

Pornography: A totally doable plan for protecting our kids,

Episode 79



Power of Moms
A Gathering Place for Deliberate Mothers

With April and Kristen A. Jenson

Pornography isn't something that we as moms really feel comfortable talking about, but this is such an important topic to understand to protect the family from the dangers of pornography.

Good Pictures Bad Pictures is a comfortable, read aloud children's book that tells the story of a mom and dad who teach their child **what** pornography is, **why** it's dangerous, and exactly **how** to reject it. Basically, it's a book about taking good care of your brain by not letting pornography in.

Kids understand the kid-friendly analogies we've provided to explain the brain science behind addiction. They love learning that they actually have two brains—a feeling brain and a thinking brain. This is a powerful concept that helps kids recognize the difference between their impulsive desires and the smart ways get what they want while staying safe. In the book, kids learn that while both brains are important, it's the thinking brain that learns right from wrong and that's why it has to be the boss.

But we can't stop there. The book arms kids with a **5-point CAN DO Plan** to teach them how to help their brain reject pornography as well as minimize the troubling and tempting memories of accidental exposure to it. We believe that in order to stay safe in the digital age, kids **must install an internal filter in their own brain**. And that is the purpose behind *Good Pictures Bad Pictures*: To raise children with sexual integrity.

Pornography is not a teen-only problem and is very accessible to young children. Once they are on the Internet, there are no iron gates to keep them out of porn sites. Even three year olds can find their way onto hard core porn sites. **And pornography is not what it used to be**—it's not just nude centerfolds. Today's porn is streamed in full color and is extremely deviant, violent and graphic.

A child's brain is far more vulnerable to pornography than most parents realize. The recent proliferation of mobile devices connected to the Internet has created an epidemic of pornography exposure and addiction among young children.

The **Brain Science**: There are two reasons why a child's brain is so vulnerable to pornography. First, every parent knows that kids' brains are wired to be *curious* and *imitative*. Their brains have an abundance of special cells called *mirror neurons*. These special neurons make children *feel* as if they are *experiencing what they see*. These mirror neurons have a purpose which is to help kids imitate adult behavior. Unfortunately, this backfires with pornography. Because of mirror neurons, kids are more drawn into it than an adult would be and they are more liable to act out what they see with other children.

Second, a child's ability to control impulses and "just say no" is underdeveloped because the part of the brain in charge of those skills, the thinking brain or the pre-frontal cortex, is immature until they are in their early 20s. A big part of the CAN DO plan is helping kids to strengthen their thinking brain so they have greater capacity to reject viewing images which can be very enticing.

How to broach the subject of pornography with younger kids?

- **In the book Good Pictures Bad Pictures**, mom deliberately sets up a situation where she and her son are looking through a family photo album. She says, "These are good pictures, but there are also bad pictures called pornography." This might be a way to start a conversation with your kids.
- **Share your own story**: "Sometimes when I'm on the Internet, I've accidentally seen pictures that make me feel very uncomfortable—sometimes they're a bit shocking. They show naked people. These pictures are called pornography. Have you ever seen anything like that?"
- **Keep it up**—the temptation of porn will be a constant in their lives. Check in with them regularly and don't freak out if you discover that their curiosity has gotten the best of them. Stay calm and use it as a teaching moment. I've written about what to do if you find out your child has been viewing porn on my blog PornProofKids.com. Just enter the search term Smart Parents and you'll find my six article series.

Top 2-3 things we should do to safeguard our computers, phones, and tablets?

- **Don't give your young children a mobile device**. Instead, buy one for the family and lend it to them to use. Set up rules just like a real library. NEVER allow them to use it secluded in their room or take it with them to bed. Recharge them at night by your bedside.
- **Password protect** every internet-enabled device (including video game consoles) so they must have your permission to use it. If you don't know how to do it, Google it right after you finish listening to this podcast!
- **Install filters, accountability software and set parental controls** on each device as well as a router filter (which filters the entire wi-fi), but don't trust them to completely protect your child. For mobile devices like smartphones, iPods, iPads, and other android devices, learn how to be in charge of that technology. Make sure their friends deposit their phones and mobile devices on your kitchen counter when they come over to play. Your kids will develop much better social skills by experiencing face time with their peers without electronics.

- **Discuss** the real dangers of the Internet with your kids and get them excited about protecting their brains and keeping the entire family safe.

Kristen doesn't want to scare moms but instead wants to give parents a message of HOPE. Kids can be taught to protect themselves from the pull of pornography by installing a filter in their own brain. It acts like a shield that helps them reject pornography no matter where they encounter it--school bus rides, friend's homes, or on visits to family.

Finally, I encourage parents to give their kids a plan for how to proactively respond to pornography exposure. In *Good Pictures Bad Pictures*, we've taken advice from experts and developed a 5-point response plan that uses the acronym "CAN DO." Kids learn exactly how to respond, kind of like a "stop, drop, and roll" plan for pornography exposure.

Why is this important?

- First, because kids are so vulnerable to the powerful pull of highly accessible and highly addictive Internet porn. Kids must have a plan to give them the extra strength they need to disengage and stay free. It's interesting to note that many addicts who are addicted to drugs and porn, report that porn was the most difficult addiction to recover from because the brain cannot rid itself of pornography images like the body can detox from drugs.
- Second, to teach kids **specific cognitive skills** that help them minimize the powerful memories that pornography creates in a child's mind. If they know what to do when those images pop back up, they can divert their thoughts and keep their curiosity under control.

Pornography has so many bad outcomes for a child. It can ruin self-esteem, lead to depression and life-long addictions. Pornography can derail careers and ruin marriages. Protecting our kids from pornography should be a top priority in our parenting.

Each one of our kids is in the crosshairs of the porn industry. If we as parents will have the courage to face this issue head on, our kids won't be left to face it alone. And they'll have the support and tools to they need to grow up free from the brain damaging effects of pornography. We CAN DO it!

Transcribed by Rosie Liljenquist with notes from Kristen A. Jenson