

# FROM A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

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Spring 2014

**PERSPECTIVES  
COUNSELING  
CENTERS  
248-244-8644**

**Perspectives Counseling Centers  
Invites You To Our  
Spring Open House 2014**

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**"The World They Live In"**  
**Understanding the World Teens Live In**  
**And**  
**Learning How To Speak Their Language**  
**May 2, 2014**  
**9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**  
**Leslie Johnsen, MA, LLP**  
**Beth Atwell, MA, LPC**  
**Diana Jennings, MS, LLP**  
*Join us for this complimentary Professional seminar*  
*Call (248) 244-8644 to reserve your spot!*  
*Continental breakfast served*  
*Space is limited so call now!*

## "If You Can't Beat 'Em, Join 'Em"

By Joseph Lilly, LMSW

I set out to research all the negative and/or damaging effects of technology and electronics use on children. I wanted to find all the reasons why we should put an end to this technology "obsession." And sure, I found it. What I was more surprised to find were the positive effects. I found idea after idea about why we need to embrace technology and help children do the same. I learned there are a lot of misconceptions about technology and the reasons why children use it. I guess really what I learned is if you can't beat them, join them! But let's teach them how.

I define electronic use as the use of tablets, smart phones, computers, and video game consoles for the purposes of texting, video games, video chatting, and social media. This could be for business, school, or pleasure. However, there are times when we just need to turn off and unplug. It really is best to use and enjoy all things in moderation. That's easier said than done.

First, children WANT to be engaged with their electronics. The simple answer to get them to walk away is to make it worth THEIR time. Offer incentives; hire them to help YOU with household tasks (not their chores), offer rewards and praise when they focus on obligations, chores, and homework. You can even offer them extra time later for not playing now. If it's worth it, they will do it. Just remember to keep rewards, incentives, and payments reasonable.

Second, there are times when you just won't be able to avoid conflict and anger. It happens, we're human. In an attempt to be proactive and reduce the possibility, offer countdown warnings that free time will be ending, that it's time to put it down. Walking in to the room and saying "times up" is a crash course to an outburst. Set timers and offer reminders at 15, 10, and 5 minutes. This also helps in teaching transitioning skills. When it can't be avoided and the outburst happens, focus on separating the emotions from the behavior in addition to problem solving. During an outburst or argument, attempting to get your child to understand and accept logic and rationalization is futile. The famous "because I said so" is just fuel to their emotional fire. Empathize with their emotions: "I know you're upset because you want to play," "I understand how frustrated you must feel." Once they are calm, a more logical discussion can then take place.

**"If it's worth it,  
they will do it."**

Let's be honest with ourselves. Getting them to stop just isn't that easy. Children seem so "addicted" to these devices. Common belief and assumption is that electronic use creates social isolation in today's youth. Research indicates it's actually the opposite. Children are using electronic devices to connect socially with their peers through Facebook, Twitter, Xbox Live, and all the numerous text messaging applications. Children consume a large dose of electronics because that's how they "hang out" in today's world.

It's not the technology that they are after, it's the communication. Children are not able to drive, there are less kids playing outside, and electronics provide much easier access to friends. Children are less worried about what strangers see than they are what their parents can see. They will text each other while in the same room to avoid parental/adult interference. Instead of warning children NOT to use electronics and the internet, teach them HOW to. Provide them with choices and avoid controlling their free time. Use it as a tool to teach them boundaries, limit setting, and accountability. Electronics provide them with an opportunity to take charge and have a sense of control

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## "If You Can't Beat 'Em, Join 'Em" continued from page 2

in their lives, free from the adult centered and adult controlled contexts. They may be treated or feel as if they require constant adult direction. If they are really given the freedom to choose, and they continue to choose the same activity, then they're really getting something out of it. Allow them to make mistakes, that's how they learn and develop a sense of control over their own lives. Kids make good choices if given the freedom to do so.

What about how electronics impact the brain? Research indicates that an hour of video games a day increases brain power. Studies have shown increases in memory, critical thinking, and problem solving. Truthfully, computers and electronics are increasingly important tools in today's society. They aren't going away.

If this is what children want and need, why not give it to them? If the behavior was sitting down reading a book, would we question it? Just because it's not how we would want to spend our free time doesn't make it wrong. Join in with your kids. Play games with them. Get into their world. Understand them. This provides more opportunities for you to teach boundaries, limit setting, and accountability. You'll have more opportunities to learn who they are and build trust.

There is a body of evidence that suggests increased exposure to violent content increases aggressive thoughts and behaviors. If that is true, then increased exposure to pro-social content increases pro-social thoughts and behavior, and research supports that.

The good news is that not all media content is violent. Additionally, we are complex beings. Children are exposed to so many social influences including television, radio, friends, family, church, etc. Not all of it is violent or bad. All of these influences impact a child's thoughts and decisions. Why not use their interests as a way to assist in shaping their morals and beliefs? Learn to trust your children. When it comes to their free time and their decision making, telling them what they can and cannot do suggests to them that they aren't trusted. With the exception of chores, responsibilities, obligations, and safety concerns, allow them opportunities to have control of their free time and prove to you that you have taught them well. Show them trust and they may surprise you.

**"If this is what children want and need, why not give it to them?"**

Computers and electronics are an increasingly important part of the lives of youth. We, as a society, are becoming increasingly dependent upon it. There really is a generational gap. Adults generally do not understand what all the fuss is about. They don't have to. The important piece is helping children navigate and understand their world, spending time getting to know them, and teaching them how to be safe in an ever complex and changing world. We cannot stop the world from changing or control the way it changes. We can adapt and evolve with it while teaching our children to do the same. Throughout history there is evidence that an item or idea originally feared can be adapted into our day to day lives. We have been given a new opportunity to grow, teach, and evolve. Since we can't beat the changes - let's join them and teach children to do the same.

**Joseph Lilly, LMSW** is a therapist at Perspectives Counseling Centers. Joe works with children, adolescents, and families in problem areas associated with Adjustment Disorders, Anger, Anxiety, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Divorce, Grief and Loss, Mood Disorders, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Self-esteem.

## UPCOMING GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS

### **Social Skills Group**

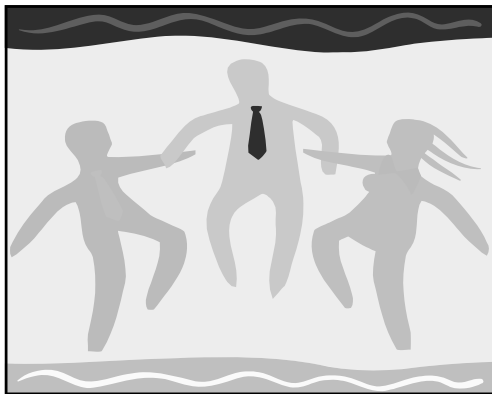
*Teens and children with social anxieties or deficits*

*Diana Jennings, MS, LLP*

### **H.E.A.R.T. of Family Workshop**

*Work through complicated family dynamics and resolve conflict*

*Beth Atwell, MA, LPC*



### **Stress Busters Workshop**

*Children who struggle with anxiety and fears*

*Kim Birmingham, LMSW*

## **Call for Current Schedule**

### **The Young Women's Edge**

*Young women struggling with depression, anxiety, self-esteem and forming healthy relationships*

*Leah Ethier, MA, LPC*

### **Self-Esteem Workshop**

*Girls 12-18 struggling with low self-confidence*

*Mary Johnson-Palazzolo, LMSW*

### **The Teen Edge**

*Teens who struggle with self-injury, depression and anxiety*

*Leslie Johnsen, MA, LLP*

### **Self-Control Group**

*Boys 8-12 who struggle with anger, impulsivity and hyperactivity*

*Joe Lilly, LMSW*

## CREATIVITY CORNER

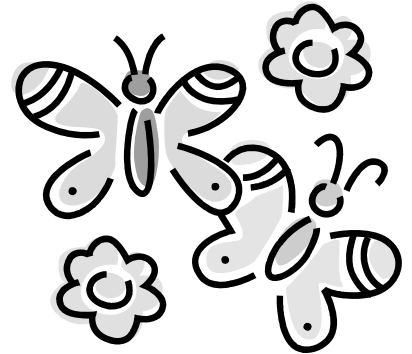
**WHAT WE THINK, WE CREATE!**

Make your own positive affirmation chart:

I AM loved

I AM special

I AM a good friend

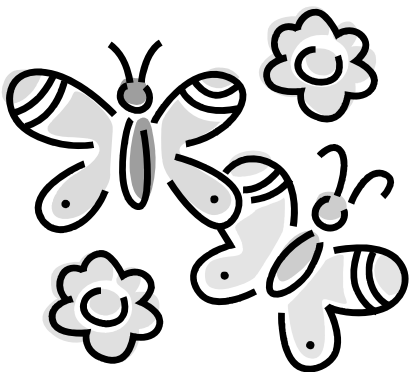


I AM \_\_\_\_\_

I AM \_\_\_\_\_

I AM \_\_\_\_\_

I AM \_\_\_\_\_



Find a special place to hang your chart

Read it every day

When I read my chart, I feel

\_\_\_\_\_!

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Perspectives' mission is to treat each child with compassion and respect while providing a safe and nurturing environment. In our offices children can explore and learn about themselves. Your proactive involvement can help to provide children with the coping skills needed for emotional wellness in adulthood. We are here to assist those that you entrust us with. We look forward to continued collaboration with your referrals. We are committed to the improvement of children's mental health and well-being on an ongoing basis. Questions and suggestions regarding the Children's Department may be directed to Diana Jennings, MS, LLP, Director of Children's Services at (248) 244-8644.

*[www.perspectivesoftroy.com](http://www.perspectivesoftroy.com)*

