

Should You Tell Your Wife About Your Porn Problem?

From wives to moms, women are front and center in the war against porn. But what role should women play? Where are the lines?

Shaunti Feldhahn and Craig Gross, the founder of , have researched these issues in years—and done hands-on ministry—to get some answers. In their new book, *Through a Man's Eyes: Helping Women Understand the Visual Nature of Men*, the duo shares many insights that could help in the battle against porn addiction.

Charisma News caught up with them to get some insights. You can still read part one of this interview: “What Women Don’t Understand About Men Who Struggle With Pornography.”

Charisma News: Are you suggesting that a wife be her husband’s accountability partner?

Gross: No! Definitely not. In the book we tell every woman reader what many therapists have told us: A man’s wife absolutely cannot be his main accountability partner. He needs to be talking to another guy for accountability. If she was his accountability, that would make her the police. Not good for the marriage!

Feldhahn: What we are suggesting is literally that she be a partner. That he can open up to her and get support. That she understand what is going on in his head and the battle he faces every day so he feels like she is on his side in the battle. That she is “for” him instead of being an antagonist he has to tiptoe around or be on guard against.

Gross: I wrote a book called *Open* about the importance of accountability—in this case, accountability with other men.

But we've often found that even though accountability is normal and expected in the church world, men never even get into accountability relationships to begin with, if their wives aren't supportive of it.

For example, we have this really popular software program, X3watch, to help people avoid temptations online—but how is a guy going to be able to install and use any sort of program to help him out if his wife isn't aware of the need for it? How is he going to get the support that every guy needs?

Feldhahn: I saw a great example of this early on. I often have pastors invite me to do pastoral interviews on various subjects as the sermon times at their churches; like for a Family Matters or Pure Sex sermon series.

One of the very first of these pastoral interviews, we talked about my research on this topic and afterward a man came up to talk to me. He quietly told me he wrestled with porn and that this church had a Saturday morning men's group that he had wanted to attend, to get some help, to get free of it.

But when he told his wife he'd like to go, she got alarmed, like, "What are you saying? Are you saying you're attracted to other women? What are you saying?" He told me all he could do was say, "Never mind, it's fine."

He wanted to get help, but he didn't want to upset or hurt his wife. And I thought: How incredibly sad that this man was one who actively wanted to get help and support, and yet still felt trapped, in part because he simply didn't know how to help his wife understand. That was when I started to realize the need for this book.

Charisma News: You've talked a lot about the importance of enlisting the support of a woman as a wife. What about as a mom?

Feldhahn: That is another crucial missing-link factor. It's

preventative. If you want to have fewer porn problems in the church tomorrow, catch them today among the kids and teenagers before they get a real hold.

I have a talk on unleashing the inner mama bear of every mom to fight for our sons today, and believe me ... it's necessary. Whether it is elementary schools that don't know how boys learn differently, so the boys feel stupid and check out, or Internet advertising that is designed to lure our young men in and get them hooked on porn, our boys are growing up with a target on their backs. We moms need to say, "Enough is enough; you are not getting my son!" and know what to do about it.

Gross: A mom can make a huge difference if she knows what to watch for, and what to do about it. In my work with XXXchurch, we deal with a lot of parents. Sadly, I deal with more moms than dads. Not that I don't like dealing with moms but I've noticed that fathers are often absent from these conversations. So if the moms are willing, we have to equip them.

After all, the moms drive the kids in the minivan, and see what the kids are watching on TV. They might catch a glimpse of what the kids are browsing on the Internet. We frequently get panicked emails asking what to do when they just found their kid looking at online porn. In the book we walk women through how to talk to their sons; to point them to their dads for the initial conversation but after that to be able to calmly seize those windows of opportunity that come up for other discussions.

Feldhahn: The key for us as women is to know how to help a son establish good habits in his thoughts and actions. If starts well, hopefully he will continue well and spare himself a lot of pain for the rest of his life. That's a great example of how a woman who understands the visual nature of men and boys just a little bit more, can make a lasting difference for generations.