

Let's Talk About Sexting and Pornography Participant Guide

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Realities

- **Curiosity is normal** — it's part of healthy sexual development.
- **Access is easy** — most exposure to pornography is accidental before age 13.
- **Peer pressure is strong** — sexting can feel like a “normal” part of relationships.
- **Brains are developing**— teens are wired for risk-taking but not long-term thinking on impacts.

Risks

- **Emotional impact:** shame, anxiety, pressure.
Body image: distorted expectations about appearance and relationships.
- **Legal risks:** sharing nude images of minors = child pornography laws.
Relational harm: trust issues, coercion, breakups, bullying, exploitation.

Actions for Caregivers

Lead with Empathy

- Stay calm—panic or punishment shuts down trust.
- Ask curious questions: *“What have you heard about sexting at school?”*

Normalize Conversations

- Talk about healthy relationships, consent, and respect—not just risks.
- Use teachable moments from media or news stories.

Set Boundaries

- Keep phones (all digital devices) out of bedrooms at night.
- Promote ongoing conversations about digital footprints and privacy.
- Encourage critical thinking about media messages and porn myths.

Be a Safe Harbor

- Let your teen know: *“If something goes wrong, I want you to come to me. I'm here to help.”*

Tips for Caregivers

- **Use “I” statements:** *“I worry about...”* rather than accusations.
- **Keep it age-appropriate;** build the conversation over time.
Share your values clearly while staying open to their perspective.
- **Revisit the topic often;** one talk isn't enough.

Next Steps:

- Teens need open dialogue, empathy, and guidance to navigate sexting and pornography. Parents can reduce risks and strengthen trust by talking early, often, and without judgment. Start one short, judgment-free conversation: *"What do kids your age think about sexting?"*