



How to Talk with Kids About Pornography: A Quick Start Guide for Proactive Parents





Prepare Your Child to Reject Pornography: QUICK-START GUIDE FOR PROACTIVE PARENTS

Introduction

Thank you for facing the problem of pornography *head on*, so your kids won't have to face it *alone*! Preparing children to reject pornography is crucial to safeguarding their minds and their future relationships and happiness.

This convenient guide will help you quickly:

LEARN THE BASICS

- ALL Kids Are Vulnerable to the Pull of Pornography
- A Few Startling Stats
- 5 Ways Pornography Harms Kids

PREPARE YOURSELF

- 5 Reasons Why Sooner Is Safer
- 5 Tips to Get More Comfortable Talking with Kids about Pornography
- 5 Easy Teaching Moments to Arm Your Child

EMPOWER YOUR CHILD

- How to Teach an Age-Appropriate Definition of Pornography
- Which Simple Words Keep Kids Safer?
- Teach Your Child "I Have Two Brains!"

#SoonerIsSafer. Children are safer when parents are proactive!



LEARN THE BASICS

ALL KIDS ARE VULNERABLE TO THE PULL OF PORN

Many parents believe the myth that only “bad” kids or children from “dysfunctional” families would ever be drawn to pornography. The truth is that ALL children are biologically wired to be interested and affected by nudity and sex.

But pornography is not simply nudity—**it’s an unnatural “supernormal” sexual stimulus** that causes the brain to release an unusually high dose of a chemical called dopamine, often called the molecule of motivation. Dopamine causes us to want, seek out and search ... and in the case of pornography, there is virtually an unlimited amount of material to discover online.

When a child sees pornography, their brain begins to release large amounts of dopamine. This creates a drive for more, even in a child who did not like seeing pornography in the first place. Unfortunately, with repeated exposure, porn can warp a young person’s developing sexual template.

And what’s worse, children don’t have fully-developed “brakes” in their brains to help them resist their own dopamine-driven curiosity.

You can see why good, healthy, and normal children are vulnerable to pornography. When children become victims of pornography, they are merely responding naturally to an unnatural or “supernormal” stimulus.

That’s why parents must prepare their young children to reject pornography. When kids make a conscious choice to look away, the supernormal stimulus loses power. [Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today’s Young Kids](#) was written to help kids understand how to keep their brain safe from addiction. Educated and prepared kids are more resilient to pornography’s pull!

Want to learn more?

- [Sex Addiction Expert Explains Why Good Kids Get Pulled into Porn](#)
- [Addiction Alert! 3 Facts Every Parent Needs to Know](#) (this post includes kid talking points!)
- [How Porn Use Becomes an Addiction, Simplified!](#) (for nerds who want even more info on the neuroscience of addiction!)



We are grateful for the time Mark Bell, LMFT, CSAT devoted to working with Protect Young Minds in writing this important advice for parents.

A FEW STARTLING STATS FOR PROACTIVE PARENTS

When it comes to protecting your child, statistics may not matter. After all, your child is an individual bursting with potential—not a statistic!

But here are a few stats in case you need to convince others that protecting young kids from pornography is crucial:

- **10% of the visitors to porn video sites are younger than 10 years old.** And children under the age of 10 account for 22% of the young people under 18 who are viewing online porn. *Bitdefender (2016).* [One in 10 visitors of porn sites is under 10 years old](#)
- **68% of adolescents have unintentionally encountered pornography** and 37% have intentionally viewed pornography. *Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2016) [Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research](#). The Journal of Sex Research, 53, 509–531. doi: 10.1080/00224499.2016.1143441*
- **57% of teens age 13-17 sought out porn at least once a month.** Barna Group (2016) [The Porn Phenomenon](#)
- A study of over 9000 kids ages 9-16 found that their **top online concerns are being exposed to pornography** (named by 22% of children) and violent content (18%). *Livingstone, Sonia & Kirwil, Lucyna & Ponte, Cristina & Staksrud, Elisabeth (2014) [In Their Own Words: What Bothers Children Online?](#) European Journal of Communication. 29. 271-288. 10.1177/0267323114521045*

For more empowering stats, see our entire list of [11 Startling Stats Every Proactive Parent Needs to Know](#).



5 WAYS PORNOGRAPHY HARMS KIDS

Kids are bombarded with opportunities to view porn. It can be found on cable TV, computers, smartphones, or tablets or electronic readers like Kindles. Porn can come through social media platforms, messaging apps, internet-connected gaming consoles and online cartoon games.

That's why smart, proactive parents want to understand the 5 ways porn harms kids:

Harm #1: Porn influences popular culture and drives kids to objectify themselves in sexual ways

From a young age, girls feel pressure to to be seen as "hot". They see idealized and sexualized bodies, clothes, and behavior everywhere from celebrities to the popular girls on social media.

Harm #2: Porn disrupts normal childhood development

- **Sexual Dysfunction:** Researchers from Cal State Fresno and Bowling Green State University demonstrated that children ages 6 to 12 who were exposed to pornography (which many researchers include as a form of child sexual abuse) during the period of time when they should be channeling their energy to non-sexual development, were at higher risk of developing dysfunctional sexual health attitudes and behaviors.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Adults and even younger predators use porn to groom kids for sexual abuse.
- **Sexual Addiction:** Kids who use porn can become addicted to using it, especially when masturbation is added.

Harm #3: Porn warps kids' ATTITUDES about sex

Many children use porn as a source of readily available sex ed. Sadly, as kids watch some of the most common and pervasive internet porn, they are taught that sex is about degrading and violent acts instead of love, trust and intimacy.

This is the truth: Parents are competing with the porn industry for the healthy minds of their children, especially their children's sexual templates.

Harm #4: Porn changes sexual BEHAVIOR and increases sexual violence in users

[Studies](#) show that even non-explicit, sexualized media predicts earlier sexual activity among teens. A UK report of research shows that sometimes kids emulate what they see done in porn, including both oral and anal sex. Studies also show that girls who watch pornography are more likely to engage in anal intercourse.





Further studies show that pornography can serve as **rape training** for young men. From an [Australian report](#) by Dr. Michael Flood:

*"There is consistent evidence that exposure to pornography is related to male sexual aggression against girls and women. In a recent longitudinal study of U.S. youth aged 10 to 15, with three waves of data over three years, **individuals who intentionally consumed violent X-rated materials were over six times as likely as others to engage in sexually aggressive behavior.**"*

Harm #5: Porn use can lead children to harm other children

Children are wired to imitate what they see adults do. When children watch porn, it's no surprise that they may feel driven to imitate what they see on other vulnerable children, including both oral and anal sex. In the U.S., porn is connected with a troubling increase in [child on child sexual abuse](#) or harmful sexual behavior. Porn becomes the perpetrator that teaches kids to act out on other children.

In the U.S. nearly 40% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by minors, according to a Justice Department research on crimes in America. A UK Parliamentary report says "up to 65% of sexual abuse experienced by children under 18 is perpetrated by someone under the age of 18" **with more than half directing their sexual behavior towards a sibling.**

What You CAN DO!

For more studies and citations, **plus actions you can take to combat each one of these harms**, please read [5 Proven Ways that Porn Harms Kids](#) on [ProtectYoungMinds.org](https://protectyoungminds.org) and download our full report.





PREPARE YOURSELF

5 REASONS WHY SOONER IS SAFER

We often hear this question: "Won't I make my child more curious about pornography if I start talking about it too early?" Let's think about that.

You basically have two choices:

1. **Cross your fingers and hope they won't be exposed until the day AFTER you begin the conversation.** (That's where a crystal ball comes in handy!) Convince yourself that your child will be the exception and come and tell you when they've seen pornography, even though you've never broached the subject or asked them to report exposure.
2. **Be proactive and prepare your kids as early as they have any access to the internet** so they won't be caught off guard. Understand that it's safer for kids to have their questions answered about pornography with a parent by their side than for them to be curious when they're alone on the internet or with a friend. Be realistic as you give your kids a plan to be resilient in a hypersexualized world where porn is just a click away.

[*Good Pictures Bad Pictures Jr: A Simple Plan to Protect Young Minds*](#) is the perfect way to gently begin conversations about screen safety!

Five Benefits to Being the First

Here are five benefits to being the first one to introduce and warn your kids about pornography:

1. You can set yourself up as the best source of information and invite your kids to come and tell you if they ever see it. You can explain your values about pornography, as well as all the reasons to avoid it.
2. You can create an environment of safety and assure your child that you will answer all of their questions.
3. You can assure them that their curiosity is normal, but warn them that following their curiosity about pornography is dangerous and can lead to the trap of addiction. Let them know that they won't get into trouble when they come and tell you they've been exposed to it.
4. You can lessen the shame and shock associated with pornography exposure by defining what pornography is so kids recognize it when they are first exposed.
5. You can increase the trust in your relationship when you teach them what to do in an often frightening situation. By giving them a PLAN for dealing with it, they will know you are helping to protect them.

Success Story: "I knew exactly what to do"

One mom shared her experience with teaching her 9-year-old son the CAN DO Plan™ from the book [*Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids*](#). Three days later he came home from school and told her that another student had shown him pornography. He said, "I knew exactly what to do. I was scared but I knew what to do!"

Instead of facing this troubling exposure alone, this young boy knew his parents were there to help him. He recognized what he saw and already knew several good reasons why he should not look at it. He had no fear about talking with his mom about his exposure because *she had talked with him first*.

5 TIPS TO GET MORE COMFORTABLE TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY

1. Focus on the why

Why do you want to warn your child about pornography? Review these [21+ reasons to warn your kids about porn](#). Think about how pornography could impact your child's future ability to form intimate relationships and [enjoy a happy, long-lasting marriage](#). Imagine how important it is to protect your child's brain from [addiction](#).

2. Remind yourself that the more you do something the easier it becomes

All firsts produce a little anxiety. But firsts become seconds and then thirds and then easier. It may take a big dose of courage the first time you talk to your kids about pornography. You might be nervous, but it will get easier.



3. Try a role-play rehearsal

Sounds a little weird, but it works! If you're uncomfortable talking with your kids, practice role-playing with your spouse, a close friend or family member. The more you hear yourself say the words out loud, the more comfortable you become using them.

If you decide to purchase [Good Pictures Bad Pictures](#), read it out loud to yourself or with your spouse/friend/family member. And then set up a time to include your child!

4. Recruit your friends

Ask them! They may have some great ideas. And if they haven't yet broached the subject with their own kids, you might give each other courage to get started! Parents tell us how relieved they were to finally get this dark topic out into the light—like a burden had been lifted from their shoulders. We believe you'll feel the same way!

5. Name it when you see it to start conversations

Our environment is littered with overtly sexualized and pornographic images, lyrics and words. So use them as natural conversation-starters! When you see or hear something, point it out and ask your kids what they think: "Why do you think advertisers use scantily dressed women in their ads? What kind of a reaction are they trying to get from you?"

5 EASY TEACHING MOMENTS TO ARM YOUR CHILD

Talking with kids about pornography isn't a one-and-done event you can check off your parenting list. It's a series of talks - some big, some small, some formal, and some casual. Here are 5 teaching opportunities every parent can use to arm their child against pornography's pull.

#1 Storytime

Reading books with kids is a natural and easy way for parents to approach a tough topic with a child. Here are a few we highly recommend:

- [Good Pictures Bad Pictures Jr.: A Simple Plan to Protect Young Minds](#) for ages 3-7
- [Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids](#) for ages 6-11
- [I Said No! A Kid-to-kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private](#)
- Say "NO!" and TELL! Books by [WeStandGuard](#)



We also have [a list of 8 recommended books to teach kids about sex](#).

#2 Fun Entertainment

Whenever a huge blockbuster movie, music album, or video game comes out, **think of it as an opportunity to strike up a conversation about the type of media your family participates in.** By including your children in the process, they will learn to apply important values about the media and entertainment they choose.

If you're concerned about sexualized content in a video game or movie, don't be afraid to ask direct questions, such as:

- *Are there characters that have little or no clothes on?*
- *Why don't we watch movies that don't share our values about bodies or sexual behavior?*
- *Why is pornography something we are careful about in our family?*

Websites we recommend to help parents choose appropriate media:

- [Common Sense Media](#) has talking points parents can use to start a conversation with their kid.
- [Kids In Mind](#) **provides objective and complete information about a film's content** so that families can decide, based on their own value system, whether they want to watch it.
- [Pure Flix](#) is a service that exclusively features wholesome and faith-based media choices from movies & TV shows, to animated shows, educational features and classic Hollywood movies.
- [VidAngel](#) provides a service to filter streamed content. They also create their own clean movies and comedy.

#3 New technology

Another natural (and critical) time to talk about pornography is [when your child gets use of their first cell phone or tablet](#), your family buys a new smart TV, or you bring home the latest virtual reality system. **This is the time to talk about how this new device connects with the whole world through the internet.** Here are some questions you can use to strike up a conversation:

- *How is it the same or different from other tech tools we use?*
- *What could the risks be, and how can we be prepared to handle them well?*
- *What are good activities to do on them?*
- *What are inappropriate activities?*



You should talk about the parental controls or accountability software you have installed, and why. It doesn't need to be a secret that your family uses filters and other safety measures to keep your home a safe place.

#4 Sex education and body safety

Your kids may have lessons at school about sex education or body safety, and these are good times to build on what they've already learned. **More importantly, parents have the privilege and duty to start teaching their kids these important life lessons at home**, adapted for their children's age and personality.

Wondering what to teach? Here are some helpful resources:

- [10 Topics to Consider Before Talking to Your Child About Healthy Sexuality](#)
- [7 Things Your Seven-Year-Old Should Know about Love and Sex](#)
- [Let's Talk about Sex: 8 Books to Read Together](#)

#5 Advertising

Sexualized images sneak into all sorts of everyday advertising, making it seem like a normal part of life over time. However, we can use ads to spark conversations about appropriate dress and behavior. In fact, as you begin to teach kids what pornography is, [your child may call out things that adults have become accustomed to!](#)

As your children get older, you can have more in-depth conversations about advertisements: So why do you think they would put a shirtless man and a woman in a bikini in a commercial for new tires? Does it get your attention? What do you feel when you see a person with few clothes on? How do they want you to feel about their products?



Be aware of the advertisements that appear on your children's digital devices - all those pesky banners, popups and other kinds of clickbait. Your kids may need detailed instructions on how to get rid of ads or avoid them!

For even more teaching moment ideas, check out [this article](#) on [ProtectYoungMinds.org](#).

EMPOWER YOUR CHILD

HOW TO TEACH AN AGE-APPROPRIATE DEFINITION OF PORNOGRAPHY

Pornography involves pictures (even word pictures) of people with no clothes on

Young children who have any access to the internet need to know just enough about pornography to be able to recognize it when they see it. That's why starting with a definition of simple nudity that focuses on the private parts of the body ("the parts we keep covered with a swimsuit") is appropriate to teach a young child.

But some nudity is clearly not pornography, so how do you explain the difference? Here are some helpful ideas: [Art vs. Porn: How to Explain the Difference to a Child](#).

And as kids get older and more educated about sex, you can expand the definition of pornography. Here's one by Dr. Jill C. Manning:

"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." What's the Big Deal about Pornography: A Guide for the Internet Generation, p. 2.

Porn creates tricky feelings

Besides teaching a simple definition to help kids recognize pornography, it's important to acknowledge that pornography can make kids feel both shocked, sickened and embarrassed as well as excited, curious and enticed. That is normal and they shouldn't feel ashamed of their natural curiosity. However, following that curiosity about pornography can lead them to great harm and dangerous situations.

Every kids needs an escape plan

Children need a plan for how to react to being exposed to pornography. [Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids](#) teaches the CAN DO Plan™ and [Good Pictures Bad Pictures Jr.: A Simple Plan to Protect Young Minds](#) teaches the Turn, Run and Tell plan. However, maybe your kids want to come up with their very own plan! The idea is for kids to understand how to turn away and then tell their parents or trusted adult about what they saw. This reduces the secrecy and shame associated with escalating porn use.

The most important outcome of your conversation is that you are making it okay to talk about pornography. You are taking it out of the dark and bringing it into the light where it can be

- **defined,**
- **discussed, and**
- **rejected.**



WHICH SIMPLE WORDS KEEP KIDS SAFER?

Simple words can empower kids. Think about it. If your young child were being sexually abused, could he or she describe what was happening? Can they name their body parts using the right terms? Can knowing a few simple words keep kids safer from a sexual predator? Yes!

Two Good Reasons

Teaching kids to use correct terminology for body parts is a way of **reducing the shame** often associated with sex and its toxic counterfeit, pornography. Why? Because increased shame can make kids more likely to keep silent about pornography exposure.

But there's another reason for calling a spade a spade, a penis a penis and a vagina a vagina. Your child's ability **to communicate sexual abuse**.

A CPS Warning

A Child Protective Services specialist shared the following story:

A 3-year-old girl became upset when she was left with a teenage boy babysitter who was an extended family member. She cried, "He's always poking me with his stick!" Unfortunately, she didn't know the word *penis*. Her mom thought she was being silly and simply told her to ask him to stop poking her. Sadly, the abuse continued for months before the girl's parents learned what their daughter meant by "his stick." This tragic true story illustrates why kids need to know the names of *both genders'* body parts.



Knowledge. Is. Power.

When kids are empowered with correct words, they can communicate accurately what is happening to them. And parents can more effectively teach kids to protect themselves. So from a young age, **teach children the correct names for private body parts of both genders**.

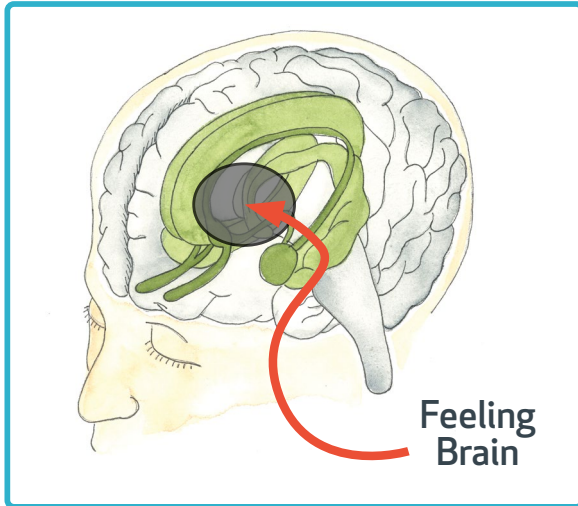
As parents prepare their kids with knowledge and use the correct names for their body parts, they empower their children to communicate more effectively. The result? Parents are better able to protect their kids from both pornography and sexual abuse, as well as discuss healthy sexuality as children grow and mature.

For more help protecting kids from sexual abuse, read:

- [The Three Big Red Flags of Sexual Abuse](#)
- [Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse--How to Protect Your Child](#)
- [Three Ways to Guard against Child Sexual Abuse](#)

TEACH YOUR CHILD “I HAVE TWO BRAINS!”

It's true. You have TWO brains! And if you want to help your children grow up resilient against all kinds of addictions, it's crucial that they understand how their “two brains” work.



The Feeling Brain

For simplicity sake, the feeling brain includes several structures in the brain, most of which reside near the center of your brain. It's where emotions like fear, anger, excitement, sadness and pleasure come from. The feeling brain is also responsible for your basic drives such as hunger, thirst and sexual desire which help to ensure your survival and the survival of the entire human family.

The feeling brain has three main objectives:

- To survive physically
- To avoid pain
- To pursue pleasure

The feeling brain is sometimes called the primitive brain because the structure of this part of our brain is similar

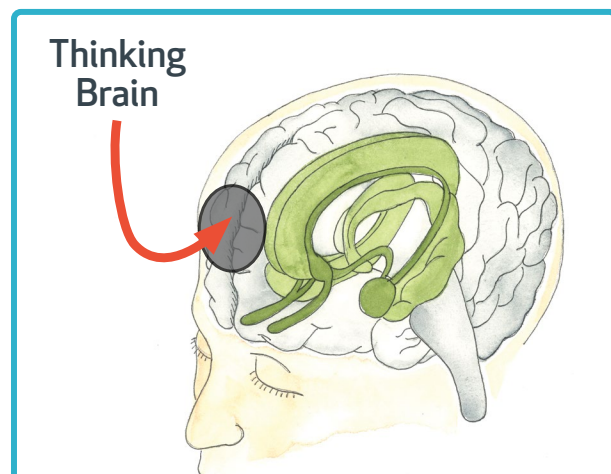
in all mammals. It's automatic and responds to stimuli extremely fast. Just imagine that you're hiking through the woods and come upon a large bear. Before you can even think the word “bear,” your feeling brain has already started pouring out adrenaline to help you run away or even fight!

Your feeling brain automatically handles tasks like warming your body up when you go sledding on a cold day or cooling your body down when you play soccer on a hot day. Your feeling brain regulates your breathing and your heart rate so you don't ever forget to do them. Being on autopilot for some things is very crucial to our survival.

The Thinking Brain

Our second brain is our thinking brain, or the prefrontal cortex, located right behind our forehead. This part of our brain is much slower. In our prefrontal cortex we plan, weigh consequences, learn right from wrong and develop brakes for our basic emotions and drives.

Think about a two-year old that runs after a ball into the street, not thinking to look for cars. His feeling brain wants the ball (which represents pleasure). The two-year-old's thinking brain is not yet developed enough to put the brakes on his desires. But an older child can be taught to stop at the curb and look for cars before entering the street because an older child has a more developed prefrontal cortex.





The thinking brain needs to be in charge in order to control our basic drives. And, in fact, until we grow up we depend on the adults in our lives to augment our prefrontal cortex. "Eat your vegetables! Put on your helmet! Wear a jacket!"

Pornography activates the sexual part of the feeling brain before a child's thinking brain even knows what sex is. That can set up a very confusing and compelling curiosity which may drive the young child to seek out more and more pornography.

Simply put, **the feeling brain can become overwhelmed by pornography and hijack or take over the underdeveloped thinking brain.** In fact, because our brains consider sex a matter of survival, pornography viewing can become a powerful and enslaving addiction.

Teach your children about their two brains and encourage them to put their thinking brain in charge!

For more help teaching kids about their two brains and how they can avoid addiction, read them the bestselling book [Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids](#).

For a video to explain the differences in our two brains, watch this: [Things You Didn't Know about Porn](#) on the website YourBrainOnPorn.com. **Note:** The video refers to the two brains as "old brain" and "new brain". We recommend this video for kids age 10 and up.

More Helpful Resources

Help and Heal [SMART Plan Guide for Parents: Helping Kids Who Have Seen or Sought Pornography](#). A FREE download gives excellent advice for dealing with pornography exposure after the fact.

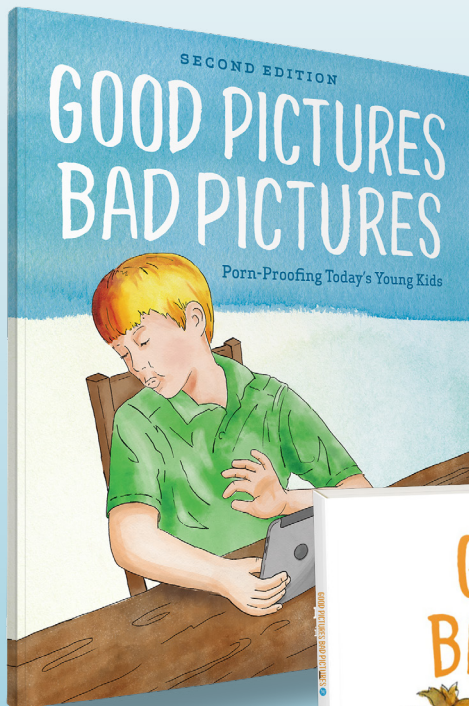
Share & Speak Up [Ambassador Kit: Inoculating Kids against the Pandemic of Pornography](#). You provide the enthusiasm for educating your local community and we give you the tools!

More FREE Guides and Posters on our [Protect Young Minds Resources](#) page!

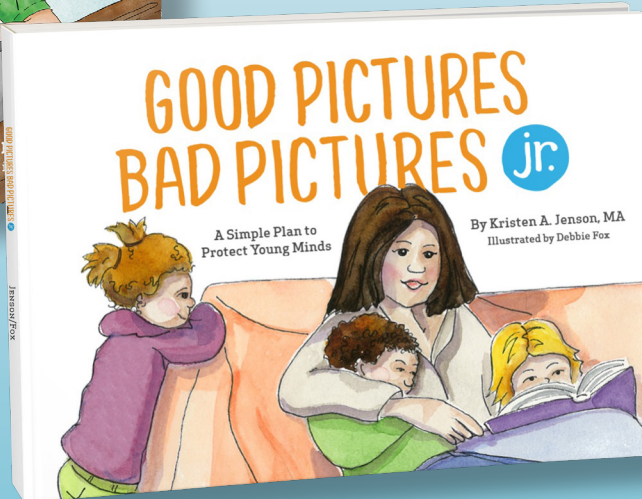


protecting our most vulnerable

POWERFUL TOOLS TO RAISE
PORN PROOF KIDS



#1
**BEST
SELLERS**



As a psychologist and a mother of four, I can't recommend this book highly enough.

Pornography is a fast-track to depression, anxiety, and unhealthy relationships between males and females. Parents need to understand that their kids are being exposed to porn at a younger age than they realize...your kids will rarely tell you what they saw. We need to GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE by reading this book to them and discussing what they need to do if they stumble across porn.

MARY, AMAZON REVIEW
OF GOOD PICTURES BAD
PICTURES: PORN-PROOFING
TODAY'S YOUNG KIDS

Find out more at **protect
youngminds.org/books**
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