**[5 Secrets that Make It Easy to Talk to Kids about Porn](http://pornharms.com/5-secrets-that-make-it-easy-to-talk-to-kids-about-porn/%22%20%5Co%20%22Permanent%20Link%20to%205%20Secrets%20that%20Make%20It%20Easy%20to%20Talk%20to%20Kids%20about%20Porn)**



By Kristen A. Jenson, author of *Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today’s Young Kids*

Who wants to talk to their kids about pornography? (Hmm…I don’t see anyone raising their hands!)

How do you even begin to approach this difficult topic? It’s *easy to put off* even though you know your kids are growing up in a pornified world, one that teaches warped views of sexuality and pulls kids into life-altering sexual addictions.

But here’s the good news! Follow these five tips and you’ll be surprised how easy and comfortable these conversations can be.

**1. Put on your science lab coat**

Don’t have one? Hated chemistry in high school? No problem. The point is this: Treat the discussion about pornography like you would a talk about why the sun moves across the sky or where the birds go in the winter or why you need to stop at the curb and look for cars. Banish the shame and embarrassment and focus on the simple facts.

**2. Give kids a basic definition**

Your first task is to choose a time and place to define what pornography is. In our read-aloud book [*Good Pictures Bad Pictures; Porn-Proofing Today’s Young Kids*](http://amzn.to/1eSx4ig), a mom invites her young son to look at family photos with her. She explains that these are *good pictures*, but there are also *bad pictures* called pornography. Then she gives this very basic definition.

**Basic definition**: *Pornography is pictures or videos of people with little or no clothes on. It focuses on the private parts we keep covered with a bathing suit.*

**The book’s Glossary has an advanced definition**: *Pornography is material specifically designed to arouse sexual feelings in people by depicting nudity, sexual behavior, or any type of sexual information. This can refer to pictures, stories, sounds, symbols, actions, or words that depict bodies and/or sexual behavior.* (from Dr. Jill C. Manning’s book *What’s the Big Deal about Pornography*.) For more ideas, check out my blog post [How to Define Pornography for a Seven-Year Old](http://pornproofkids.com/2012/04/30/defining-pornography-for-a-seven-year-old/)

**3. Teach kids that pornography can hurt their brain**

Explain to your kids that most of the things we see can’t hurt us, but looking at pornography can. It *tricks* the brain just like strong drugs, and can change the way we think and act. People who look at pornography can become trapped, just like people who become addicted to drugs, alcohol or tobacco. An addiction is a really bad habit that causes a person to do things they no longer want to do, but can’t seem to stop. Teach kids that while they may accidentally see pornography, they should *always* resist the temptation to look for it.

Assure your kids that you will give truthful answers to *any questions* they have about pornography. Unfortunately the Internet has more lies than truth about pornography, and kids should never try to look up something about pornography or sex online without the help of a parent.

**4. Teach kids they have two brains**

Kids love this! We have TWO BRAINS??? OK, not really, but it’s important to understand that we all have two *parts* of our brain that are involved in addiction.  We’ll call them the **feeling brain** and the **thinking brain**.

The *feeling brain* is all about instinct, appetites and desires; all of these are critical to our survival. Pornography activates the *feeling brain* and, over time, can give it power to hijack the*thinking brain*—the part of the brain that understands consequences and puts the brake on our appetites. (Read more in [You Have Two Brains!](http://pornproofkids.com/2012/04/16/you-have-two-brains/)*)*

Unfortunately when the feeling brain takes over, it doesn’t understand right or wrong and it just goes for what it wants. Here’s a great analogy that [explains addiction by using an ice cream truck](http://pornproofkids.com/2012/04/18/the-ice-cream-truck-and-addiction/).

Why is this important? Because the feeling brain can be very curious about seeing pornography. That’s what is so confusing to kids—pornography can cause two different feelings: an exciting feeling in their body and a yukky feeling in their mind or heart (emotions). Jeffrey J. Ford, MS, LMFC, gives some excellent advice in [this short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftwowvNt2Wo) that teaches parents to help their child sort out their feelings after they’ve been exposed to pornography.

Once your child has seen pornography, teach them the skill of [distracting their brain](http://pornproofkids.com/2013/03/06/teach-kids-two-ways-to-forget-porn/) away from that memory. Pornography is shocking and highly memorable, but images can fade if kids work at directing their thoughts to something positive and exciting. Physical activity also helps.

**5. Keep talking. Keep listening.**

Don’t try to teach them everything at once or they may become confused and overwhelmed. Ford [advises parents](http://lifestarstgeorge.com/blog/?p=153) to take it step by step. “It is helpful to remember that our children will not learn everything at once, and we don’t need to cover everything at once either. Learning about sex and pornography is a process that takes time and requires safety in asking questions.”

When your kids return home from visiting friends or family, chat with them about what they did and watched (but don’t make it an interrogation). According to Dr. Gail Poyner, co-author of *Good Pictures Bad Pictures*, her experience counseling children who are addicted to pornography reveals that often a child’s initial fascination begins from watching a mainstream movie that shows scantily clad actors or very brief nudity. I’ve heard of kids who began their addiction to porn by looking at women’s underwear ads.

The porn industry is relentless. One talk isn’t going to do it. Make the topic of your family’s [media standards](http://www.fightthenewdrug.org/media/r/family-media-standard) a natural and regular part of the dialogues you have with your kids.