

Family Legacy Institute

Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Having That Pesky “Sex Talk” With Your Kid

By Dr. John P. Splinter

There’s a little joke that many have heard. Mom and dad say to their 14-year-old, “Joey, it’s time for us to have a talk about sex.” Joey replies, “Sure, what do you want to know?” The problem with that joke is that it’s often far too true.

Research finds that most parents will talk with their kids about smoking, drinking, and drugs, but not about sex. Yet today sex is easily the most potentially damaging issue shaping kids lives between the ages of 8 and 24. The porn industry is targeting children between ages 9 – 12. The average age at which kids are exposed to porn is eleven.¹ (One study found it to be eight.) Twenty-one percent of 9th graders have slept with four or more partners.² Twenty-six percent of girls age 14 –19 carry at least one STD.³ We’ll provide more research as we try to help you have intelligent conversations about sex, with your kids. *This is not an issue that you may responsibly ignore as a parent.* Not in today’s highly sexualized world.

Here’s what you’re up against. Research finds that the average kid in America today receives approximately 14,000 sexualized messages per year. There is absolutely no question in this culture whether your child is going to be inundated with sexual information. It comes at them through TV, the Internet, cell phones, magazines, books, locker room conversations, corporate advertising strategies, and on and on. The only question on the table for you as a parent, is who is going to interpret the information your children learn. Hopefully, that person is you. If you choose not to speak with your children about sex, then your kids are basically adrift in a category five hurricane.

In the following pages we’ll teach you about what to do and what not to do in regard to sexual information, as you prepare your children for adult life. We believe that the best place a child can learn about sex, is in the home, from mom and dad. So in the following pages we’re going to empower you.

The least effective approach you can take with this material is to hand it to your kids and tell them to read it. You must lead them through the discussion if you want to influence them with what you believe. It may be difficult for you, but you’re an adult. Step up to the challenge, and may God use you well. Here are ten tips for having that pesky sex talk with your child.

TIP #1: Don’t Have “The Sex Talk” With Your Kids.

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We're very serious about this. Do *not* have "The Sex Talk," if by definition it's a one-time thing, perhaps a day or a week before your kid starts dating. Research shows that this is a waste of your breath and your kids' time ~ having "The Sex Talk" has *no* impact on how your child will behave on a date, nor in regard to his/her management of their sexual drive. None.

So what's a parent supposed to do? Do this, and do it effectively. Have approximately 5,000 mini-chats with your kid about sex, beginning at age five and ending on the day they walk out the door into their own adult world. If your kids are already 8, or 16, start now. Integrate the subject of sex into dinner-time conversation. Talk about the newspaper article in which a 13-year-old girl who had a "secret friend" in a chat-room disappeared and was later found dead in a ditch in East St. Louis, raped and beaten. Teach about how pedophiles try to come along side kids, gain their trust, and then abuse them.

Talk about what's going on in the camera-man's head when he points the lens of his camera up the skirt of a cheerleader in a pro football game. Comment on the commercials that use sex to sell hamburgers ~ share what you and your spouse feel about them..

Weave the subject into breakfast talk-time. Talk about your values as a parent. Share an occasional story of mistakes you made, and how you'd do things differently today. Occasionally weave scripture into the discussion, but be careful not to beat your kids on the head with the Bible or they'll tune you out.

As you're driving around town, talk about people you know who have misused sex, and what the consequences are as seen in their lives (e.g., out-of-wedlock pregnancy, STDs, ruined marriages). As you're sitting on the beach enjoying the view, talk about how each human body is different, and how the most important thing God created wasn't the human body, but the human soul. Teach your kids that to look only at the body is to miss the whole point of human life.

Essentially, what we recommend you do is to teach your kids a Christian world view regarding sexuality. Don't just have a one-time talk with them. Discuss sexuality frequently – at least once a week, using five-second mini-bites rather than half-hour lectures.

Tip #2: DO Talk About God's Plan

Talk about what you believe in. Don't just talk about what you believe – teach why you believe it. Share personal life experiences. Explain things that hurt you, why they hurt, and how your kids may avoid the same hurt. Share your experience of the beauty of sex (you don't have to be embarrassingly descriptive – talk in generalities). But your kids need to know why you believe what you believe, as well as how your belief has worked for you. Here are four messages to teach your kids:

Sex is beautiful!

If you use scripture in your conversations, talk about the beauty of sex. For example, in Genesis 1:31 scripture says that God looked at everything he'd created (including sex), and said it was

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“very good.” In the Song of Solomon, scripture gets pretty visual in regard to the King’s wide-eyed description of his wife’s body. He used word pictures from his culture. Our word pictures would obviously be different. Here’s an excerpt:

Song of Solomon, 7:4-8 ~

- 4 Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus.
- 5 Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel. Your hair is like royal tapestry; the king is held captive by its tresses.
- 6 How beautiful you are and how pleasing, O love, with your delights!
- 7 Your stature is like that of the palm, and your breasts like clusters of fruit.
- 8 I said, “*I will climb the palm tree; I will **take hold of its fruit.***”
(Solomon probably had to go take a cold shower after writing that part.)

Then his wife responds, and notice how feminine her thoughts of sexuality are in contrast to his masculine approach. She’s thinking of a drive in the country, and blossoms, and pomegranates. She says,

Song of Solomon 7:11-13 ~

- 11 Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages.
- 12 Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom - there I will give you my love.
- 13 The mandrakes send out their fragrance, and at our door is every delicacy, both new and old, that I have stored up for you, my lover.
(Mandrakes in the ancient world were thought to be an aphrodisiac, so she’s expressing her sexual desires for her husband – in a more feminine manner.)

Read those verses with your adolescent children. Obviously, God created sex to be visually stimulating and romantic. Teach your kids that God created sex to be a beautiful thing.

Sex is powerful!

Be sure to talk about the power of sex, and how it can easily overwhelm a person. Explain how both men and women become literally, physically addicted to it and how it controls their every thought. Explain that it’s so powerful that only one container can contain it – and that container is marriage. Talk about how God warns us to carefully monitor what goes on in our heads (Matthew 5:28) and hearts (Prov. 4:23), mainly because sex is incredibly powerful.

Read the story of Samson from Judges chapters 14 – 16. He was a powerful man who was made weak by his own sex drive. Talk about how sex can take over a person’s thinking and judgment.

The only container strong enough to handle sex without it becoming destructive, is marriage. In every other use of sex (cohabitation, affairs, homosexuality, pornography, prostitution, masturbation) it becomes a destructive force to both the person involved, and the relationship. Sex is powerful.

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God initially intended for sex to be a bonding agent that causes men and women to become so attached that nothing can separate them. Solomon observed that love is as strong as death (Song of Solomon 8:6). Starting with emotional romantic attachment, and then adding sexual intercourse, is like combining the two bonding agents creating epoxy glue. That's why God teaches us to reserve sex for within marriage.

Discuss Satan's use of sex to destroy the beauty of it and to create ownership.

God's enemy, the Devil wants to ruin everything in God's creation. Satan uses sexual disobedience as one of his most powerful weapons in ruining people's lives. He does it through STDs, broken promises, mistrust, unwanted pregnancies, depression, sexual deviance, broken marriages, abortion, kidnap, rape, assault, prostitution, murder and suicide ~ and all in regard to misuse of God's perfect plan for sex. Explain to your kids that anything he can take away from them now (chastity, purity), Satan will use to make them feel lousy about themselves later. Teach them that 75% of kids who are sexually active, later deeply wish they had not been.

Discuss the challenge of chastity in this culture.

Talk about how difficult it is to be chaste in this culture ~ and the dominant cultural value today is to lose one's virginity while in high school, or at the latest, college. Base your hope for their chastity upon another text from scripture. *Prov 3:5-6 ~ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.* If they adopt that verse as their world view, it will help your kids avoid the many sexual land mines that have become commonly accepted pieces of our culture.

Research has shown that the most effective form of protecting your child against the myriad problems and heartaches of sex in this culture, is a strong faith in Christ and a strong relationship with mom and dad. No other approach even comes close. Sex education in public schools has generally proven to be more of a stimulant for experimentation than a preventative measure. It's been a bit like teaching a kid all about how fast a Maserati sports car can go, talking about the thrill of speed, the best highways for speeding, reminding him that he has a key to a Maserati in his pocket, and then telling him not to speed.

Abstinence oriented sex education programs are more effective in keeping kids sexually pure than are non-abstinence programs. Yet even the "Promise Rings" that kids put on after taking a pledge of chastity, have been shown to slow kids down by about 18 months.⁴

The most effective place to teach about sex is in the home, with mom and dad. An active faith in Christ, plus a strong relationship with mom and dad, are the strongest friends a kid has in this sex-saturated culture.⁵ Ninety-one percent of teens ages 15-17 that have not had sex, said they were influenced by what their parents have taught them about sex.⁶ Eighty-eight percent of teens ages 12 -19 say it would be easier to postpone sexual activity if able to have a more open, honest conversation with their parents.⁷

Tip #3: Talk About Intercourse

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According to *Seventeen Magazine* forty-two percent of boys and thirty-three percent of girls ages 15 – 17 have had intercourse.⁸ Another source finds that 50% of seventeen-year-olds and 80% of all teens have had sex by age nineteen.⁹ Indeed, American kids now lead the Western world in per capita of teen pregnancies, STDs, and abortions. Our culture has never been so saturated by sexual activity, sexual promotion, and sexual destruction as it is today.

Most kids in public schools today have been in sex education classes. Many have seen photographs or even movies including pictures of male and female genitals. Some have sat in class as some idiot teacher has put a condom on a banana in order to “show how things work,” and all of this in the name of “safe sex.” You need to teach your children that there is no such thing as safe sex.

The most commonly used format of protection in teens is the condom. But condoms break. They can leak. They occasionally slip off while in the vagina. And condoms are *not at all* effective in protecting against STDs including HIV-AIDS.

A startling piece of research found that kids who are sexually active and then break up, are far more prone to attempt suicide. Girls are three times more likely, and boys are eight times more likely.¹⁰ The reasons for this are at least two-fold: First, kids who become sexually involved have been found to be more prone to depression. Second, when the break-up comes, the emotional effect is like that of a divorce – it’s a sense of immense loss and soul-ripping. Teens’ brains have not matured to the level of adult functioning, and they are more prone to acting out their sadness.

So talk about intercourse with your kids. Start when they’re three years old. Get a picture book from the library showing the “birds and the bees.” And from that point until they marry, have occasional open and frank discussions of any aspect of sexuality they may wish to discuss. You will probably have to initiate the conversation much of the time – so do the big boy thing, swallow hard, and initiate these conversations.

Teach your child the *adult value of delayed gratification*. It’s a value they’ll need throughout their entire lives, and one of the most challenging places to develop it is in teen sexuality, as hormones rage through their adolescent blood streams. Teach them that the kids who can’t delay gratification today, will be the failures of tomorrow.

Teach you kids to value their bodies as more than just a tool for sexual experimentation. They are created in the image of God. Teach them to value obedience to God far above the value of gaining teen sexual knowledge. They won’t miss out on a thing if they wait – they’ll have all the pleasures of sex when they marry. What they will miss out on if they wait, are the destructive memories that can’t be forgotten, the development of the habit of disobedience to God, and the risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease (some of which will kill them).

Tip #4: Talk About Oral Sex

The first time that oral sex became an openly used point of national discussion was when Bill Clinton was in the Oval Office and Monica Lewinski was “going down on him.” Everyone who

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still had a shred of naiveté about the subject was suddenly confronted with the mental picture of the president of the United States sitting in the Oval Office with his zipper down and a young woman giving him oral sex.

If that last paragraph offended you, you're undoubtedly among the majority! Yet the term, "Giving a Monica" was born among the teen culture shortly after Clinton and Lewinski had their fling. And oral sex has become almost passé among kids beginning in middle school these days. So as uncomfortable as it may be, we all need to recognize that things are different in the 21st Century than they were in the 20th.

Here's another very public, very ugly example of this principle: On April 15, 2009 thousands of Americans demonstrated against President Obama's spending by throwing what they called "Tea Parties," in memory of the famous Boston Tea Party of the American Revolution. The next day ABC, NBC, and CBS news hosts (including female broadcaster Katie Couric) were making fun of the event by chortling on the air about "tea bagging." In case you didn't know, "tea bagging" is a form of oral sex in which a person gets the entire penis and testicles into their mouth.

It might be more comfortable for all of us if we could just go back and live in the 20th Century, but we can't. The "tea-bagging" comment was on national news programs broadcast by the "big three" telecasters. *Not that we want* it to be on the air! Not that we *desire* to be publicly discussing this subject. But it's being thrust in our faces today, and unfortunately this level of dialogue is more alive in the teen world than any other place.

One research project found that forty-nine percent of adolescent males have received oral sex, thirty-nine percent have given oral sex, and making the picture even more wretched, eleven percent have had anal sex.¹¹ Another study found that most teens believe genital intercourse is the *only* thing that constitutes as sex. In kids' minds, all other sexual activities (including oral sex), do not count as "sex" ~ which means that in their minds, a kid can do oral sex and still be considered a virgin.¹²

Many teens believe that oral sex is a safer form of sex ~ that a person can't get pregnant or catch STDs through oral sex. Obviously, pregnancy is not a possibility in oral sex, but catching STDs is a definite possibility. Dr. Margaret Meeker, Child and Adolescent Medicine Physician and author of the book, "*Epidemic*," teaches that any STD that may be caught through normal genital sex, may also be caught orally.¹³ And it is no comfort to anyone that seventy-eight percent of new cases of genital herpes are caused by a virus found chiefly in the mouths of 16 – 21 year-olds.¹⁴ Nor is it comforting to know that HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) is believed to now be responsible for a new form of cancer of the tonsils or throat.

Some Christians erroneously believe that scripture prohibits oral sex, but scripture is silent on this issue. Where scripture is silent, one must rely upon reason, and upon what is acceptable by both married partners. But in the world of parents and children, when talking about sexual matters, parents must advise that oral sex *is* sex, and that the overriding issue of all sex is obedience to God ~ honoring God with our bodies ~ i.e., maintaining sex only within marriage, in a precious, monogamous, heterosexual lifetime relationship.

Tip #5: Talk About Masturbation

Masturbation is another subject that has become commonplace in today's culture. Research finds that 53% of adolescent males have been masturbated.¹⁵ It's safe to say most adolescent males have either masturbated or have heard about it ~ and the majority of adolescent females today are at least familiar with the term.

There are issues to consider with this subject. Masturbation is not merely a physical release. When two people are involved, it is a form of sexual activity which was originally intended by God to function as relational glue, bonding the two together. When it is practiced solo, it's usually accompanied by sexual fantasy and it tends to become addictive. Let's unpack these thoughts.

In Matthew (Matthew 5:27-30), Christ warned against the fantasies of lust. He gently called it, "looking at a woman lustfully," which is a euphemism for an activity about which every man knows ~ the fine art of mentally undressing a woman and/or fantasizing sex with her. He could have just as easily reversed the gender and spoken of women looking at men lustfully. In this passage he said that it would be better to have one's hand cut off, or an eye gouged out, than to burn in hell because of lusting. This doesn't mean that Christ was teaching self-mutilation. Rather, he was speaking of the spiritual legacy of mental adultery, or sexual fantasy.

One concern with sexual fantasy is that it leads ever more deeply in the direction of imaginary sex. Naturally, the better at imaginary sex one becomes, the less appreciation one has for a real, lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual relationship. For a person to allow their mind to wallow in fantasy, inexorably leads toward dissatisfaction with what is real.

A second concern is that the more one fantasizes about other partners, the more likely they are to want to actually try out other partners.

A third concern with masturbation is that it generally spiritually leads away from God. It's difficult to sexually fantasize about another person to whom one is not married, and yet maintain fidelity to God and His purposes.

A fourth concern regarding masturbation is that it is usually a solitary activity – one giving self pleasure. This is an issue because scripture demonstrates that God intended for sex to be a two-person activity – between husbands and wives – for their mutual enjoyment and for bonding.

A fifth concern regarding masturbation is that for reasons yet undiscovered through scientific research, sexual activity that is outside of what God permits, seems to lead toward sexual ownership. The Apostle Paul spoke of "slavery" in Romans chapter six. Many who are addicted to sex would concur that sexual ownership is a form of spiritual slavery. When the brain engages in sexual activity, hormones and brain chemicals are released. Sex isn't just about testosterone or estrogen. It's about Oxytocin, Adrenalin, Cortisol, Dopamine, Serotonin, Norpinephrin, Vasopressin. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that has the same effect on the brain as taking cocaine.

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This is true whether through normal sex with one's spouse, or fantasy while looking at pornography. This chemistry of sex in the brain appears to have the ability to rapidly become addictive. Addiction does not appear to be a problem within normal marital sexual relationships. It does appear to become a problem exacerbated through masturbation.

Although individual church leaders may have opinions, few if any Protestant denominations take a formal stance on masturbation. By contrast, the Roman Catholic teaches firmly against it.

A story may help articulate a parent's responsibility to his child. A girl (we'll call her Sally ~ not her real name) aged 12 or 13 was in a classroom in a public school. The teacher had completed her lesson plan and ten minutes remained in the class, so the teacher suggested the students circle their desks into groups of four or five, and chat. In Sally's group someone asked, "What shall we talk about?" A boy in her group said, "Let's talk about masturbation." Sally asked, "What's that?" The rest of the group looked at her like she was from another planet.

Sally said, "Oh, I get it. It's one of 'those' subjects. I'll ask my folks about it when I get home." The group gasped and everyone said, "Oh my gosh, DON'T talk with your PARENTS about it!!!"

Both of Sally's parents had jobs. When Sally got home, her dad was the first parent to arrive home after work, so she asked her dad, "What's masturbation?" Her dad calmly nodded and said, "OK, let's talk about it." They sat down together and her dad gently but directly explained what it was about, how it works, and answered Sally's questions.

The next day Sally ran into the boy who had suggested the topic. She said, "I talked with my dad about masturbation. He told me all about it." The boy was stunned. All he could mumble was that he could never talk with his parents about it, and he walked away in amazement.

Dad, your kid needs to know that you are able to discuss this subject without coming unglued. He needs direction from his dad or he'll almost certainly be swept into the mainstream of kids who program themselves for complete lack of integrity by conducting fantasy experiences in their mind, of the kind that Christ spoke sharply against.

Tip #6: Talk About STDs

Years ago there were two primary STDs: syphilis and gonorrhea. Today there are 25 to 30 different types. Some of them are incurable (e.g., Herpes), and some are fatal (e.g., HPV and AIDS). Parents need to discuss this with their children. Research finds that if a person is sexually active today, they have a 50/50 chance of getting an STD.¹⁶ Research finds that a sexually promiscuous girl is four times more likely to contract an STD than to become pregnant, and that a young mother today has an average of 2.3 STDs.¹⁷ In 2002 it was estimated that a million Americans were living with AIDS,¹⁸ and Chlamydia has been found to be most prevalent among persons ages 15 – 24.¹⁹

One of the most common STDs today is Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Many parents and teens are counting on the inoculation against HPV. Some teens believe it is a cure-all against

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STDs. What the marketing firms don't tell us is that the inoculation they currently give, provides protection against four of the approximately 30 strains of HPV. Condoms can't protect against HPV because the virus may be present on the skin surrounding the genitals, and can be spread skin to skin, even without intercourse. HPV is responsible for cervical cancer, there is no cure for HPV, and much of the time HPV has no symptoms.

Herpes may have no symptoms for years, so a person may not even know they are a carrier. However, it can cause severe brain damage in infants born to people who carry the disease.

In one Midwestern school, a teen's "medical map" was studied by professionals. This "map" included every person who had been sexually involved with one another, leading to the moment that this teen had sex with his/her partner. It was discovered that in this medical map there had been 286 people sexually active in the stream of males and females who had been sexually active before them, the stream that finally ended in the sexual encounter between this teen and partner. Their sexual union increased the medical map to 288. Parents must teach their kids that just because someone says they're a virgin, doesn't mean they are. They may have had sex with others, and may be unknowing carrying an STD. Even if they only had sex with one other person, that person's medical map could include scores or even hundreds of people "upstream" from them.

Furthermore, virtually any STD that may be caught through genital sex, may also be caught through oral sex. It's the exchange of bodily fluids that carries STDs.

You must talk with your children about STDs. It is *extremely possible* that if your child is sexually involved in today's culture, they will become infected with any number of STDs. Here's a *partial* list of STDs currently out there waiting to be brought home: Bacterial vaginosis; Chancroid; Chlamydia; Cytomegalovirus; Genital warts; Gonorrhea; Granuloma inguinale; Hepatitis B; Herpes; HIV-AIDS; HTLV; HPV; Lymphogranuloma venereum; Molluscum contagiosum; Nongonoccal urethritis; Pubic lice; Scabies; Syphilis; Trichomoniasis.

Tip #7: Talk About Pornography

The pornography industry has targeted children from ages 8 – 15. They do so by buying up the web addresses around where children hang out on the Internet. One wrong key-stroke leads a child to a porn site. The porn industry knows porn is so addictive that if they can get a kid hooked, they have a customer for life. The porn industry in the United States alone generates \$12 - 14 billion a year. Nearly three billion emails per day are pornographic,²⁰ and some estimate that 20% of all porn sites are child porn. Sex is the number one topic searched on the Internet.²¹ Nearly fifty percent of people surveyed in a *Focus on the Family* poll, said that porn is a problem in their home.²² One author states that 21-29 percent of pastors are addicted to porn.²³

Here are a few issues to discuss with your child:

- Porn is enormously addictive ~ as addictive as cocaine or heroin
- Porn use leads incrementally to greater consumption of porn, and to darker porn
- Porn leads to other sexual activity including prostitution and child abuse

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- It increases the probability of women being raped or abused
- It decreases the probability of men and women having friendships
- It increases the probability of divorce.
- It destroys human intimacy and trust
- It demeans women
- It destroys real, genuine relationships and replaces them with false attachments
- Christ warned against mental sex (Matthew 5:28)

Pornography has become all but accepted by younger generations. The most common ways porn is brought into the home today is through the Internet, TV, and cell phones. A person doesn't have to go looking for it today – it hunts you down.

Parents need to do two things in regard to pornography and their children. First, parents need to make sure their own house is in order by canceling any subscriptions to magazines that bring porn into the home, canceling any TV channels that show porn, and putting porn-blocking screens on computers in the home.

Second, parents simply must warn their children about viewing porn. It's going to happen. In today's culture you can't stop it from happening. You can only tell your children how to handle things when it does happen. Here's what to tell them:

- If it pops up on the Internet, click the site off immediately. If that doesn't work, turn the computer off immediately. Then, tell mom or dad about it.
- If someone sends nude pictures on the cell phone, hang up immediately. If the pictures are stored on the phone, erase them and tell the sender not to send any more.
- If someone shows you pornographic pictures, ask them not to ~ look away ~ leave the room.
- If you're watching TV and the show gets pornographic, change the channel.

The over-riding parental message that parents need to convey is that nobody, child or adult, dare begin filling his/her head with porn, because the pictures don't fade away. They stay in the head, being burned into the brain by epinephrin. Pictures become controlling, addictive, and destructive. The harm they bring can last for years – even for a lifetime. Christ didn't warn about this because he was a prude, but because he understood how powerful lust is.

Tip #8: Talk About The Dangers Of Cyber-Space

In January 2009, several newspapers published reports that 18% of boys, and 22% of girls in high school had passed nude photos of themselves or others, to their girlfriends or boyfriends via cell phone. It's a phenomenon known as "sexting." One young teen in Cincinnati did this. Her boyfriend passed the pictures on to some of his friends, who posted them on the Internet. The girl committed suicide.

Cyberspace has become the new Wild West in our culture. There is no parental supervision in chat rooms or when texting with friends. Kids talk about anything and everything. And cyberspace has become the new hang-out for pedophiles, posing as teens or even as children.

So parents need to set ground rules regarding the Internet, chat rooms, cell phones, taking and sending pictures, pornography, relationships with strangers ~ and this should be part of the ongoing discussion about sexuality in the home.

Tip #9: Talk About Cohabitation

In spite of the fact that half of people choose cohabitation rather than marriage, or prior to marriage, there is no positive, supportive research favoring cohabitation. Virtually all the research is negative. This is because the foundations of cohabitation are faulty. Reasons why people cohabit rather than marry include:

- Inability to commit
- Fear of intimacy
- Broken sense of morality ~ belief that morality is irrelevant, or situational
- Inability to delay personal gratification
- Ignorance of the connection between physical intimacy and emotional damage
- Desire to maintain a relational exit in case a better option comes along
- Focus on self rather than on the other person

Here are some of the research findings:

- People who cohabit are far less likely to marry³⁸
- They are more likely to divorce if they do marry^{36, 37}
- Cohabiting couples are less happy than their married counterparts^{39, 40}
- Cohabiting relationships are far less stable than marriage relationships^{29, 30, 31, 32}
- There is less bonding and trust within the cohabitation relationship^{27, 28}
- There is more physical violence against women in cohabitation relationships^{33, 34, 35}
- There is more sexual cheating on the other party in cohabitation relationships⁴¹

Parents, talk about cohabitation with your children. It's an option they are likely to consider when they leave home. Don't let the culture shape them into conformity. Teach them that God's plan for marriage is a far wiser plan, and is supported by loads of research.

Tip 10: Talk About The Emotions Of Sexuality

We'll finish with a brief discussion of emotions and sex. When God created sex it was for the purposes of *procreation and bonding*. In today's culture, sex has been reinvented as a form of *recreation and status*. Because it was created for procreation and bonding, two of the side effects of recreational sex are pregnancy and emotional distress.

Our culture has taught our children that unwanted pregnancy can easily be erased via abortion. What our culture doesn't teach us is the post-abortion depression many women face^{24, 25}, nor the sense of having murdered one's own infant in the womb, as remembered on each anniversary of the abortion or each birthday that would have happened had the child lived.

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Sex and emotions were created by God, to go hand in hand with one's beloved. The more we use our sexuality as a toy, the more damage we do to our ability to make meaningful attachments, and less we become able to enjoy the deepest pleasure intended by God.

There's another dynamic too. There is a correlation between teen sex and depression. Sexually active girls are more than three times more likely to be depressed than are girls who are not sexually active.²⁶ Sexually active boys are more than twice as likely to be depressed as are those who are not sexually active.²⁷ And as was noted above, sexually active kids who break up are far more likely to attempt suicide.

There's an extremely well-written book for anyone considering becoming sexually involved prior to marriage ~ "Smart Sex," by Jennifer Roback Morse, published by Spence Publishing Company, Dallas, TX (2005). Jennifer is a Christian. She's also very candid in presenting her mistakes as a young woman. The book is a great tool for parents talking about sex with teens and young adults.

Conclusion

Talking about sex with one's children is perhaps the most difficult thing many parents face. We suggest you take one topic from the list presented above, and discuss it over dinner. Take one topic per week. The first week will be the hardest. As you progress through all ten subjects, you'll find everyone ~ your kids and yourself ~ becoming more comfortable with the topic of sex. And that's a big part of the objective for yourself.

Remember, your kids are receiving an average of 14,000 sexualized messages per year. The *only variable* over which you have control, is the *interpretation* of what they will learn ~ what is right, what is wrong, who says so, what is helpful, what causes ruin, etc. God has placed you in the position of parent. Guide your kids. Use scripture as your basis. Stay calm. Avoid gasping. Avoid scowling and saying, "Where'd you learn *that*!" Take a big breath. Smile. Say a silent prayer. And then talk with them. Research says you're very likely to be extremely successful if you do this. There's great risk for your child if you don't.

Resources

1. Internet Filter Review. (2004) *Internet Pornography Statistics*.
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