vintage social networking

http://wronghands1.wordpress.com   ©John Atkinson, Wrong Hands

Books we can recommend

"King me" by Steve Farrar – (a book about the father's role in giving his son direction)

"Preparing for Adolescence" by James Dobson

"Have a new kid by Friday: How to change your child's Attitude, Behaviour and Character in 5 days" by Dr Kevin Leman

"Wild things, the art of nurturing boys" by S. James and D Thomas

"Growing kids with character" by Hettie Britz

Other recommendations

Focus on the Family offer wholesome and Godly guidance in parenting and marriage. CDs can be purchased from their online store: **www.safamily.co.za**.

Recent recommended purchases:

"Stress relief for busy moms 1 & 2" by Dr Kevin Leman

"**Being there for your son 1 & 2**" by Dr Steve Farrar

"**Learning to love your wife 1 & 2**" by Jeff and Shaunti Feldhahn

ParentConnect

Volume 3/2015

TAMING THE SOCIAL MEDIA MONSTER

'WHAT THE TECH IS GOING ON?'

This was the topic of a presentation I attended in the week by a local play therapist. She was discussing the fact that with children and parents spending more and more time on technological devices, there is less and less modelling of appropriate emotional expression.

This confirmed an experience I had recently. A family came to sit down at the table next to us in a restaurant. The parents were accompanied by a young daughter who looked about ten or eleven. She was busy on her ipad as soon as she sat down, looking up briefly to choose from the menu, and then speaking briefly to the waiter to place her order. She did not say one word to her parents until the food arrived. She did not look up to acknowledge or thank the waiter as the food was placed before her, and then multi-tasked as she managed to shovel some pasta into her mouth while she continued with her challenge on the ipad.

This scenario is just one indication of how technology and social media are increasingly having more of an influence in our lives and in the lives of our children. It is a world that is constantly moving and changing. It is also a world where, generally speaking, the younger generation leads the older.

There are indeed **so many** positives about this advanced, dynamic technological world, and the many benefits that it brings, and we need to embrace it. Finding the balance is crucial, and therein lies the challenge for us, especially as Christian parents: we need to be informed!

Rich Larmour has very kindly contributed a very thought-provoking article on this area of parenting. We have also included a book review by Carmen Oosthuizen on *Growing up Social*, by Gary Chapman. Many thanks to both of them for their contributions.

Regards,

Linda Anderson

Cravings

desiring God in the midst of motherhood

Pin God 1st!

31 days - 1/1 - 1/31 choosing God before social media . www.cravingsonline.net

Exodus

- 1/1 - Exodus 1:8-14, 22
- 1/2 - Exodus 1:22-2:4
- 1/3 - Exodus 2:5-10
- 1/4 - Exodus 2:11-14
- 1/5 - Exodus 2:15-22
- 1/6 - Exodus 2:23-25
- 1/7 - Exodus 3:1-6
- 1/8 - Exodus 3:7-10
- 1/9 - Exodus 3:11-15
- 1/10 - Exodus 4:1-5
- 1/11 - Exodus 4:10-17
- 1/12 - Exodus 7:1-7
- 1/13 - Exodus 7:8-13
- 1/14 - Exodus 7:14-18
- 1/15 - Exodus 8:5-8
- 1/16 - Exodus 8:16-19
- 1/17 - Exodus 8:29-32
- 1/18 - Exodus 9:5-7
- 1/19 - Exodus 9:10-11
- 1/20 - Exodus 9:16-19
- 1/21 - Exodus 10:7-11
- 1/22 - Exodus 10:21-29
- 1/23 - Exodus 11:4-8
- 1/24 - Exodus 12:12-20
- 1/25 - Exodus 12:21-30
- 1/26 - Exodus 12:31-40
- 1/27 - Exodus 14:1-9
- 1/28 - Exodus 14:10-20
- 1/29 - Exodus 14:21-31
- 1/30 - Exodus 15:1-3
- 1/31 - Exodus 15:14-21

- Social time online is limited to 1 h/day and 1.5 h on Saturdays. This is a maximum and only if time permits.

- Instagram, Twitter, etc

- If you are following somebody who we are not happy with, they may need to be removed.

- If anyone who you are following or is following you posts anything inappropriate, you must delete them or stop following them.

- No texting or responding to anyone you do not personally know.

- Any online activities such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube etc must be done in the lounge/dining room and not behind closed doors in bedrooms.

- No tech before school in the morning.

- While away from home, all of these rules apply.

- R100 will be loaded on the phone. Any additional airtime must be paid for by you. A minimum of R50 must be on the phone in case you need to get hold of your parents.

- Happy digital parenting...

Written by Richard Larmour

TUESDAY EVENING 29 SEPTEMBER!

We will be hosting an evening where this very important topic of the effects of *social media/technology on children* will be discussed by Alister Payne.

Alister spent 18 years as a primary school teacher, serving the last 8 as a deputy headmaster. He is the founder and MD of CloudEd, an IT Ed Tech Consultancy and Cloud Migration Company. He has an interest in Cloud computing, Open Source, ICT4D and Behaviour Information Technology, particularly adolescent online behaviour and cyberbullying.

He and his wife, Zena, have two little girls, and they worship at Medway Community Church.

Is technology bringing your family closer together or driving you further apart?

I am a mom of two boys aged eight and nine who love anything with a screen. Whether it's a television, a computer, an iPad or a cellphone, there is no shortage of screens in our home. A little over a year ago, I started questioning what the impact of all these screens was having on my family. I wondered whether I had appropriate boundaries in place for both my children and myself. I realised that I didn't and that is when I started to pray about it. I also started doing some research (online of course) and went hunting for any material I could get my hands on: any solid Christian material relating to screens, movies, games, the internet and, you guessed it, social media.

The first little book I found was one called, *"Will you be my Facebook friend?" by Tim Chester*. As one reviewer put it, Chester "encourages us to think about how we can use Facebook (and other social media) in a way that keeps God at the centre of our lives, and glorify Him, not ourselves." I couldn't have said it better myself.

The next book that caught my eye was one entitled, *"The Next Story: Life and Faith after the Digital Explosion"* by pastor *Tim Challies*. In a nutshell, this book explores a very important question: Do you own your Technology? Or does it own you? (This book helped me to ditch some of my bad "gadget" habits and gave me some insight into how we as Christians can respond to the rapid pace of technology in this busy digital age).

Our Home's Mobile Rules

- All homework and chores need to be done first.

- It is impolite to be engrossed on a device in public or at home with family. People are more important than phones!

- Parents have access to devices at all times, including passwords.

- Don't text or make phone calls after 8pm without permission. Leave your devices in the lounge when you go to bed. Friend's devices included J

- Don't start an account on any social networking site without permission.

- Never send nasty or ungodly messages to anyone.

- Never take or post inappropriate photos of yourself or others.

- Devices may be taken away if chores or school marks start to slip.

- Some days you will be asked to walk around the block before going online socially.

- Do not try and resolve a conflict by texting. Rather phone or speak face to face.

Use the opportunity to talk to your kids about things that would otherwise be difficult to broach and let it be a chance of telling them why you've taken a particular stance.

Consider investing in some protective software, or even hardware. There are a myriad of products out there from basic filters to routers which limit time used and sites visited for each device. It's worth doing a very good survey of what's out there before taking the plunge as it really needs to suit your situation. There is obviously the question of care vs personal privacy. If you install software that monitors every word, it may not do a lot for your relationship with your teen who is trying to develop some independence. One useful new app seeks to strike a balance by only sending parents a warning if it detects certain undesirable content. Once again though, it's not totally straightforward: The software may be available for PC and Android, but not for Mac, etc. For this reason, some families may choose to standardise on a single platform for the home.

Reconsider the age at which your child should get a phone. As boys and girls develop at different ages, it doesn't always follow that a child should get a phone at the same age that their older sibling did. It depends on the child and only you will know that. Using the argument that "Everyone does it" is not a good basis for this decision. When taken to its logical conclusion that argument can be dangerous. Some kids without phones claim they get left out of plans with their friends because they're not on the Whattsapp group. This may certainly be true, but would need to weighed in with other factors.

Finally, never be shy to flick off the wifi switch if you think they've had enough for a day!

To paraphrase what Rob Parsons often says, 'You can't win every battle, so choose the ones that matter the most to you'. Maybe for you technology isn't one of them, but if it is and you aren't sure where to start, here is a set of house rules that you may find useful.

While browsing in a bookshop earlier this year, I stumbled across a fantastic book by **Gary Chapman and Arlene Pellicane**. In "**Growing Up Social: Raising Relational Kids in a Screen-Driven World"** I discovered the five A+ skills needed to give my boys the relational edge in a screen-driven world: affection, appreciation, anger management, apology, and attention **a Screen-Driven World**. The book gives some great advice and explores various topics that I could so easily relate to:

> using a "Screen-Safe Family Pledge"
>
> creating digital-free zones
>
> some "do's and don'ts" for grandparents
>
> screen time and the single parent
>
> what we as parents model digitally
>
> does your child have too much screen time?

By praying for God's wisdom, researching and reading these books, I am beginning to understand how technology can both enhance our lives and families but can also drive us farther apart if we don't have the appropriate boundaries in place.

Written by Carmen Oosthuizen
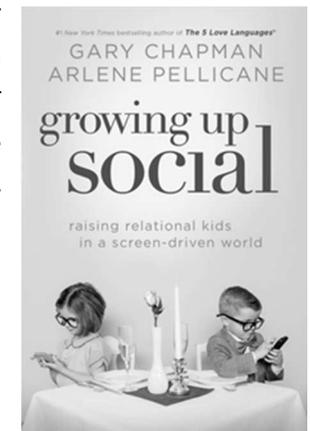
Mom, where's my phone?

A while ago I was talking to a highly intelligent friend about kids and their devices. During our chat I said that I really thought I was falling behind with it all. He paused, looked at me and said, 'No. You *are* behind!' It was a good reality check. What he was really saying is 'We're *all* behind!', and compared to me he's an absolute techno-boff! Every day, we're confronted with aspects of the digital age which simply weren't there yesterday and the reality is, that in our busy lives it's impossible to keep up with everything. Many of us settle for the apps that really work for us and ignore the rest. To some extent we probably all tend to resist change. A library of e-books on your tablet is great, but somehow many of us just still prefer holding a book in our hand, it's what we're used to. Kids don't have that bias though.

Initially, my concern with kids and technology was not so much about the fact that they may never learn to love holding a book, that's a minor issue. It was more that they shouldn't become so *reliant* on technology that they can't cope without it. It was about letting them know that if the home wifi breaks, there's still a library down the road to get their school project done. Another concern was about trying to get them to exercise discernment: getting them to understand that just because Google came up with it doesn't mean that it's necessarily true, and that just because the GPS took you to a certain address, doesn't mean that's where the party is. You still have to be able to think and use common sense. How many of you have heard something like, 'Mom my iPad died, I can't do my homework'?

Get educated! Make no mistake – this takes time and effort. Read books and check out the websites that deal with the dangers. There is so much information available from basic household rules to sophisticated software. Thankfully there are loads of concerned Christian parents the world over and many have done the hard legwork already. A useful local site is www.cellphonesafety.co.za. It's very time consuming to learn how to get to all the right settings on all the different devices in your home. For instance disabling the 'In-private browsing' is different for Internet Explorer, Chrome, Mozilla, Safari & Android browsers. Youtube has its own safety settings but would need to be activated for each different device. There are also more child-friendly browsers which you may want to consider.

Stay educated! As mentioned earlier, new apps are coming out daily and the features on existing ones are changing. Kids get to know about these much faster than we do, but there are sites like www.bewebsmart.com which offer free regular updates with reviews of new apps and things to watch out for.

Set boundaries for the use of technology at home. Many websites suggest that your teen signs a contract with you when they get a phone. It lays down the terms of use and teaches them that freedom goes hand-in-hand with responsibility. This can actually be an excellent way of teaching your kids a valuable biblical principle: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much" (Mathew 16v10). If your teen keeps all the cellphone rules consistently, you may just be more amenable to the next party invitation!

Don't believe it when the shop assistant says the phone or the PC browser is safe, check it yourself! All too often it either hasn't been done or else they haven't covered all bases.

And that's just what it is. It is unrivalled among the many temptations which your son will face and if given a foothold can potentially turn into a lifelong addiction. This truly is a tool of the enemy which is aimed at wrecking lives. It robs kids of innocence, destroys relationships, and will affect the way your son views women – possibly for the rest of his life. If you think it isn't that serious, think again. Mom's, what your sons will experience hormonally as teenagers is something that only another teenage boy or older male can appreciate.

And the troubling aspect is just how easily it can happen. It goes like this. 'Mom, can I look for something on Youtube?' 'Yes sure', you say, thinking it sounds fairly innocent. Then scrolling down the page his eyes fall on another suggested video. The temptation is too much and what begins is an avalanche that is very difficult to stop. As adults we need to be so careful about the searches we do because those are used to build a profile which shapes all the suggested content for future searches on the same device. Even if you were looking for something innocently or out of genuine interest, it will directly affect the suggested sites and videos the next time your child does a search. Yes of course pornography is something that has always been with us, but today's ease of access makes this a much greater challenge than ever before.

These dangers are not meant to scare anyone but are just real reminders about what young people are facing.

So what do we do? We have something in our lives that firstly is here to stay, whether we like it or not. Which secondly, is very useful (to the point of not really being able to live without it), and thirdly presents very serious latent dangers to our kids. Here are some suggestions.

While pondering the issue of change and reliance on technology, another friend asked me, 'Can you shoe a horse?' Can I *what* a horse? Once again it was a good reality check. There would have been a day when many fathers would not have been able to fathom their sons not being able to shoe their own horse. He made a good point: Change is real and we've all come to rely on things that previous generations wouldn't have. And things are improving too. In practice today Wikipedia is probably one of the best fast sources of reliable information available, and 99% of the time the GPS faithfully does its job – even if it routes you through some areas you weren't really planning on visiting! When that happens, forget shoeing the horse and just make sure you can change a tyre! Although change has always been present, what may be different in today's world is the *rate* of change.

Of course we now have conveniences like never before. Mom's arranging playdates, kid's plans changing after school, booking a squash court from your phone, checking the weather. All these things are really great and there's no questioning the advantages. Then there's also the very serious issue of kid's safety today which can't be overlooked. However, previous generations who lacked these conveniences as kids may actually have had an advantage of learning some very valuable life lessons. Missing a party, getting rained out, waiting to get fetched at school and sometimes just having extended periods of good old boredom. As unpleasant as these are at the time, they are experiences which can go a long way to develop godly virtues like patience, contentment & self-control. They helped kids of the past to deal with small disappointments and even may have taught them a little about delayed gratification.

Will there be a consequence for the next generation of adults who have become totally accustomed to an instant world where things are available on demand? Who knows? But it may be worth a second thought.

Phones and tablets are the dream tools for Mom's who need a break. 'Here, play a game, watch a video, download something – anything! Just give me 5 minutes!' And who can blame them? But how much is too much?

Is this issue of technology something you always intended having a good handle on, but you're now aware there's been a 'slow slide' downhill? If you had to honestly add it up, how many months a year do your kids spend looking at a device? Remember that if they spend just 1h20min on the phone each day, that adds up to an entire month of their waking life every year!

There are certainly other questions we need to ask ourselves too. Is my child merely imitating my own behaviour with my phone? Do I look up and engage them when they talk to me, to let them know how important they are and how important it is to engage others with our full attention? Do I look up at my spouse to have eye contact when we talk? Am I tacitly teaching them that it's okay to talk or text while driving? Are they just mimicking what they're seeing? If we're so busy that we have no energy other than to hand over a phone, maybe we need to ask ourselves, 'Are we maybe just too busy?' It goes without saying that many parents are not that busy by choice.

Late last year the New York Times ran a very interesting article entitled "Steve Jobs was a low-tech parent" (Jobs was the head of Apple and creator of the iPad). When asked by a journalist what Steve's kids thought of the new iPad he replied, 'They haven't used it. We limit how much technology our kids use at home'. In fact he was just one of a growing number of chief executives of hi-tech companies who've taken this stance in their own homes.

We may ask, 'But what if they don't know how to use Google? Won't these kids get left behind?' Apparently not. These people head up some of the very companies developing gizmos which entertain kids the world over – just not *their* kids! Why is that? What do they know that we don't? There are a whole host of things, some more serious than others, but here are some that immediately come to mind.

Social skills: Many of you would have seen the cartoons of kids on the playground years ago versus today. The first picture depicts a lot of social interaction and physical activity with faces showing laughter, smiles, irritation & tears. The second picture shows all of them sitting down staring into screens. Understanding cyber communication is important, but surely understanding real personal interaction is even *more* important: Understanding how different human beings work, think & react. We're told that the bulk of what's conveyed in our communication is via body language and tone, both of which are all but lost in simple text messages which opens up the risk of misunderstandings.

Bullying: This is naturally not confined to the cyber world and unfortunately manifests its ugly head in so many ways. However cyber-bullying in particular has the potential of remaining totally hidden from view. This makes it all the more essential to look for any warning signs and keep open the communication between you and your child.

Addiction: It's one thing being addicted to a device itself and not knowing what to do if it's not in your hand. That's akin to someone wanting to stop smoking and feeling insecure if they aren't holding a cigarette in their hand. Yet it's a completely different thing to become addicted to the actual content accessible through that device. Sadly this article would not be complete without talking about the lurking monster of pornography.