

omg....lol...I luv u :-) – No I Really Do

The Harm Caused By Texting Parents

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Much of the concern about cell phones, instant messaging and Twitter has been focused on how children have abused the use the technology and how it has affected the new generation of children. However, the surge of studies assessing the affects of parents' use of such technology — and its effect on their family — is now becoming an equal source of concern to child-development researchers.

The New York Times recently reported on a study conducted by Sherry Turkle, who has been observing the effects of technology on parents and children for the past five years. She has found that feelings of jealousy, hurt and competition are common in many homes, as children and spouses vie for attention that is being given to technology instead. In her studies, Dr. Turkle reports, “Over and over, kids raised the same three examples of feeling hurt and not wanting to show it when their mom or dad would be on their devices instead of paying attention to them: at meals, during pickup after either school or an extracurricular activity, and during sports events.”

This is a generation of email and texting and in many ways it's great. It allows us to connect to so many people in so little time. In the context of a hyperactive world in which people are often running in various directions at once, text messaging appears to be a viable way for people to not just keep in touch, but actually increase their social and work productivity.

Ironically, the more we “connect”, the more we lose our connections. We may gain in the quantity of our social networking, yet we are losing in the quality of our most significant relationships. Respect to another individual is displayed by showing them that “they take up space on our hard drive”, as we show that they mean something to us. Hence the Hebrew root word for respect is kavod, heavy. We demonstrate honor to someone by standing up when they walk into the room, as we show that we feel their presence. Anybody who has been the recipient of a “cold shoulder” knows the devastation of feeling “light weight”, as if our presence does not exist.

When we show that we recognize the presence of our children and we have a desire to listen to them, we have essentially granted them respect and love. No matter how many times we repeat to our family members how much we love them, our actions in demonstrating that at this moment you are more important than anything else in this world , speaks ten thousand times louder. Eye contact, attentiveness and being able to disentangle oneself from outside distractions are key.

One very practical solution that helps demonstrate respect to our children is by designating a specific “no email, texting and phone” time everyday. As we ignore the very tempting buzzing sounds permeating from our cell phones and give our children our fullest utmost attention, we demonstrate at that movement that they are the most important people in our life. When a child has waited an entire day to share with mommy and daddy what they had done

in school; what are they to feel if their excitement is welcomed with a response “that’s nice dear” as the parent types a hundred words a minute? This experience can be very painful for the child. They may come to perceive our connection to our ‘technological others’ as an aloofness and lack of caring. Feelings of resentment build, which can lead to a greater risk of families breaking apart.

Talking to our spouses and children is more than just having a conversation. We are demonstrating that we are interested in their lives and care about their words. A few minutes a day that we put our cell phones to the side and give priority to our family can produce tremendous amount of positive consequences. As we demonstrate self respect and importance to our children and spouse, the more they begin to truly internalize that they carry weight, importance, and self-respect. The more we prioritize our family over our texts, the more they will feel loved, a sense of security, and a desire to open up to us.

The following are some practical suggestions for how to improve”technology free” communication:

- **Create no technology times each day.**

By ignoring the tempting buzzing sounds permeating from your phone, blackberry, or computer you show your family that they are your first priority.

- **Make your first interaction after school or work a time that is designated to give you family your full attention.**

Take 5 seconds before walking in your door to think about how grateful you are to have a family waiting at home for you. Then use this thought to create a mindset that is ready to give your full attention to your family.

- **Dinner time and bed time should be technology free.**

Research shows that family meal time is an important protective factor for young kids and their families. Use meal time and bed time to truly engage each other in positive communication.

- **Be aware of hints.**

Dr. Harstein says, ” Be aware of each other”. Observe your families and get to know their cues. This will help you identify when your children or your spouse really need your attention.

Family is more important today than it has ever been. If we were closing on a very big deal with an important client, would we interrupt them by looking at our texts, and pretend to be listening to what they have to say? No, we would not! Therefore, it is important to show, right when we come home, that our family is that very respected client. We have been witness to a breakdown of marriages and parent-child relationships at an alarming rate. Even families that remain intact, have parents and children who have stopped speaking to each other, as they are constantly engaged with those who are not present. We simply cannot afford to lose our connection with our children. We need to make our families our priority.