

LET'S TALK

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• TIPS for PARENTS and CARERS



We surveyed more than 2,000 parents and 90% told us you thought it was important to talk to your children about issues related to pornography such as consent, communication, body image and self-esteem. But only around 50% of parents of children aged 13-18 had done so. So we've put together some tips to help you have open, honest conversations about relationships, sex and porn.

- 1 Be aware of what's going on in your child's life.** Whether your child is looking for it or not, it's very possible they'll see some kind of porn whether it's through online adverts, games, or friends. They might be perfectly fine with this. But they might have questions, or find they feel anxious or upset about what they've seen and want to talk to you about it.
- 2 Try not to let your feelings get in the way.** However you feel about sex or porn, it's important to try not to let any strong feelings affect how you discuss these subjects. That could mean your child won't come to you for information or advice and will get it from other, possibly more unreliable sources. If they know they can come to you to discuss anything – even if it's awkward – they'll be more likely to turn to you if they're having a difficult time and need help.
- 3 Don't save it all up for one Big Talk.** Try and get into the habit of discussing growing up, friendships, relationships and sex from an early age. This makes the more challenging topics easier to broach when the time comes.
- 4 Keep it appropriate.** If you're unsure about what age to discuss things, you can ask your child's school what information they are giving at what age so you can reinforce important messages. However don't just leave it for the school. If your child asks a question about something it's usually a good sign that they're old enough for an answer!
- 5 Don't think you need to know it all.** You don't have to be a sex education expert, you just have to be a parent who's willing to discuss the difficult stuff in your child's life along with the easy stuff! Admitting that you're not sure about how to discuss porn, and exploring the topic together with your child, is much better than ignoring the issue and not talking about it.
- 6 It's not about you.** Avoid making it all about your experiences when you were growing up – you can acknowledge the world has changed, but this isn't your time to unload your experiences on your child. And if you personally look at pornography, it's no more appropriate to share this information with your child than telling them what your favourite sexual position is! Don't do it!
- 7 Start the conversation.** You can bring up subjects when the opportunity arises, such as seeing something on television or hearing it on the radio or in music. You could also talk about how your child feels about topics like porn and sexting. What do their friends say about it?
- 8 Keep it going.** Don't feel that subjects can only be talked about once. You might discuss something with your child and find it's not the right time for them to be able to talk about it without embarrassment. Try bringing up topics at different times and in different ways to find what works for you both.
- 9 Let it be on their terms.** Identify some reliable sources of information you can steer your child towards so they can refer to these if they want some information without chatting to you. For example, the Bish website: www.bishuk.com/porn/
- 10 Take responsibility.** While lots of schools might be teaching about these subjects, many still aren't. So don't assume your child will learn about these topics unless you make sure they have access to useful information.

Did you know?

FPA are supporting parents who want to write to their children's schools to confirm that topics such as consent, communication, body image and self-esteem are covered in relationships and sex education lessons.

Simply download our template letter to send to your children's head teacher, or head of PSHE: www.fpa.org.uk/action

Or just copy the text and send your message by email instead.

Useful resources

Parentzone: A website providing expert information to families and schools

parentzone.org.uk/parents

Speakeasy courses

FPA created the Speakeasy course to help parents and carers feel confident talking to their children about growing up, sex and relationships

fpa.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-parents-and-foster-carers

FPA info and resources for parents

fpa.org.uk/help-and-advice/advice-for-parents-carers

NSPCC: Information on talking to your children about porn

nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/

National Autistic Society: For parents and carers of young people with autism

autism.org.uk/sexeducation

Thinkuknow: Guidance about online safety for parents

thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/

Child Exploitation and Online Protection command

Help and guidance on online safety for young people and their parents and carers

ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/