

# It's time we talked about pornography

Parent tip sheet **2**



## How parents can make a difference

Pornography is impacting on young people in ways we've never seen before. There's no simple way to prevent it – but there are things that parents can do to support their children to navigate pornography's influence.

### Understand that pornography is now a parenting issue.

Pornography is everywhere. For young people growing up online, it is almost impossible to avoid it. Porn has become the most significant sex educator for many young people.

At the same time as it has become mainstream, pornography has also become more aggressive – with the acts of aggression overwhelmingly directed towards women.

Young people are learning very problematic messages from porn – about gender, sex, aggression, consent and race.

This new reality means it's time we talked with our kids about sex and pornography as a matter of urgency.

### Understand what we can do to minimise pornography's harms.

We may not be able to prevent pornography's harms altogether, but we can:

- limit young people's exposure and access to pornography
- equip and encourage young people to critique what they see in porn
- help young people develop the skills they need to resist pornography's influence
- inspire young people that relationships and sex can be better than what they see in porn
- Support schools to address pornography's influence.

### Set appropriate limits on technology use.

Technology enables us to connect, learn and create all sorts of amazing things – but it also brings risks. Young people's exposure to pornography commonly occurs through technology – on phones, tablets, laptops, desktops, and even music or gaming devices.

Put age-appropriate limits on your child's technology access – including when, where and for how long they can use it.

Filters on modems and devices can help prevent exposure – particularly unintentional exposure. But they're not perfect. Use filters in combination with time-limited access in supervised spaces.

### Encourage critical thinking.

We need to coach our kids to analyse the imagery they see, such as advertising, video games and TV programs. Encourage your kids to ask: Who made this imagery? Why did they make it? What is it saying about men, women, power, aggression, sexuality and race? Are its messages healthy? Respectful? Realistic?

Young people need to understand that pornography is not reality. Porn misrepresents what bodies are like, what people enjoy, what is safe and how people – particularly women – want to be treated.

### Use the tip sheet

*'What do young people need to know about porn?'* to explore with your child how porn misrepresents reality.

## How parents can make a difference

### Support your child to learn the skills they need to respond to pornography's influence.

Young people need to develop practical skills to protect their wellbeing in situations such as when they experience peer pressure to watch porn, or when a partner initiates porn-inspired sex.

You can support your child to develop these skills by talking through the types of situations they may face and exploring options for how they could respond. Let them know you understand that these aren't easy situations – it can feel hard to know what to do or say.

Think creatively with them about their options and discuss pros and cons. Through your encouragement and support, you can help build their self-confidence and assertive communication skills.

Remind them that it is never ok for anyone to pressure them to do anything sexual and affirm that you will support them however you can.

Encourage your child to seek support from you or another trusted adult if they ever feel pressured, unsafe or concerned about anything.

### Support your school to address porn.

If we're serious about equipping young people for a healthy, respectful, consenting sexuality, schools and parents will need to work together.

Support your school to deliver sexuality education for the twenty-first century, where the curriculum includes content that helps students critique porn's influence and aspire to something better.

Refer your school to our website for more information: [itstimewetalked.com/schools/](http://itstimewetalked.com/schools/).

### Help young people to understand that relationships and sex can be so much better than what they see in porn.

Talk with your child about how important it is that sex is consenting, safe, respectful and mutually pleasurable.

The significance of modelling respectful gender relations in your family and community can't be overstated. When young people see respect and equality modelled in the relationships around them, it can help them to develop healthy expectations about how they should be treated – and how they should treat others – in their own relationships.

### Where to now?



Learn more about how you can talk with your child about porn. To view the other tip sheets in this parent series, visit [itstimewetalked.com/resources](http://itstimewetalked.com/resources).