

Your Child and Technology: What Every Parent Needs to Know

No amount of high tech computer filters and blocks can take the place of good parenting when it comes to Internet safety, according to experts at The Family Center's February program on children and technology.

Grosse Pointe Public School System psychologist Scott Bruns led the presentation with a discussion of today's youth, the Millennial Generation, and how they compare to previous generations. Millennials — also known as Echo Boomers, Generation Y, Mosaics and the Net Generation — have grown up with a wide array of electronic social networks such as the Internet, cell phones, instant messaging, MP3s and online communities. This generation tends to be confident, hopeful, goal and achievement oriented, civic minded and inclusive. Bruns quoted from the PBS "Frontline" episode, "Growing Up Online," by saying, "The Internet is responsible for the greatest generation gap since the advent of rock and roll. Today's generation is digital natives while the rest of us are digital immigrants." He added, "We are not adapting nearly as quickly to our students as they adapt to the world. How can we beat them in technology? We can't. We must teach them to be good citizens."

John Maggio, "Growing Up Online" director, states, "If you're basically a grounded kid, you're going to be fine. We need to teach people good citizenship, a sense of morality, right and wrong, that transfers to the Internet." Bruns added that the number of actual incidents of online predators is very small. "Most kids are savvy enough to know when something seems wrong on the Internet."

Joe Bracken of Grosse Pointe Geeks said most parents ask, "What am I going to do about my kids online?" Many parents are ready to block everything. He cautioned, "the more you block things from them, the more they are going to wonder about it. ... Keep the dialogue open. No matter what blocks you put on your computer, kids will get around it."

Social networking is the latest buzz word he said for sites in which users create content, such as MySpace.com, Facebook.com, YouTube.com and others. Today's children are more comfortable than their parents with being public. They may try on different identities on social sites and escape by being someone totally different. Rather than physically hanging out, kids hang out electronically. They find willing listeners in the middle of the night, when they are bored or tired or grounded. Bracken warned that everything one puts on the Internet will remain there for a very long time. "Even if you think it won't affect you," he said, "it may come back to haunt you. The way kids feel today may not be the way they feel a week from now." But their impulsivity drives them to write more than they should without thinking of consequences.

Steve Woloszyn, the Grosse Pointe school district's technology manager, makes a living out of blocking kids from inappropriate online material and use. He's been doing it for 35 years, and he is motivated — he's a parent.

He spoke about the district's use of technology to enhance learning. Computer education

begins in kindergarten and runs through high school as career and educational tools. All students are taught acceptable use of technology and are required to sign an Acceptable Use Agreement. Students are issued E-mail addresses in the sixth grade.

Blocking children from inappropriate online material and use within our schools is a major component of Woloszyn's job. Federal mandates and relevance to curriculum require schools block some Web sites, he said. Not just adult sites are blocked. So are the social network sites. Wikipedia was blocked after middle school teachers found students accessing inappropriate material. He said the school district subscribes to NetTrekker as a safe alternative to Google for students. There are many school district online resources. Woloszyn recommends parents go to www.gpschools.org/ci/ce/computer/home.htm.

Written by John Minnis

Internet rules for kids

- Do not give out personal information to online strangers
- Do not post pictures or videos that could be used to identify you
- Do not meet in person anyone you have only met online
- Treat others as you would like to be treated
- Cheating, plagiarism, stealing and vandalism are wrong online as well as in the "real world"
- Tell your parent if anything makes you uncomfortable

Your Marriage is Worth It

My husband had that “Is there something you want to tell me” look on his face when I shared my selections for this year’s Parenting Symposium:

- “Keeping the Shine on Your Marriage”
- “How to Survive Parenthood without Losing your Mind or Your Marriage”

So, imagine his hesitant response the week after the event as I worked through my list of a dozen or so little things I could do to show my spouse I cherished him, a do-able homework assignment from presenter Mary Anne Lushe, LMSW, marriage and family therapist.

The exercise was simple, but it reminded me to “be romantic on a micro level” as Lushe suggested, to take advantage of small oppor-

tunities and really think about my behavior and how I communicated with my spouse. I tried using “softened start-ups” to begin discussions we had to have instead of “You never...” phrases, letting go of being right, and not sharing every emotion.

Instead of always being in the divide and conquer mode to get through the hectic schedule of school and homework and activities we created, I tried to be realistic in scheduling and truly thought about Dennis Muzzi’s, LMSW, therapist, comment that he didn’t remember his parents being at every game, or even wanting them there. But, as one father in the audience commented about our community, “If you’re not at Elworthy [field], it’s a mortal sin.”

So, looking at the realities of the magical childhoods we’re trying to create for our children, it’s really important to take advantage of the opportunities to connect with other parents at Elworthy, to nurture who our kids are, and to appreciate the little buffer times we can build into our crazy schedules. Appreciate the time stuck in traffic. Reach out to hold hands. And as Muzzi said, “Enjoy the snippets now” because as long as you don’t do or say anything now that you can’t take back, “This time will end and you will have more time later with your partner.”

We can do this, because our Kids are Worth It!

Written by Rebecca Fannon

Ask The Expert

– “Healthy Home” by Robin Heller, executive director, LocalMotion

Q. What are some things a parent can do to create a healthier home?

A. Start with some easy things.

Try to minimize your use of plastics and vinyl. Use glass containers to microwave food instead of plastic containers or wrap. Use reusable metal travel mugs instead of bottled water. Look for toys made from natural materials. If you do get something with vinyl, air it outside until the smell is gone and don’t allow children to put the product in his/her mouth.

Read the labels on your cleaning supplies. Do any say danger or warning? If so, consider replacing them with less toxic alternatives that say caution on the label. For example,

try hydrogen peroxide instead of bleach. Or, use baking soda instead of scouring powder. Perhaps you could use vinegar and water instead of a commercial glass cleaner. (One note, the vinegar and water solution may have to be used a few times to cut through the residue of the old cleaner.) Many homemade cleaning recipes using not much more than water, vinegar, baking soda and a mild soap can be healthier and can save money. If you prefer to buy premixed, several brands of non-toxic cleaners are available at our local stores.

Avoid using any pesticides on your lawn or garden. Less toxic choices to control weeds abound, including ones that make a beautiful lawn with no ingredients linked with serious health problems for children, pets and others in the family.

Q. What about using antibacterial soaps or hand sanitizers?

A. While we want to be conscious about healthy living, killing all germs may not be desirable. Use of antibacterial products in a healthy home may not be necessary. Some concerns about using antibacterials include the development of more resistant strains of germs. Also, some of the commercially available antibacterials include ingredients that can be harmful to waterways and our health.

Generally, washing your hands with soap under running water is sufficient. If you need a portable sanitizer, look for one using alcohol, not triclosan or triclocarban. For countertops, a solution of vinegar and water is an alternative.

Q. Where can I learn more about healthier product alternatives?

A. Fortunately there are several sources:

- Websites such as safecosmetics.org and cosmeticdatabase.com help identify cosmetics with fewer harmful ingredients.
- Local stores carry organic foods which are produced without pesticides and carry non-toxic cleaning products. Just ask the manager for their selection.
- Contact LocalMotion, a Grosse Pointe based environmental health nonprofit, for more information and product lists. www.local-motion.org

Thank You’s

Thank you, thank you to the following donors who recently made gifts to The Family Center:

Megan Brennan	Jere & Susan L’Heureux	Kurt & Carole Tech
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Lisa Khoury & Serge Thomas	Strickler <i>in honor of their mother on Mother’s Day</i>	



From The Director.....

What a great beginning to the New Year! The excitement of participating in the 5th annual Parenting Symposium, the Partners In Parenting series and the 8th annual Month of the Young Child celebration was a great way to get acquainted with The Family Center's programs and meet participants.

In my service as an advisory board member for The Family Center over the past eight years, I was able to participate in the formation of this wonderful community organization. I watched it grow under the leadership of Diane Strickler and am pleased to further its development. I thank Diane for her endless support with the transition process. In her new role as founder, Diane will remain as an active volunteer, helping to preserve the foundation that has been laid and continuing to serve as an ambassador for an expanding circle of supporters.

Over the past 3 months, it has been my pleasure to meet over 50 active members consisting of board members, advisory council members, community volunteers and professionals. The collaborative effort displayed by this group of dedicated individuals is evidenced in the teamwork of planning educational programs and events.

The Family Center is a unique organization with an excellent reputation for quality programs and the ability to respond to community needs.

The Family Center also recognizes Beth Quinn for her seven years of excellence as our newsletter editor. This is Beth's last newsletter edition. She has decided it is time to step down and pursue other interests. Thank you Beth for sharing your talents over the years! We welcome John Minnis as our new newsletter editor.

I look forward to meeting many more of you in the months ahead. The Family Center prides itself on providing educational enrichment and resources to parents, caregivers, educators and professionals. Our accessible, community based programs help to build healthy, resilient, successful kids...in turn helping to build stronger families and a stronger community!

As with any nonprofit organization facing today's challenges, we ask for your continued suggestions and support so that The Family Center may continue to expand its mission with enhanced community programs. Please feel free to contact me directly with your suggestions, I look forward to hearing from you!

Deborah A. Liedel
Debbie.Liedel@familycenterweb.org or (313) 432-3582

Full Circle Giving Opportunities!

As a non-profit organization, The Family Center's mission of *building healthy, resilient, successful kids...together* relies on generous contributions from our donors. Every gift, large or small, makes a difference! Your support provides the foundation for current and future programs. Most importantly, it makes an impact on the community we serve together!

We hope you will consider making a gift to The Family Center. Gifts in honor or recognition give three ways...to the honorees, to The Family Center and to the donors who know their support is valued!

Here are some Full Circle Giving Opportunities

The Family Center welcomes sponsors to contribute in-kind items and pro-bono services. We need assistance with marketing and production of print materials. In addition, we are in need of sponsors and contributions of items for our 2008 Holly Fest annual fundraiser.

We welcome third-party events to promote greater awareness about The Family Center and broaden our base of donors and partnerships.

Circle of Friends is a newly formed group which will assist The Family Center with its current fundraising events. We are looking to form a creative, energetic team to help us develop a new awareness & fundraising event!

Please contact us directly at info@familycenterweb.org or 313.432.3832 regarding Full Circle Giving opportunities! Or... contact me directly at Debbie.Liedel@familycenterweb.org or 313.432.3832 regarding Full Circle Giving opportunities!

FAMILY HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR

Join us for a **free** community health fair to celebrate the opening of our **new Pediatric Unit**

Saturday, July 19

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Beaumont Hospital, Grosse Pointe

468 Cadieux Road, Grosse Pointe

Featuring:

Ask the Doctor – pediatrician, family medicine, dermatology, gynecology.

blood pressure checks • car seat safety • massage demos

Information available about HPV, diabetes and nutrition, healthy food products and more.

The Family Center of Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods will offer "Navigating the Adolescent Years – A Road Map for Parents and Professionals"

Grosse Pointe Public Library presents:

Story Time with Miss Kathleen
Shows at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Detroit Science Center presents: It's Alive in Eekstein's Lab
Shows at 11 a.m., noon and 1 p.m.

For more details, visit www.beaumont-hospitals.com

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