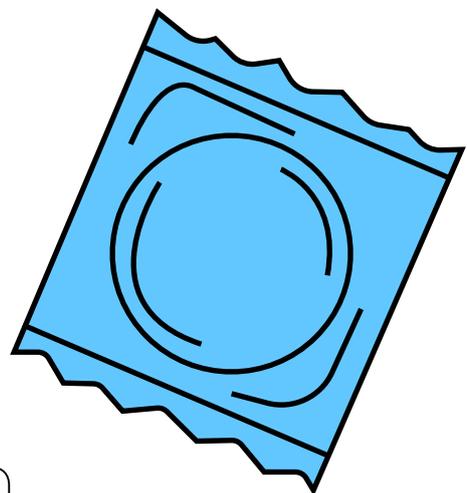


# The Conversation Guide

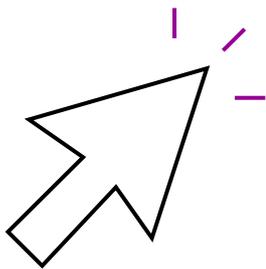
A guide to talking about porn  
with your 16+ year-old



The **porn** conversation  
+not your average sex ed

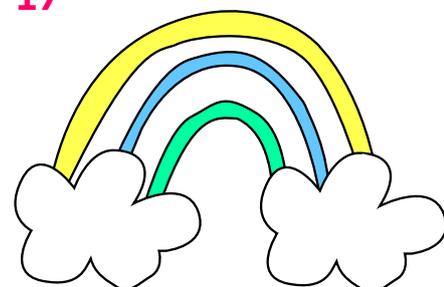
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16+

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# The Conversation Guide

## A GUIDE TO TALKING ABOUT PORN WITH YOUR 16+ YEAR-OLD

### What is The Porn Conversation?

'The talk' is known as that one awkward conversation that you have with your teen that will most likely never be brought up again. **The Porn Conversation** believes in education through continued conversation - beginning with the topic of porn.

By shedding light on the highly controversial debate on **free online** porn and today's online sex culture, we are campaigning for a more educated and alert generation, who are prepared and ready to make better choices about their sexual health; driven by knowledge, and not by fear or shame. **The Porn Conversation** is guided by you, the parent, so you can adjust the script to align with your family's values and principles. We understand that porn isn't the easiest topic to speak to your teen about, so we created this guide to help parents and trusted adults approach this subject in a meaningful way.

### Why have The Porn Conversation?

From an early age, children are regularly exposed to sexualised images. Providing age-appropriate comprehensive sex education for young people is fundamental for their development, yet it is absent in many school curricula. Although most parents agree that sex education is necessary (Kantor et al., 2017), they often fail to talk about **sex** at home. It's only natural that young people are curious about sex. When young people don't have access to age-appropriate and evidence-informed sex education from trusted sources and adults, they are left to learn about sex through what they find online, which in many cases, is porn. Whether it's an advertisement, a video game, a social media post, or a pop-up it's nearly impossible to protect your teen from ever seeing sexual content in their adolescence. According to several long term research studies, adolescent **pornography** viewing predicts a variety of sexual experiences that range from violence (Rostad et al., 2019) to the **objectification** of women (Vandenbosch & van Oosten, 2017).

Comprehensive age-appropriate sex education has many positive impacts, including increasing a young person's knowledge and improving their attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health and behaviours (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2018). The reality is, a large number of young people are streaming porn from the numerous free online porn websites, such as YouPorn, RedTube, and the ever-popular Pornhub and the probability that it is their first exposure to sex is high.

Having **The Porn Conversation** encourages your teen to critically think about the content they consume – and to question the messages! To accomplish this, **The Porn Conversation** Guide uses a **porn literacy** framework to guide these discussions.

## What is porn literacy?

Porn literacy is a type of **media literacy**. Media literacy is a decades-long educational framework and approach to help us become more critical consumers of the **media** we are exposed to (Share et al., 2010).

### The five key questions of media literacy are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

### The five core concepts of media literacy are:

1. All media messages are 'constructed.'
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organised to gain profit and/or power.

Porn literacy works in a similar way to media literacy by using the same core concepts and questions of media literacy as a framework from which young people can critically examine and make sense of the sexual images they see (Hutchings, 2017). It is used to encourage an understanding that porn as a form of sexualised media, whether consumed intentionally or not, has a message. The main goal of porn literacy is for individuals to critique porn and construct their own meanings from the content (Defur, 2014). As one of the primary concerns regarding youth pornography engagement is the impact it can have on forming sexual expectations, developing porn literacy skills could assist young people to anticipate sexual outcomes that are realistic for their lives instead of the fantasy that porn creates.

**The Porn Conversation** guides parents and trusted adults on how to begin talking to their teen about porn, and how to examine the harmful messages free online porn promotes, such as the unrealistic expectations of sex, objectification of girls and women, racism, violence, and the **sexualisation** of teens.

## The issue with free online porn

Free online porn is defined as the most easily accessible pornography on the internet. It is found on websites where you can access unlimited amounts of content for free. Children and adolescents are led to believe the fictitious stories porn creates are real. Most pornography found online is violently **misogynistic**, and leaves people of all ages, genders, and sexualities with a misunderstanding of what sex and respectful

relationships look like - which further maintains the **rape culture** we live in. Having **The Porn Conversation** promotes **consent culture**, which is a respectful and nonviolent alternative to rape culture, teaching young people that only they control their own bodies, and that any interaction with another person should always be received with their **consent**. As parents and trusted adults of young people, it's within our best interest to be aware of the online sex culture of today and provide young people with the information they need to lead full lives - both off and online.

## Your 16+ teen in the digital age

From the age of 16 and up, your teen will most likely be experiencing continued developments; both physically, socially, and emotionally. From body changes, menstruation, masturbation, relationships, identity exploration, to sex - **teens need** **The Porn Conversation more than you know!** It's common for adolescents of this age group to have romantic relationships, and they may have sexual experiences (Sellers, 2021). Teens are growing up in an oversaturated online world, which may bring a lot of social pressure, both online and offline. It's vital that you speak to your teen about body image to provide them with positive support and confidence. Reassuring them that there is no such thing as "normal" can be extremely comforting to a teen who may be struggling with self-esteem issues. Throughout their teenage years, your teen is forming their new identity while becoming a young adult, and will come across many new experiences in their personal lives that will call for evaluating risks. Through sharing your own values and **boundaries**, you can bring some positive guidance for your teen to readily navigate these challenges.

Once you get talking, they might have some questions - more than you could imagine! Research shows parents think they talk more about sex than their kids say they do (Sellers, 2021). So don't be afraid to bring the topic of sex, **sexuality**, and relationships up - even if you're relating it to something you're watching together on TV. Find moments to celebrate their accomplishments, their identity, and growth in their lives. Model behaviours that you expect from them, like listening attentively, asking curious and open questions, and respecting individuals of all identities including sexualities. For example, "I love how you're able to express your boundaries so well in your relationships" or "Why do you think asking and giving consent is important in a relationship?".

See more scripts on different topics [here](#).

### It's helpful to decide how your family will have these conversations. Ask yourself:

- Will you be having **The Porn Conversation** one-on-one or as a family?
- Are there some topics you would prefer to discuss with your teen one-on-one versus as a family?
- How do you wish other trusted adults (e.g., grandparents, co-parents, aunts, etc.) communicate about the topic of sex and porn with your teen? Or do you not want them to speak about these topics with your teen?

- What values and morals would you like to promote as a family?
- How can you as a family use teachable moments throughout your child's life to promote your family's values?

## Initiating The Porn Conversation

First of all, it is okay to feel nervous! This can be an awkward moment for both you and your teen. Remember that your teen will follow your lead- if you feel too embarrassed to talk comfortably about sex, they will feel equally as uncomfortable. The goal here is to make more common conversations around topics of sex and porn, not to shame or embarrass your teen. Some talking points to start off can include:

*"I want to talk to you about something really important that we will talk about a bunch of times but starting could be weird..."*

*"I know you may see porn at some point, it's practically unavoidable! So here's what you need to know about it..."*

*"Could you put your phone/tablet down for a moment? I want to talk to you about some of the images or videos you may have seen online..."*

You might agree that having a conversation with your teen is not always the easiest thing to do, so we completely understand that it's helpful to have some support initiating **The Porn Conversation**. Although it may not seem like it, teens report that their parents have the greatest influence over their decisions about sex—more than friends, siblings, or the media (Albert, 2012). Start the conversation out slowly with supportive reminders such as, "I love you no matter what" or "I had a hard day today and I always have time for you".

When you initiate **The Porn Conversation**, not only are you supporting your teen's lifelong sexual and reproductive health and well-being, but they are more likely to come to you for advice again in the future. As parents and trusted adults, your teen's health and safety come first - which must include their sexual health and online activity too.

## Tips for having The Porn Conversation

**It's never too late or too soon to have The Porn Conversation**

*Having **The Porn Conversation** is better than having no conversation at all!*

**Don't panic, stay calm**

*Think about what will help you stay calm: take deep breaths, drink water, make sure you are in comfortable clothing, create a relaxing and private space. Be honest and say, "I'm going to take a deep breath before I answer you".*

**Keep the tone of the conversation casual**

*Don't use a tone that may suggest your teen is in trouble.*

**See your teen as the adult they are soon becoming**

*Remember that you want your teen to feel comfortable with coming to you when they are a teen.*

**Listen more than you talk**

*When listening to your teen talk, be aware of any negative body language like crossing your arms or looking at your phone.*

**Be clear that it is a judgment-free conversation**

*Tell your teen, "I am not here to judge you for being curious. I am here to support you".*

**Build trust**

*Let your teen know this is a private conversation that won't be shared with others without their consent. Tell them, "I won't share what we spoke about today with anyone else unless you tell me that it's okay with you".*

**Don't have **The Porn Conversation** just once**

*Having continued conversations throughout your teen's life shows continued support.*

**Don't make assumptions**

*For example, don't assume your teen has not seen porn.*

**Don't be afraid to ask questions about their own thoughts and opinions**

*Ask your teen, "What do you think about that?" throughout the conversation to keep the conversation two-sided.*

Whether you enjoy, are indifferent, or detest porn, your teen will be exposed to it at some point. Ignoring it only adds confusion to your teen's sexual future. No matter what your values are, you must explain how most porn is unrealistic, and not an ideal guide to understanding sex.

Many parents find it easier to start the conversation when they are in person, but not face-to-face. For example, while you are driving your teen to basketball practice or taking a walk through a park. When initiating, don't sit your teen down for "a chat", you don't want to make them feel like they're in trouble. It may never feel like the perfect time to have 'the talk', so just go for it! Remember that the worst conversation a parent or trusted adult can have about these topics is no conversation at all.

**Through this conversation guide, you can choose different approaches and talking points to help you navigate **The Porn Conversation**. After all, you know your teen the best!**

## Avoid saying

Avoid using shaming statements that can make your teen feel embarrassed or uncomfortable to open up to you about sexual topics in the future:

“Who showed it to you?”

“Where did you find it?”

“Why are you watching it?”

“Porn is bad/evil/dirty.” (negativity won’t help)

“Can you tell me what you already know about that?”

“You shouldn’t be watching this.”

“What do you think you are doing?”

“What kind of family do you think this is?”

“I can’t believe you did that.”

## What should my opening line be?

### If you are unsure if your teen has seen porn yet...

“I know you may see porn at some point, it’s practically unavoidable! So here’s what you need to know about it.”

“You will come across some pornographic images or videos online someday, and I want to talk about what you might see.”

“When I say the word ‘porn’ what do you think of?”

“I’ve got some questions for you about the internet. Sometimes I get pop-ups of naked people and people having sex. What do you do when that happens to you?”

### So you’ve got the proof they’ve seen porn...

“Nothing is wrong, I want to let you know about free online porn.”

“Hey, I noticed that you have come across some adult websites. I want to talk to you about the content you are seeing.”

“Could you put your phone/tablet down for a moment? I want to talk to you about some of the images or videos you may have seen online.”

## How do I respond?

### If your child is willing to talk

“I understand that you may feel a little uncomfortable, and I am thankful you are open to talking about this with me.”

“Being able to talk about this is important. It is completely natural to talk about sex. This is how you figure out if you are ready for sex is to get comfortable talking about it.”

“You’re smart, and I don’t want you to think what you’re seeing is necessarily how you should act or look.”

“I wasn’t able to have these conversations with my parents growing up, so I really appreciate being able to talk to you.”

“I am so proud of how open and honest you are!”

“Thank you for speaking with me, I want you to know that you can always talk to me about anything.”

“There is a lot of pressure out there to be different than who you really are, but it’s important for you to know that you never have to be anyone but you!”

### **If your teen asks you a question you don’t know the answer to**

“I am not sure! How about we look that up together.”

“I’m also curious to learn more about that. Let’s look for some resources on that.”

### **If your teen is unwilling to talk**

“That’s okay, I understand this isn’t the most comfortable conversation to have with me. You can always come to me when you feel ready.”

“I hear you. This isn’t an easy topic to discuss. I am always available to talk.”

“I want you to know that I am on your team. Your health and safety is my number one priority.”

“If you are ever curious about something I am a person you can talk to at any time.”

“I know this may be awkward for you. If you ever have any questions or need help, I am here for you.”

“I want you to know that I will never judge you for who you are and you can always come to me if you want to talk.”

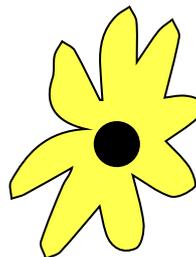
“Let’s pause this conversation for now. I want to come back to it in the future when we both are ready to share more.”

### **If your teen enjoys watching porn**

“I understand that watching porn can be a very pleasurable experience, and it doesn’t always give the whole picture when it comes to sex.”

“Watching porn can make us feel a lot of emotions. How does it make you feel?”

“Porn is made for entertainment purposes, that’s why people find it enjoyable to consume.”



## Non-verbal ways to communicate with your teen

It's also possible to have **The Porn Conversation** through non-verbal communication techniques. Some ideas include:

- Sending a text
- Leaving a note
- Sending an email
- Creating a question box in your home your teen can use to ask handwritten questions

## Let's get critical

A major part of **The Porn Conversation** is encouraging your teen to be critical about what they are consuming online. Through pop-ups, their own curiosity, a typo, or friends - they'll likely be exposed to pornographic content. The source of online sex culture is all-encompassing. From browsing the typical free online porn sites to scrolling through social media, this often results in seeing the kind of images that encourage negative, disrespectful or violent behaviour; or leading your teen to believe they have to look or act a certain way to be attractive.

Through encouraging your teen to critique what they see online they are able to make smarter decisions about sex and relationships. Critical thinking will encourage your teen to question their relationship with porn and how the messages they receive from it might shape the way they feel. Offering this intentional critical lens allows them to be mindful of their porn consumption and to grow as confident and secure individuals. Remember, if you don't **shame** them, it encourages them to open up to you more in the future.

## Remind your teen what they see in porn is not the whole picture. Discussing what happens off camera helps separate the fact versus the fantasy.

- The people you see in porn are performers. They negotiate contracts and get paid for what they do.
- They never show the conversations around consent that occur between actors before, during and after scenes.
- Safer sex strategies are normally not seen on screen. These include the use of contraceptives and sexually transmitted infections testing before and after filming.
- There are filming techniques like lighting, directing, and camera angles that create each video/ad/etc.
- Editing is used to make scenes shorter and don't show foreplay or communication between the performers.
- There are some performers that will use medication to keep an erection for the scenes.
- Performers shoot scenes throughout a period of time that allows for bathroom, water and food breaks.
- We don't see the awkward scenes or bloopers that will be edited out of the final cut.

**When discussing your teen's relationship with porn, they are able to examine what about their porn use may be concerning.**

- What did you understand?
- What didn't you understand?
- Do you have any questions about anything you saw?
- What do you find interesting about porn?

**Provide the following porn literacy questions for your teen so they can examine their own relationship with porn on their own time:**

- What feelings may come up for me before, during, and after watching porn?
- Does the porn I watch directly match my personal values?
- Do I find porn a way to experience pleasure? Or do I use it out of boredom?
- Do I feel in control of how and how often I use porn?
- How does the porn I consume affect my relationships with others?

**Questions to think about when examining the type of porn you are consuming:**

- Who created this porn?
- Who is being paid for this porn?
- Are the performers consenting to the actions taking place, the recording, and the sharing of this content?
- What categories of porn am I usually interested in?
- What messages am I receiving?
- How do these categories represent my sexual desires and interests in a positive way? Which of these might be concerning and reflect harmful stereotypes? (e.g., racism, fetishisation of LGBTQ+ individuals, objectification of women, etc.)

## Let's keep The Porn Conversation going

Free online pornography often promotes harmful and demoralising behaviour that can affect the health and safety of our teens. When encouraging your teen to remain critical about online media, it's important to explore the following messages they might be receiving:

- Sex
- Body Image
- Rape Culture\*
- Objectification of Girls and Women
- Racism and the Fetishisation of Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC)
- Sexualisation of Teens
- Consent and Boundaries
- Online Safety

**\* Content warning:**

This theme contains content that may be triggering for people who have experienced sexual violence or abuse.

## How to talk about...

### Sex

Ask yourself: *“What role does porn play in the way I feel about sex and intimacy?”*  
*“While we can get real pleasure from watching porn, what we see in porn doesn’t always reflect the real-life sex that people have.”*

“Deciding to have sex with someone is an important decision. If you have been having sex or are thinking of having it, you can always talk about it with me first.”

“Sex does not always go as expected, it can be funny, and honestly, a little awkward at times.”

“Unlike what you see in porn, sex does not always have to include penetration and end in an orgasm. With every partner, there must be communication and consent present before, during, and after sex.”

“Anal sex in porn is often depicted as something easy to do, but in real life, it takes preparation and care for it to be safe and pleasurable.”

“In porn, we don’t see the reality of safer sex practices used during or before sex, such as contraceptives.”

“The people in porn are performing, often with a script, a storyline, and lots of editing.”

### Body Image

Ask yourself: *“How has porn helped shape the feelings I have about my body?”*  
*“Do I feel more or less confident in my skin from what I see in porn?”*

“In porn, you may notice some body types. Large penises, perfectly symmetrical breasts, surgically modified vulvas, and no body hair. This image encourages people who watch it to seek this body image for themselves or their partner. It can add a lot of unnecessary pressure!”

“The ways our society creates beauty standards often make us feel less desirable and attractive, especially when what we see in porn is not representative of what we see in the mirror.”

“All bodies, no matter the shape and size, are worthy of love and pleasure.”

“In porn, you often see and hear phrases such as being “tight” when referring to a vagina. When in reality, vaginas are muscles that naturally expand and contract. There are many myths in porn which place further unrealistic bodily and sexual standards.”

“In porn there is use of editing, lighting and heavy makeup to make the performers look like they do.”

“The majority of bodies you see in porn are people who are not disabled. The idea that disabled people are undesirable or **asexual** is completely untrue.”

### Rape Culture\*

Ask yourself: *“What messages am I receiving from porn that promotes violence or abuse?”*

\* **Content warning:** This theme contains content that may be triggering for people who have experienced sexual violence or abuse.

“Rape and sexual violence are abundant in porn. This is one of the most popularly used storylines and it perpetuates rape culture.”

“Coercion is often used to persuade you to consent to something you don’t want to do. Don’t give in to anything you do not want to engage in.”

“No one should ever make you feel bad, guilty, or obligated to have sex with them. You deserve to feel in control of your body and your right to give consent.”

“Sex in real life is a consensual and pleasurable experience for all involved.”

## The Objectification of Girls and Women

*Ask yourself: “Does the porn I watch contribute to or reflect any misogynistic stereotypes?”*

“Misogyny is when women are discriminated against or hated because they are women. You can see this a lot in free online porn in the way that women are objectified to a being without thoughts, feelings, and opinions.”

“In free online porn you will notice that many films are shot from the male gaze, meaning, the women in porn are depicted as tools of the men’s satisfaction as both the viewer and the sexual partner in the film.”

“You may notice that a lot of free online porn presents many **gender-role stereotypes**. For example, in heterosexual scenes, women are more permissive and weak than their partners. What do you think about that?”

“Women in porn are called all sorts of derogatory terms such as “sluts” and “whores”. These words are used to hurt women into thinking intimacy isn’t about a woman’s pleasure - but this is not true.”

“Women are just as worthy of respect and pleasure as men. This is also true in relationships, whether they are sexual or not.”

“Oftentimes women in porn, especially in heterosexual and same gender sex scenes, are depicted as a tool used for the sexual gratification of a man.”

## Racism and the Fetishisation of Black, indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC)

*Ask yourself: “Does the porn I watch contribute to or reflect any racist stereotypes?”*

“The fetishisation of BIPOC dehumanises individuals to the point where they are not seen as deserving of pleasure, but objectified tools.”

“You may notice tags and titles used to describe BIPOC performers and the films they are in are often racist.”

“You will notice in many free online porn sites that Black male performers are often presented as more aggressive than white performers.”

“There exists a lot of racial terms and hate speech in free online porn that perpetuates harmful stereotypes and behaviours towards BIPOC.”

“The ‘interracial’ category in free online porn sustains racist stereotypes. It says that there is something “taboo” about interracial sexual relationships; that it’s not culturally acceptable behaviour.”

“In free online porn, Black women are more likely than white women to be depicted as targets of aggression.”

## Sexualisation of Teens

Ask yourself: *“What messages about myself am I getting from porn?”*

“In porn, you will often see titles or tags that show “teens” in the videos. They are often performed by younger looking adults and are not actual teens. However, this encourages predatory behaviour that targets underage users online.”

“Your body is owned by nobody but you. You are not an object that is for the viewing pleasure of others.”

“You may notice that some of your peers may choose to look older than they are to gain gifts or attention both online and offline.”

“Some people, especially teen girls, believe they are expected to dress and pose online much differently than boys to appear more attractive.”

“In society, especially online, people offer gifts and access to people based on how they look and behave. In this family, you do not have to please anyone by being anything but yourself.”

“Your value does not come from the way you look, act or dress. You do not have to please anyone by being anything but yourself.”

## Consent and Boundaries

Ask yourself: *“What messages about consent am I getting from porn?”*

“No matter what you see in porn, know that you are able to create your own boundaries on what feels good or not to you. Everyone has the right to have their boundaries respected.”

“Giving someone consent is more than just saying “yes”. It is important to tell your partner what is and isn’t allowed, and to be specific.”

“Even if you consented to something in the past, you can always change your mind at any point in a situation or relationship”

“Not everyone is going to find the same things pleasurable, so communicating before, during, and after sex with all partners is important.”

“Consent is something that is not given just once, but can change throughout your relationships.”

“No” is a full sentence, you do not need to explain yourself when it comes to consent.”

## Online Safety

Ask yourself: *“Does what I see reflect my values?”*

“There is a lot of content on the internet that can make you feel confused or scared. You can always come to me if you see something you need to talk about.”

“I cannot protect you from everything you see online, but knowing how you can be safe online and to question what you see is a top priority.”

“Sometimes people use the internet to make others feel hurt. If this is happening to you or someone you know, let me know so we can talk about it.”

“When we talk to other people online, it is very possible that they aren’t who they say they are. Never give anyone your personal information.”

“Sexting or sharing nude pictures of yourself or others can be very dangerous. People can easily screenshot, forward and share explicit content. It is also against the law because of your age and can get you in lots of trouble.”

“When you write something online or in a group chat, you can not take it back. The internet does not forget. Be mindful that there are circumstances to everything you put online.”

## Going beyond the first talk

When advocating for the sexual health of your teen, it's critical to discuss topics beyond porn. As parents it is crucial to remain and maintain communication with your teen to support their decisions. **Educating yourself** before having **The Porn Conversation** is beneficial in providing your teen with the most comprehensive sex education.

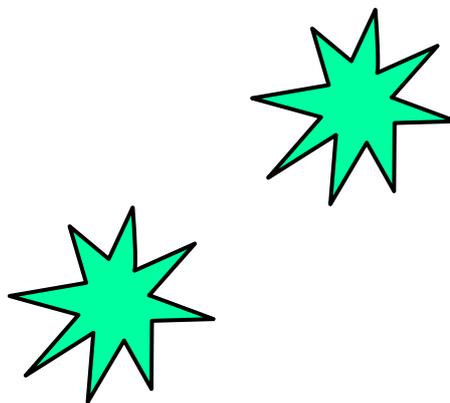
**For lessons and activities, check out our 16+ year-old Curriculum for more on:**

- **Anatomy and Physiology**
- **Puberty & Adolescent Sexual Development**
- **Gender Identity & Expression**
- **Sexual Orientation & Identity**
- **Sexual Health**
- **Consent & Respectful Relationships**
- **Porn Literacy**
- **Interpersonal Violence\***

**\*Content warning:** This theme contains content that may be triggering for people who have experienced sexual violence or abuse.

**For a comprehensive list of sites and apps for families to be aware of, visit **Erika's no-go list.****

**If you think your teen would be interested in learning more on their own, send them to our **chat bot.****



# The Glossary

## Asexual

The sexual orientation or identity associated with a person who has little to no sexual attraction for anyone.

## Boundaries

Limits we establish to protect ourselves from being hurt, manipulated, or used by others both emotionally and physically.

## Consent

When someone freely chooses and agrees to do something.

## Consent culture

The creation of an environment that promotes the normalisation of using consent throughout your life in all relationships.

## Free online porn

The most easily accessible pornography on the internet.

## Gender-role stereotypes

Over generalised beliefs that certain behaviours and attitudes are considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for a person based on their gender.

## Media

The many different forms of communication that carry a message (e.g., social media, TV, advertisements, porn, etc.).

## Media literacy

The ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.

## Misogynistic

The hatred or discrimination against women or girls.

## Objectification

The action of degrading someone to the status of an object.

## Pornography

Printed or online media containing the explicit description or display of naked bodies and/or sexual behaviour. Otherwise known as “porn”.

## Porn literacy

A framework based on media literacy used for critical examination of porn as a type of media.

## Rape culture

An environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence is depicted and excused in the media.

## Sex

A consensual activity that adults, and some older teens who feel ready, may do. Sometimes just for pleasure and sometimes to reproduce.

## Sexualisation

When a person is sexually objectified by others to the point that their value is based solely on their perceived sexual appeal or behaviour.

## Sexuality

The way people experience or express themselves sexually.

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