found out. I was shocked and devastated. Angry with my kids for what they were looking at, but also **angry with myself for letting it happen.** The silver lining was that our kids wanted help. Looking back, I know we were extremely blessed that they found the courage to come to us.

At first we thought it was enough to closely monitor their online activities. But over and over again, the pull of pornography won out. Each setback meant our kids felt a renewed sense of shame and failure. One day it occurred to me that I was trying to solve a problem that I still thought was taboo to discuss. **If we were going to tackle this as a family I had to get over my inhibitions, and face**

I began looking for information — anything that would help me know why my kids were struggling. I desperately wanted to know what I could do to help them. Eventually I found the book **Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn Proofing Today's Young Kids.** Reading this was the first of many steps our family has taken to help protect our kids from the harms of pornography.

The more I understood how and why the young mind is vulnerable to pornography, the braver I became at talking openly about this subject. Admittedly the conversations with our kids weren't always perfect—or easy. Yet as we talked, my husband and I found better ways to support our children in their efforts to overcome this dangerous habit.

**The experience we've had with our kids was a wake up call I don't wish on anyone.** There were times when we were overwhelmed and sought additional counselling. Now that our younger children are approaching adolescence, I can't imagine not giving them a plan and a safe place to talk about the harms of pornography. My first priority is to prepare them well. I've made sure they know what pornography is, why it is harmful, and that they can come to us with any concern. Talking openly has given our family the confidence to make smart choices."

## Getting over the initial fear of talking to kids about pornography

Getting past the natural resistance to talking about this can take a parenting leap of faith. Many parents worry that their own awkwardness or inexperience with this subject could do more harm than good. **To put your mind at ease, listen to the following advice from six awesome kids!**

### Advice from a 5-year-old girl

“My mom taught me that pornography is pictures of taking your underwear and clothes off, not for a shower, but around other people. It makes me unhappy that some people use pornography because it is not good. It can hurt your brain and trick it to be mean to other people. Pornography can also make you get an addiction because you want more and more of it.

**I can stay safe from pornography if I turn it off right away and look at something different.** I know I should say, ‘That’s pornography!’ to my brain and ask mom and dad for help to think about other things.”

**Her advice for parents:** “I think parents should talk to kids about pornography because it’s bad and so we can learn how to protect ourselves. It’s easy for kids to find pornography. I remember seeing it on a sign by the Las Vegas airport. Some kids might think they should look at it because it seems cool, but it isn’t.”

**Her advice for kids:** “I would tell kids not to look at pornography because it makes your brain stop growing.\* It won’t help you be a good person. And it can make you mean. Also, an adult who uses pornography might hurt you.”

*\*Giving kids the opportunity to describe the dangers of pornography in their own words allows parents to determine when further clarification is needed. Remember this is a layered, ongoing conversation. A -year-old warning other kids that porn stops your brain from growing is an example of how a young child might internalize the harms of pornography.*

*Note: Findings from a German research study indicate that a steady consumption of porn does reduce the volume of gray matter in specific regions of the brain. —most notably those responsible for decision making.*

### Tips from a 7-year-old boy

“It was weird the first time my mom talked to me about pornography. But now I know I should shut off the computer if I see bad pictures. **I think kids could get tricked into looking at pornography if they think it’s funny.** I know one kid got in trouble at school because he kept pulling his pants down at recess and showing his private parts. Maybe the teacher told him that was pornography because he stopped.”

**His advice for parents:** “Parents should definitely read [Good Pictures Bad Pictures](#) with their kids because that’s what my mom did.”

**His advice for kids:** “I would tell kids not to look at pornography because it’s not good for you at all!”

### Ideas from 10-year-old boy

“I am so glad I know about what pornography does to your brain and how it can become an addiction. I only knew I shouldn’t look at bad pictures but I didn’t know why it was bad. Lots of kids are probably the same way.”

**His advice for parents:** “At first it was kind of weird to talk about it but now it’s not. You should definitely tell your kids. I feel more confident to know what to do if I see pornography.”

I remember a boy in my class was looking at inappropriate pictures on the iPad. I quietly told the teacher because I knew I was supposed to tell an adult. The iPad was taken away from him. I’m glad he didn’t know I told on him because I didn’t want him mad at me. But I’m also glad he stopped looking at bad pictures.”

## Thoughts from a 13-year-old girl

“I don’t really understand why anyone would want to look at pornography but **I’m glad to know what to do if I see it.**

So far I haven’t noticed my friends talking about this. Maybe it’s more of a boy problem at my age.\* I think if boys are looking at pornography they will show their friends who are curious. Boys might think they have to look at it to be cool.”

\*Letting kids express their thoughts can help parents see how kids are interpreting their experiences. Kids may not understand that many young girls are viewing pornography, but girls may be even more silent about it because they feel so much shame. Parents can clarify the issue as they have these open conversations.

**Her advice for parents:** “If you are afraid to talk to your kids about pornography, start with a book or something. Then try to bring it up in normal conversation. You won’t be as nervous after you do that a few times. I was embarrassed to talk about it with my parents the first few times. Now it’s not embarrassing at all.”

**Her advice for kids:** “I think more kids should learn about why pornography is harmful—and what to do if they see it. I would tell kids to get help if they think they are addicted so that they can do better things in life.”

## Encouragement from a 14-year-old boy

“Talking [with my parents] about the dangers of pornography doesn’t make me curious to look because it literally informs me of all the reasons I shouldn’t. Now I know I can tell my parents about anything bad I might see. **I know they won’t be angry** and it would just be an accident that I saw it.

There are definitely kids my age that look at porn. I just leave or ignore the conversation if it starts to get inappropriate. **I like that I’m prepared and know how to handle these situations.** It makes me more confident at school.”

**His advice for parents:** “I would definitely encourage parents to talk to their kids. It’s better to inform kids about the dangers instead of them discovering it on their own. Kids should know they can talk to their parents about it.”

**His advice for kids:** “I would tell kids to stick only to online friends you know in person. Make sure you have a good friend group that supports your choices. If you know how to avoid pornography and don’t go looking for it, then most of the time you won’t have any problems.”

## Talk today for a safer tomorrow

After listening to our group of “field experts”, it’s easy to understand why kids thrive when parents talk to them about the dangers of pornography. If at first the conversation feels awkward and embarrassing, don’t worry! **It does get easier.** Remember that when you talk today, kids learn:

How to recognize and reject dangerous online content

Why pornography is harmful and habit forming

How to have more confidence by feeling prepared at school and among peers

To ask their parents anytime they have questions or need help

**Remember, kids want to feel prepared for the challenges they may encounter.**

As you can see from these kids, it will be worth it to teach them what they need to know!

