

Excerpts from *Parenting for Purity in the 21st Century*

Conversation Starters

Gather Information

A great way to open conversations is to ask our children about their friends. This is easier for them to talk about because we are not asking about them personally. We can ask things like:

- What do you hear your friends talking to each other about (pornography use, movies they watch, things they do with others, masturbation, their feelings)?
- What do your friends do online?
- What do you see your friends saying to each other online (or “how do your friends treat each other online”)?
- How do you see (boys/girls) treating other (boys/girls) your age?
- When two of your friends are not happy with each other, what do they do?

Ask Opinions

After getting the information, we can ask our children their thoughts, gaining insight on how they think. We can ask:

- How do you feel about (answers to any of the above questions)?
- Do you think (answers to any of the above questions) is helpful or harmful?
- How do you think your friends feel when they (anything you learned from the above questions)?
- How do you think (answers to any of the above questions) affects other people in these friends family or friends?

Share Your Story

Once our children are open enough to discuss what they see others doing and what they feel about it, we can move closer to their experiences, but we still need to prove that we are safe. This is best done by sharing our experiences next. This can feel scary, but we must be willing to tell our children anything we hope they tell us, and we need to go first.

- Let me tell you about a time when I (something related to erotic material, online behavior, inappropriate conversations with peers, physical relationships, sexual thoughts, sexual feelings, confusion about sex, or emotions).
- This is how I felt about (situations listed above).
- This is how (situations from above) affected me.

Ask About Them

Then, and only then, have we earned the right to ask our children direct questions. We can start out simple, and simply ask:

- What questions do you have about (erotic material, online behavior, inappropriate conversations with peers, physical relationships, sexual thoughts, sexual feelings, confusion about sex, or emotions).

That may open up lots of conversation. If not, we can ask more directly.

- Can you tell me what you have been exposed to in the way of erotic material? How did it happen? How did you feel afterward?
- Have you ever had peers get you involved in inappropriate jokes or conversations? How did it happen? How did you feel afterward?
- What experiences have you had in the way of physical relationships? How do you feel about those? Do you have any questions about physical relationships?
- Have you experienced sexual thoughts or fantasies? When do they usually happen? How do you feel afterward? Do you have any questions about those?