



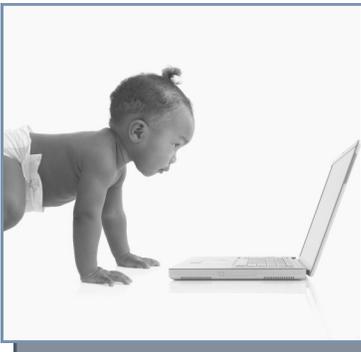
Teaching the Way of Love

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

October, 2013

Prayer of the Month

Good & Gracious God,
Help our family to be
intentional about the
technology that you
have given to us.
Guide us when we go
on-line. Amen.



Technology and Your Family What You Should Know

Technology is a major part of everyday life. Rarely a day goes by when we do not access the internet or our cable channels. In fact, **adults average 24 hours of every week on-line**. And, a recent study showed that the second most time consuming activity for a child is sitting in front of an electronic screen. **The only thing that kids do more of than sit in front of an electronic screen each day is sleep**. This should be a reality check for all of us.

Consider this. A mere 60 years ago, black and white televisions were available to families. Thirty years ago, desktop computers made their way into homes. Just 15 years ago, laptops with touch screens began to replace desktops. And in the past 10 years, mobile internet access via cell phones started to appear. All of this means that **children find it odd when the world wide web isn't readily accessible** in their home. **They are "digital natives"** which means that they can't remember a time when the internet wasn't available.

According to a study done by Joan Ganz Cooney Center, **25% of 3 year olds go on-line daily**. By the age of 5, 50% of youth are on-line each day. By the age of 8, 66% of children are using the internet daily. And **by the time they reach the age of 13, nearly 75% have a cell phone with mobile access** that allows them to go on-line 24/7.

Parenting Tip of the Month

No matter how much technology you have in your home, you still need to connect as a family. Learn more at: <http://goo.gl/Dy8otr>

What impact is all this technology having on a child's well-being and family life? As one might guess, there is both good and bad news to report. **On the positive side, the internet** makes information sharing and retrieval quick and easy. It **gives us greater opportunities to accelerate, enrich and deepen our knowledge** on any topic that we choose. In addition, on-line access and mobile gadgets make it possible to experience what we are learning. In combination, they can **provide a virtual reality that can appear and feel like the real thing**. And, they can **give us the ability to share "face time" with individuals who are miles away** using programs like Skype or Google Groups. All of **these are good applications** of the internet.

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Parenting with the Heart of Christ

But, **there are negatives** as well. **Technology does not discriminate between right and wrong.** With a switch of a remote or a swipe of the touchscreen, you can move from a program on St. Peter's Basilica in Rome to a sporting event to a porn flick. **A cable or internet connection opens your home to an unlimited access to the good, the bad and the ugly of the world.**

And, **technology can replace real activities with virtual interests.** It takes less effort to text your child in the next room to come and eat dinner than it does to walk across your home and ask in person. It is more exciting to play a game of Madden football with NFL stars than it is to play a game of touch with your neighbors. It is more efficient to hand a child a Kindle that reads a bedtime story than it is to sit down and read to them.

Finally, with the increased use of technology, there have been changes in a child's well-being. Specifically, **there has been an increase in obesity, attention disorders and sleep disorders as well as a decrease in a child's ability to relate well to one another.**

Technology can be both a benefit and a burden. That is why **you should never be passive or naïve about the technology that comes into your home.** That is why we suggest that you **become intentional about your technology use.** Here are several **recommendations** that we suggest.

Media Free Zones. Every home should have designated areas where technology is not allowed. In particular, **every bedroom should be free from electronic gadgets and TVs.** This family rule prevents people from privately accessing sites that are harmful and from using technology when it is time to rest and sleep. FYI – the American Academy of Pediatricians recommend that **all youth should dock all media one hour in advance of retiring** in order to enhance normal sleep patterns.

Media Free Activities. Here is a list of activities during which **electronic access can be rude, harmful and/or distracting:** mealtime, driving, at the theater, restaurants, at sporting events, weddings, lectures, family gatherings, Mass.

Limit the Access. When everyone in the family knows their limits they **become more intentional** about their technology use. Even though your cable and internet provider want you to buy into the mindset that "unlimited talk and text" is a good, in reality it is not.

Co-View. If you don't think it is a good idea to let your kids physically wander around unattended then why would you let your child "virtually" wander around. **Travel with them when they go on-line. Watch what they are watching.** Talk to them about what they are watching. Guide their on-line activity.

Set the Example. Make sure that you are responsibly using technology. **Don't let your texting and surfing habits interfere with your family time.** Spend more time talking face to face with your kids than you do texting them or checking their on-line status.

Following these recommendations can help your children be better prepared to really learn and develop during their time in school. But this is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies for helping your children become the best they can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.