



## Preventing the Sexualization of Childhood: What Adults Can Do

There are several things parents and professionals can do. None of them are totally satisfactory at dealing with the problem, but they make it better.

- 1.) Try to limit your children's exposure to sexualized content from media and popular culture as much as possible when they are young. You won't be totally successful but this is a start.
- 2.) Let children know that parents and other caring adults are there to talk to them about what they see and hear – without guilt or punishment. Children need to see caring adults as people who can help them make sense of what they are seeing, even when there are no perfect answers. What's important is that children don't have to make sense of it all by themselves or feel guilty about what they see or hear.
- 3.) Help children develop positive identities of themselves as girls or boys – who are competent and who can do lots of things, not the narrow stereotypical images they often get from the media/commercial culture.
- 4.) Help children develop positive caring relationships with other children and adults and learn caring behaviors.
- 5.) Answer children's questions about sex. Try to do it by having give and take conversations where you ask questions to find out what they know and are asking for. Give a little bit of info and see how they respond. Are they satisfied?
- 6.) Convey your adult values in ways that leave room for children to ask questions and say what they think, too.
- 7.) Work together with other adults to support each other's efforts and try to set ground rules about what clothes are off limits and other limits.

*So Sexy, So Soon: The Sexualization of Childhood*

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