



Rand Park High School

Integrity and Commitment

Asgaai Avenue, Randpark Ridge • 011 793 1246 • www.randparkhigh.co.za

COUNSELLING NEWSLETTER

Tech-savvy Parenting

29 June 2017

Dear Parents, Guardians & Learners

We welcomed Nikki Bush, creative parenting expert and co-author of the bestselling book “Tech-Savvy Parenting” to our school recently. She presented a very informative and insightful talk on how to be a tech-savvy parent. She spoke about how to make sense of the digital and technological world our children and teenagers are so enthralled by and to be aware of the dangers and risks associate with new technology, the Internet and social media platforms.

As parents and educators, we need to be knowledgeable about how to manage the use of online platforms, devices and other technological resources more effectively in our homes and to guide our children accordingly.

Since the parents who attended this talk found it so enlightening, I wanted to share some of the key points with our broader parent body as I believe we can all benefit from receiving some guidance on this matter.



Source: Times Magazine

I think most parents of teenagers feel like technology has taken over their teenager and their households and may want to ban technological devices at times. From a very young age, our children are being exposed to technology and screens, some as young as the first year of their lives. In many cases, exposure starts with mom’s or dad’s cell phone – young children play games or view photos on these devices while the parent has a conversation or is busy with something else. From then on, the exposure to technology just increases with age, with the following media platforms taking priority:

Television:

Television viewing is often the main pastime for many children from very early childhood. Parents often use TV viewing as an activity to keep the children busy so that they can get on with their household chores, work or social life. When children are watching TV they are usually quiet and behaving so it becomes a convenient go-to activity for many parents. This often results in children becoming reliant on TV viewing for entertainment and as a soothing method.

...the content of the shows and underlying messages influence a child’s values...

We need to remember that television and the content of the shows and underlying messages being communicated influence a child’s values, worldviews and ideas. Often parents are not even aware of the content of the shows their children are watching. This is especially true when kids have free access to the PVR remote or Wi-Fi password and therefore have access to any shows being aired on DSTV or streamed on the Internet.

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It is so important to remember that television time does not replace personal contact and learning opportunities that your child needs in order to develop emotionally. Although there is nothing wrong with watching TV when the content is constructive and age-appropriate and when the timeframes are reasonable, it should not be used as a replacement for other educational or learning activities or as an hours-on-end pastime.

Games:

One of the main ways in which our children, teenagers and even many adults entertain themselves is with gaming devices. These games can be used constructively for recreational purposes if monitored and used within reason. However, digital games are also very addictive and when used without control, monitoring and time restrictions, can pose a serious challenge in any household. The users become so intrigued by these games that their world starts revolving around the cyber community and they may easily lose their grip on reality or even struggle to discern between the digital fantasy community and reality. As a result, personal relationships and normal daily functioning are often affected. Many people actually engage in these games because it is their way to escape reality which makes them even more susceptible to becoming addicted.

... the extremely violent nature of some of these games often promotes and leads to aggressive, defiant or rebellious behaviour...

Furthermore, these games impact on the child's and teenager's psyche as the repetition thereof has a conditioning effect. When they are constantly exposed to the cruelty and extremely violent nature of some of these games, it often promotes and leads to aggressive, defiant or rebellious behaviour. They become conditioned and desensitised to what they are constantly witnessing and performing in the game.

Once again, not all games are bad and controlled use of age-appropriate games is the key to managing unnecessary negative effects.

Social Media:

Social media and instant messaging have become extremely popular tools for communication and connecting with friends, acquaintances and even strangers all over the world.

This online interaction in the cyber community often serves as a measure for how socially acceptable and valued the teenagers or children view themselves, based on the acknowledgement and attention received on these platforms. Unfortunately where it can boost the popularity for one person, it may break down another person's self-esteem completely as it is often used as a tool to publically ridicule, humiliate and bully others.

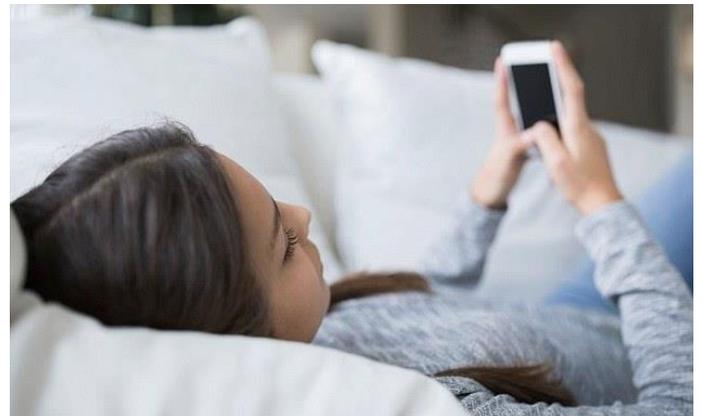


Image source: <http://dailymail.co.uk>

Then, of course, there is the very real danger of countless paedophiles and criminals scouting social media sites in search of naïve and vulnerable youngsters to take advantage of.

... when posting on social media, the audience is limitless and almost impossible to control ...

Children and teenagers don't realise that when they post something on social media, the audience is limitless and it is almost impossible to control who will be able to view it and have access to information about their personal lives.

We need to make our children and teenagers aware of these dangers and risks and equip them with the skills and knowledge to protect themselves and act responsibly online.

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Guidelines for you as a parent:

- It is your responsibility and duty as a parent to instill values in your child and to guide him/her to make responsible decisions. It is so important to spend time building a relationship so that the channel of communication between you and your child remains open.
- Restrict usage of TV, the Internet, gaming and social media. Don't hesitate to confiscate games and/or devices when the child is using them irresponsibly or excessively.
- **OurPact** is a free service for setting time-based restrictions on iOS and Android devices. Parents can install it on a child's device and control the settings from their device or from a website to set device bedtimes, schedules and block or grant access to apps.
- Set rules and determine clear and definite boundaries for the use of technology. For example, games may only be played over weekends for a limited amount of hours and not during the week. Be consistent with the enforcement of rules and consequences.
- Be aware of which digital and online games your child plays, as well as the content and nature thereof. Be observant when your child starts displaying rebellious, defiant or aggressive behaviour that could be related to the games and address it immediately.
- Encourage personal social interaction with friends and family as well as involvement in sports and extra-murals in order to minimise time spent on gaming.
- Monitor your child's social media and cyber activity and insist on being "friends" or "following" them on social media platforms. This is the best way to keep track of what is going on in your child's social and digital world. Respect boundaries and do not comment on all their posts, but be observant of their activity.

- Help and guide your child in setting their privacy settings on social media. Teach them to be selective of the information they post online in order to protect their reputation.
- Remind your child that when cyber-bullying takes place, they should not delete messages of such a nature, but rather report it to you or another adult immediately.

We need to remember that technology is a resource and not the problem. Rather, it is the inappropriate use thereof and lack of parental control and boundaries that creates problems. Parents need to play an active role in guiding, monitoring and protecting their children in the digital world.

If you would like to know more about this topic and how to be a Tech-Savvy parent, you may want to consider purchasing Nikki Bush's book: "Tech-Savvy Parenting".

Keep warm this winter and stay safe if you are traveling.

Yours sincerely

L KLEINGELD (MRS)
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

**School closes on Friday, 30 June
directly after the exam has been
written and re-opens on Monday, 24
July 2017.**

**Term 2 school reports will be
distributed on Tuesday, 1 August.**

Enjoy the holidays!