

very good
THE SEX TALK

**TALKING TO YOUR KIDS
ABOUT MASTURBATION**

Okay, let's be honest. No one wants to talk about masturbation. Especially as a parent talking to their son/daughter. But we must speak honestly about it. Especially as it relates to pornography. Porn and masturbation create a toxic and destructive combination. However, when you separate pornography from masturbation our discussion and understanding need to adapt. Several of our children are bathed in shame because of this subject and not talking about it can impact their ability to grow in their faith. Below are some additional thoughts that are not included in the script but might help in your conversations in the home.

Understand that this issue is not clear in scripture

Nowhere in scripture does it say something like "thou shall not masturbate." We need to be honest about this. Our conclusions surrounding masturbation need to be both founded in scripture and in response to what the culture is saying. Past generations have conveyed views that have proven to be built on errors and lies. For instance, mental illness, addiction, anxiety and depression have all been examples of things people have proclaimed masturbation could bring. As these myths have been exposed, the generation that has followed has become more skeptical about what to believe...or have just given up asking for answers.

We need our kids to have a clear understanding of what sex is

Often we don't speak clearly on what we mean by the term "sex." First, we need our son/daughter to understand that God created sex. God gave us our sexual desire and even the ability to have an orgasm. These are all good things! I know this might sound weird speaking this truth will be important. Second, we gain trust by also speaking clearly. Part of this means being clear that vaginal, oral, and anal sex are all forms of sexual activity. Third, sex is not a need but rather a desire. We can go through life without sex. We cannot go through life without intimacy. Finally, sex is meant to bring oneness and unity between a husband and wife. It allows two individuals to become "known" (Gen. 4:1) in the most vulnerable of ways.

Masturbation is common among adolescents for a particular reason

Not sure if you've recognized this yet but the adolescent has a plethora of changes occurring in their body all at once! Hormones are dramatically changing the body at such rapid rates that they are producing testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone. These hormones, which are doing their job to make your child physiologically mature and sexually developed, are the same hormones that regulate sex drive and desire. These hormones essentially turn adolescent bodies on sexually! This is how God designed it and we should celebrate this. Further, pertaining to guys, they will start to see frequent and often uncontrolled erections. Their body will begin to produce sperm and semen in great amounts during and after puberty. All of these changes begin to urge him to do something about the sperm and semen that his body stores.

We need to help our kids understand where masturbation is not beneficial

Understand that many of the reasons for considering this are based on the implicit responses (versus explicit where they are very black and white) found in scripture. Although there is no definitive scripture that says to not masturbate the implicit implications and the work of the Holy Spirit have led many to say it is not beneficial for a teenager.

- First, masturbation almost always involves fantasy and lust. Students will often share how sexual thoughts and fantasy fueled the act and brought about an orgasm. This is true for both men and women. Although the fantasy or lust might be fueled differently it is still important to recognize that lust is lust, for both men and women. This also brings up another key point - we can make this "male issue" and not realize we probably also have daughters that struggle with masturbation. This is why it should be a part of the conversation we have with both sons and daughters.
- Next, it tends to distance the individual from God. Many kids will share how they have felt unclean after masturbating which makes it hard to draw close to the Creator. Part of this might come from never having an honest conversation. It might also come from language used to describe this as a sin. Whatever the case, the language you use as a parent around the topic of sex should always work to restore and remove any shame. Too often kids can be bathed in shame and regret because they masturbated. It can create a cycle where they pray for forgiveness, repent of the action, to only have it happen again, and feel even worse. This can have dramatic implications on your child's faith and sexuality. This is why we've included more on shame below. Kids need to understand that this is neither the "worst sin" nor is it unforgivable.
- Third, it can teach our children to have selfish sex. Masturbation teaches our kids that we don't need anyone else to have a sexual experience. They learn to fulfill their own desires rather than in mutual intimacy seen in the love between a husband and wife.
- Another reason, it acts as a form of escape. It is used to mask or even numb pain, or fill some void relating to loneliness. This can often create associations with having an orgasm. So for instance, when our son or daughter feels lonely and they always masturbate to feel better they might find that in the future when this feeling comes over them they go first to masturbation rather than trying to seek community.
- Finally, some might say they need to masturbate so they won't have sex. However, instead of diminishing sexual desire it could increase.

Masturbation can create habitual behavior that influences future relationships

In some cases masturbation can even become an addictive force. This habit, and sometimes addictive behavior, can carry with an individual into their married life. There, it can become a serious obstacle to healthy marital intimacy. Premature ejaculation is now a thing among young men who are married and it can often be associated with habitual masturbation prior to marrying. In recent years, obsessive masturbation has been linked to erectile dysfunction in young adults. Also, it can cause a married person to no longer look to their spouse exclusively for sexual pleasure, and become less willing to give what it takes to satisfy and be satisfied completely with their partner.

There will be times where our kids consider this beneficial

Maybe there is no lust associated with the act. Maybe there is no distancing from God. Maybe it happens so infrequently that it can't even be labeled as a habit. Kids have spoken this reality before and many individuals have written and spoken about this as a *wisdom issue* or *spiritual discernment*. Recognizing this fact and listening to what your children share will be super important. Not engaging in this honestly could build up a wall rather than a bridge with your children.

We have a responsibility to speak into the shame that is so often associated with this discussion

First, don't hide from this conversation. If you don't know an answer simply say, "Let's find out together!" Unfortunately we've remained silent for far too long. This silence communicates we don't care, or even worse, this is something that is so bad we don't talk about it. As the parent, your voice carries incredible weight. Use this voice to bring clarity out of what can many times bring confusion. Second, be sure the language used around this discussion is loving and not shaming. Work on labeling the behavior and its impact and not the child. Take time to use these conversations to ask what they were seeking to accomplish through masturbation (e.g. not to feel lonely, to relieve stress, etc.)? What do they most want from the act of masturbation (besides an orgasm)? Use these opportunities to remind your children about God's good gift of sex and how our kids can work to align their sexual lives with the Creator's design.