

February 2018

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



**MIFFLIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

CHILDREN, TECHNOLOGY and MENTAL HEALTH

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help you make good decisions as a family about how you use technology.
2. To help you model appropriate use of technology for your children.
3. To help you be attentive to ways that use of technology is harming your child.

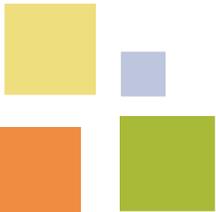
Being a mother is one of my greatest blessings. God's blessing is an amazing son with whom I enjoy at each stage - though some more than others! The one area of parenting that scares me more than any other is mental health. Having mental fortitude means you experience lows and highs, and those experiences do not overwhelm you. Watching someone I love deeply get anxious or stressed out and not stepping in to rescue them and save the sadness is not easy. My husband almost never lasts more than a few minutes before he takes over. The kids know I am the "tough" one but also the one who is willing to listen and sympathize.

Throughout my life, I have been curious about mental health. What makes people happy? Why do some people "roll with the punches" and others completely fall apart? Three years ago, a family we knew suffered a massive tragedy. Their bright, funny and intelligent youngest child committed suicide. By all accounts, this is a loving, cohesive family who never saw the pain and depression that their child suffered. Yet, at 14 years of age, he took his life. I think of Andrew often and speculate what happened that he was so depressed that he took his own life. Suicide rates are dramatically increasing among children, with suicides happening at younger and younger ages.

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CHRISTIAN
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CHILDREN, TECHNOLOGY and MENTAL...

Recently I have been reading research that shows the negative impacts of the internet on our children. Researcher Jean Twenge, Ph.D calls this the Internet Generation or iGen. Dramatic trends point directly to the introduction of the first smart phones. This generation is the first with immediate internet access. This access correlates to decreased independence and risk-taking, with increased depression and social isolation. Her research indicates that brain development is not ready for social media until late teen years. Yet many kids, like my own, want to be on the internet and many want social media.

Dr. Twenge shows that kids are several years behind in independence than previous generations. Kids are less likely to take risks, which may sound great initially. Yet, without taking risks, they are slow to discover their strengths and developing mental toughness. Some decreased risks parents appreciate, such as smoking, alcohol use and sexual encounters. However, there are some risks that parents want their kids to take, such as more rigorous academics, new physical challenges or exploring the world.

Today's kids are increasingly more isolated despite social media. Kids are not interacting face to face but rather hidden behind a screen. The lack of direct communication decreases their ability to learn how to interpret nonverbal communication; how to provide eye contact; how to talk with strangers—all important adult

skills. Screen time yields a view into a world that may or may not be real. Even as adults, we post our most positive aspects of our lives. Cool trips, fun times, “perfect” family images. Kids are no different, and yet their brain development is not ready to separate fact from fiction. Looking at “everyone else” having fun beats them down and makes them wonder “why wasn’t I invited?”. They assume that other lives are much more exciting and interesting than their own. Those feelings decrease self-esteem and self-confidence.

College age kids today are demanding safe places on college campuses. They fall apart when life throws a challenge or they are learning a new skill or they are not 100% perfect on tests. My college professor friends are shocked at today’s students’ lack of insight and willingness to challenge themselves. While alcohol consumption is decreasing in high school years, binge drinking is on the rise in college years. Binge drinking is having a negative impact with unintended sexual encounters and even death. Why are 18-22 years old’s struggling more than previous generations? What can we do as parents?

Kids who participate in sports or church activities are the two consistent groups that demonstrate higher coping and higher independence than other peer groups. These groups have more face to face time with their own peers and less electronic time due to the nature of their schedules and commitments. Dr.

Twenge does not examine extra-curriculars, though my thought is that they also would be positive influences on our children.

How do we move forward with this information? For our house, we are modeling good behavior. Recently, I asked Quinten to put me on my own electronic time limit! He is excited to be on the other side of enforcement. Electronic time with family is not counted. Currently we love playing a word game together. The key is being together and not separate. He does not have a phone. When we do move forward, he will not be on social media sites until high school. When friends come over, time must include non-electronic time. We encourage weekly down times with his friends. He also has to choose at least one activity every season.

This winter for the first time he is involved with one sport and one academic extracurricular. I point out the fun and laughter. I praise him for taking new challenges and notice when he overcomes a stumbling point. He is rock climbing which I love for the physical and mental challenge. It is him against the wall, and I see him thinking, trying, and most importantly, trying repeatedly. If I gave him a choice, he would likely do very little away from the house. I pray the *discussions* when making the activity selections in the end make him a mature, confident adult ready to conquer the world.

I look forward to discussing your thoughts at our next Gift meeting Sunday February 4th.

Janet Zappe

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Ladies Bunco Night

Friday, February 2

7:00 pm

Ok, this is not a “family” thing—but ladies need our time together!!! Bring a favorite snack to share as we enjoy the evening together. Don’t know how to play? Don’t worry—no previous Bunco knowledge necessary—and friends are VERY welcome!

Tuesday, February 13

Pancake Dinner and Program

5:30—7:00 pm

Join us for yummy pancakes with all the fixins (plus some eggs and fruit), followed by the Lenten Outburst—fun for all ages! You might want to brush up on your Bible and knowledge of Lenten stuff.

Wednesday, February 14

6:45 pm

Ash Wednesday Service

Lent begins with a service of ashes and communion. We will also have Lenten devotionals for children, youth and adults available to help us focus on Jesus during this season leading up to Easter.

Friday—Sunday,

February 16-18

Bye Bye Birdie

This fun musical by the Gahanna Community Theatre features several Mifflin folks whom you know. Tickets are \$15 each—Seating is not reserved, so plan to come a little early.

PLANNING AHEAD:

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Save the dates for Monday, June 4 through Friday, June 8 from 9:00—11:30 am (NOTE CHANGE IN TIMES FROM LAST YEAR!!!) for children age 4 through grade 5 (older children/youth welcome as helpers!). This year’s theme is “Babylon: Daniel’s Courage in Captivity”. We will be looking for volunteers for decorations, recreation, crafts, snacks and group leaders, so let Kathi Bubb know how YOU want to help this year to make another great VBS.

SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10

GIFT



Growing in Faith Together

All parents and grandparents are invited to meet together at 10:20 am in the choir room for a GiFT for Parents Class. We will discuss the link between depression in kids and electronics. Check out Janet Zappe’s article in this newsletter, as well as:

www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-tech-backlash-begins-but-it-may-be-too-late/article37590505/

<http://thefederalist.com/2017/09/13/technology-affecting-children-teens-young-adults-igen/>

FUTURE GiFT for Parents

Do you have a topic that you would like to discuss with other Mifflin parents? Better yet, do you have a topic you would like to LEAD? Either way, contact Julie at joswalt@mifflinpres.org with your ideas for future programs for parents in our church.