THREE PRINCIPLES TO INOCULATE YOUR FAMILY AGAINST THE PORNOGRAPHY TRAP

During one of our programs for parents, a mother overwhelmed by everything swirling around us in the media and society, expressed what many were feeling: “Sexualized media and pornography are everywhere—it’s hopeless. There is no way we can overcome it!” If you’re experiencing similar feelings, take heart; there is GREAT HOPE! God knows what we are faced with in these difficult times and He has given us all the tools we need to protect ourselves and our families from this awful trap. (Remember David and Goliath?) Here are 3 basic principles you can use to protect your family.

**Principle One**

**Teach God’s Plan for Sexual Intimacy**

The purveyors and promoters of pornography present it in a way that entices and excites the senses, appealing to the natural desires of the flesh. Many people have been deceived and lured into their trap. As parents, we must present the message of God’s plan for sexual intimacy in a way that is even more powerful and attractive to our youth. We must clear away the mists of deception and teach the truth about sex. In addition, as adults, we must “walk our talk” and decide which approach we believe in, which message we will allow ourselves to be attracted to and participate in. We must set the example.

**God’s Plan For Sexual Intimacy**

If we speak about sex as “dirty,” “evil” and “forbidden,” we will never be able to compete with the alluring “Let yourself go!” and “If it feels good do it!” messages of Hollywood and pornographers. That approach is also not accurate. Instead, we must teach that God’s Plan For Sexual Intimacy is a precious gift and sacred. This gift is built right into our very nature as human beings. Parents have a special stewardship to teach their children how wonderful this sacred gift is to all of us. It is not something to be feared or ashamed of, but rather something to bridle and keep in reserve for the right time, place and special person— their husband or wife. Young people today need to know that the sacredness of sexual intimacy is worth waiting for; they need to know that it will be one of the most marvelous and fulfilling experiences of their lives.

In essence, we want to present God’s plan for sexuality in such a way that, when faced with the counterfeit offer of pornography and illicit sex, our youth declare, “Why would I settle for this, when I can have that (the joy of a total union in marriage)?” When our youth see sex portrayed in the media, we want them to respond, “These people don’t have a clue about the sacredness of sexual intimacy means, but I do.” As parents, we have a responsibility to clothe the truth as attractively as possible—to combat the glittery wrapping employed by pornographers and the sexually saturated society.

**Take Care Not to Engender “Sexual Shame” In Your Children**

While we should strive to teach our children to seek out entertainment that is decent and uplifting, and avoid pornography in all of its forms, we must be careful not to become “extremists” or “fanatics.” Our focus should be on the beauty of human intimacy as opposed to constantly harping on the negatives.

Consider an attitude often communicated to children and teenagers in highly religious or moral family environments: “Sex before marriage is dirty, evil, forbidden . . . and oh, by the way, be sure to save it for someone you really care about.” A muddled message indeed.

When a child reaches puberty, he or she begins to feel sexual stirrings, arousal and attraction for the opposite sex. If the youth has been taught that sex is “evil” or “dirty,” and/or has observed parents acting extremely rigid or ranting about nudity, sex, pornography, etc., then this child most likely will experience sexual shame: the perception that “because sex is evil and dirty, I must be evil and dirty because I have these sexual feelings.”

We should teach our children about the dangers and darkness of pornography, masturbation, premarital sex, self-indulgence, etc. But of greater importance is to demonstrate appropriate love within the home, coupled with gentle teachings on the wonderful joys of intimacy and calmly point out cultural errors. We should avoid preaching lengthy sermons, interrogating our teens after dates, ranting and raving about a questionable sitcom scene, or taking any other “extreme” approach.
Principle Two

Create and Nurture True Intimacy in Your Family Relationships

Many become vulnerable and fall prey to illicit sex and pornography because they are seeking the intimacy that is lacking in their family relationships. Illicit sex and pornography can temporarily and partially fill that void with a very weak and cheap counterfeit. Afterward an even larger and deeper hole in the soul is left, one more difficult to fill. The consequences include a build up in tolerance that creates a craving for more extreme sexual encounters or porn-viewing.

We Crave Intimacy

Whether we realize it or want to admit it, we crave human intimacy. We have an innate need to love and to be loved. We need to be close and connected to others, especially those in our immediate families. Brain stimulation is not enough. We need what truly matters to the heart and soul.

Many of the teenagers and adults who got involved with internet porn, cybersex chat rooms and/or illicit sexual encounters, report that they were “lonely,” that they felt “disconnected,” and lacked real intimacy in their lives.

You don’t have to engage in sexual behaviors to be “intimate.” In fact, most human intimacy has nothing to do with sexual relations. Rather, it’s about communication, understanding, appreciation, affection, mutual respect, friendship, quality time, sharing, and many more non-sexual actions and factors. One of the great preventions and protections against pornography addiction is true human intimacy, the quality and quantity of time you spend together as a family. Individual attention between husband and wife or parent and child creates a powerful bond. This is what matters most to human beings.

Principle Three

Recognize When You’re B.L.H.A.S.T.ed

If we’re not careful, we can easily exceed our personal limits: too many activities to accomplish, spread too thin, we can get Bored or Burned-out, Lonely, Hungry, Angry or Afraid, Stressed, Tired. (B.L.H.A.S.T.ed was developed by therapist Dan Gray.) If we ignore these signs and continue to neglect our daily self-care, we can become increasingly weakened and vulnerable to self-medication through pornography, cybersex chat rooms and other illicit sexual activities.

And it isn’t just the adults who exceed their limits! We have created an environment of “high expectation” and “super-achievement” for our children and teens as well. Please don’t get us wrong, we believe as parents we should expect a lot of our children and help them stretch, struggle and work hard to achieve worthy goals and greatness. But we believe parents sometimes push too hard. Then children often feel disconnected from us because of our own busy lives. Add this all together and what we often have are B.L.H.A.S.T.ed children and teens—kids who have gone beyond their limits and seek ways to self-medicate and escape.

One of the keys to preventing porn addiction and illicit sexual behaviors is setting healthy limits, striving for balance in our lives. As adults we need to recognize our limits and help our children do the same. Pay attention to your children and recognize the signs that they are feeling B.L.H.A.S.T.ed. Don’t ignore these signs! Take time for renewal, “re-creation,” and healthy pleasure outlets. And pay very close attention to physical, emotional and spiritual daily self-care.

For additional information on protecting children from pornography, order the RECLAiM Sexual Health Parent Primer book called RESCUING OUR YOUTH FROM THE PORN TRAP. Item #2033 (Quantity discounts apply.)

Note: In spite of all our efforts to protect ourselves and our families from the dangers of pornography, there are ever-growing numbers of individuals falling into the pornography trap. If you, or someone you care about, are struggling, please be sure to offer hope and healing by referring to our online recovery program at www.reclaimsexualhealth.com.

Mark B. Kastleman is an author, speaker and trainer in the areas of brain science, personal growth, behavior change, and addiction recovery. Bruce Hannemann, M.A. and Jeannie Hannemann, M.A. are best known as the founders and directors of Elizabeth Ministry International, offering hope and healing on issues related to sexuality, childbearing and relationships. At the request of Bishop David Ricken, of the Diocese of Green Bay, they teamed with Mark Kastleman to take a highly successful online recovery program and create a Catholic version. This collaboration led to the creation of RECLAiM Sexual Health online recovery program and other resources to mend minds, save souls and heal hearts hurt by pornography. There are many people talking about the pornography pandemic, but few speak of proven solutions. RECLAiM Sexual Health has been proven to work with thousands of people in more than 80 countries.

Visit our website to learn more!

www.ReclaimSexualHealth.com