

TALKING TO TEENS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF OVERSHARING ONLINE

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
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Talking to your children about sexual topics is not always easy, but it is important, especially in this digital age. “Sexting” or sharing provocative pictures of themselves or provocative messages can have far reaching consequences. Online words or images can be shared with the whole school, not to mention the rest of the world, causing pain and embarrassment. Focusing on how being impulsive in this way can affect self-esteem and have both short- and long-term consequences can help guide the conversation.

1. ***Images have a life of their own.*** Images may be shared beyond who they were intended for and can be used against your child by someone who is not their friend. The phone could also end up in someone else’s hands—like the school principal.
2. ***Sexting could result in a criminal record.*** Remind your child that there are laws that govern their actions, and they may face serious consequences if they are caught. It is illegal to distribute child pornography, and someone who’s underage can be charged with this, even if sharing photos of themselves. So can anyone else who shares the pictures with someone else.
3. ***Dignity is worth protecting.*** Remind your child that she cares about how the world sees her. You can offer real life scenarios about how pictures can come back to haunt her - a job interview or a future relationship.
4. ***Think before you act.*** Finally, ask your child to think carefully about what he shares with others. It’s up to him to make good decisions. You are on your child’s side and your job is to try to help him avoid mistakes that could cause serious misery. Sexting is often done casually but could have very painful consequences.
5. ***Don’t request pictures from others either.*** A tendency may be to focus on telling your child not to send pictures of themselves, but it is equally important to remind them not to ask others to send inappropriate pictures or content either.

Another closely related topic is pornography. Statistics show that a growing number of adolescents are viewing pornography online, which leads to distorted thinking in our children. It’s important to talk to your children about the unrealistic nature of both the actors and the sexual scenes they see depicted.

It’s important to let your children know you are aware of both sexting and online viewing of pornography by teenagers, and that you are comfortable talking about it. These conversations (and it will take more than one), may be difficult to approach, but they get easier. When your children are faced with confusing, or even dangerous, situations, you want them to know they have an adult they can trust to turn to—you!

The above information was taken from the links below:

<https://childmind.org/article/talk-kids-sexting/>

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-your-kids-about-porn/>

Check out the following link for more tips:

<https://www.rachelsimmons.com/the-10-commandments-of-instagram-how-to-be-a-good-human-when-sharing-photos>