

# Encouraging **Your** Wellness

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*In this issue:*

- **Positive Parenting...Handling Teens and Technology**

- **Our Thoughts are in Charge of our Moods?**

- **Dear Pam,**

A question asked from a client, website visitor or class member is answered for all to see.

- **Couple's Corner**

A Routine Checkup for Your Marriage?

## **Positive Parenting– Handling Teens and Technology–Part One of a Two Part Series**

Many of you know that I spend a lot of time with the teenagers of today. In fact, they are some of the most enjoyable people I know, although I am sure many parents would love to debate that fact with me. Being a teenager today *is harder than it used to be*. One of the reasons it is harder is because of the very technology that they believe they could never live without. Teens today live in a real world and a virtual world and each affects the other. It's a big problem if parents are only involved in one of these worlds. Parents struggle with knowing how to be appropriately involved without being intrusive, and with how to teach morals and values in the virtual world. If you haven't thought about teaching values in the virtual world, consider this. In 2009, some 39% of teens admitted to sending sexually suggestive texts and pictures using their cell phones. We can reasonably guess that this is an underestimate today. The news has recently reported that teens have been arrested and charged with possession of child pornography for having nude pictures of peers on their cell phones. They will most likely be termed, "sex offenders" and have to register as such for the rest of their lives. Stories in the news have also included several suicides after online bullying or posting of humiliating pictures or information. We didn't grow up with parents providing moral guideposts for technology behavior, because it wasn't necessary. WE are the generation of parents that has to set the moral guideposts for virtual world behavior. In my practice, I have seen some really good kids in way over their heads when it comes to texting, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and more. Our kids are in desperate need of



## **Our Thoughts Are In Charge of our Moods?**

Therapists who use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) are proud to share that research shows it to be the most effective in treating both depression and anxiety, among other psychological conditions. In fact, CBT in some studies has been found to be as effective as the use of anti-depressants, and coupled with an antidepressant, yields even better results. That's because of the teaching that takes place in CBT. Step by step, a client learns that their thoughts are directly linked to their feelings/moods, behavior and physical reactions. Allow me to illustrate. Let's say that you are waiting for someone to arrive home, and they are now thirty minutes late. Several thoughts could be present. If your thought was that the person was being inconsiderate and late again, your feeling is likely to be annoyed. If your thought is that the person works really hard, and is likely

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## Dear Readers,



I started my day with a great bike ride and work in my garden. I sincerely hope summer is feeling as inspirational to you. I hope this issue of **Encouraging Your Wellness** finds you happy and staying healthy. And, as always, I hope you find this newsletter informative as well as inspirational in helping you be the person, parent, and partner you want to be. Happy Reading!

I had a great reminder this past weekend of the power of our words. My daughter played in a recreational soccer tournament, for which my husband is one of the coaches. Her team has played together since the first grade, and they have had several seasons without wins. However, they have worked hard and have come a long way. After winning the game that sent them to the championship, our girls were elated! While the coach was giving them a “way to go” talk, the opposing coach was telling his girls that our team was nothing but cheaters, who were coached to play dirty. Both of our coaches happen to be as ethical of men as I know. My daughter sat in the car after the game and, instead of enthusiastically sharing of the win, shared the other coach’s words. She pondered it, really questioning if they had done anything wrong. Words matter! As role models, let’s remember this. Kids are watching to see how we handle ourselves in challenging times, and they follow our lead. Our true character is what we show when something doesn’t go our way. Let’s remember the power of our words at these crucial times, and really give them something to look up to! And, yes, our girls won their championship game!

*“Before allowing your kids to have access to these forms of socialization, a conversation needs to take place.”*

### Handling Teens and Technology—cont’d from pg. 1

of guidance. Before allowing your kids to have access to these forms of socialization, a conversation needs to take place. (If you are behind the game, and your child already has access without rules, it’s not too late. Do it now) The conversation needs to go something like this.

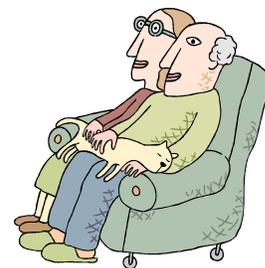
*Technology is great and it gives us great access, but it is a privilege and not a right. Privileges come with responsibility and if you show you cannot handle the responsibility, the privilege will be removed. You must use it ethically which means you may never use it to humiliate, embarrass, send personal information, misrepresent yourself or someone else, use other’s passwords without their permission, share other’s information that would be upsetting to them, share pictures of yourself or others without permission, or to EVER have or send any pictures of yourself or others that are not fully clothed. Additionally, you may never use technology to hurt or get back at another person. I reserve the right to “spot check” your*

### Thoughts and Moods... cont’d from pg. 1

tied up at work, your feeling may be one of compassion. And, if your thought is that the person has most certainly been in a car accident, your feeling is likely to be panic and worry. Thus, our thought has controlled what feeling we will have. Let’s use another example. Say Trudy is at a party where someone who is normally friendly to her suddenly is not so friendly. If she begins to think that person is just a phony, she is likely to feel betrayed or duped. If her thought is that person doesn’t like her anymore or is angry at her for something, she is likely to feel confused or angry in return. If Trudy’s thought is that person is preoccupied with something that must be weighing on her, she is likely to experience understanding or compassion. Once again we can see how Trudy’s thought dictates her resulting feeling. It also can dictate our physical and behavioral responses. If her thought has led her to be angry, she likely feels that anger somewhere in her body. She also has a probable chance of marching over to that previously friendly person and

## Couple's Corner—Routine Care for Marriage?

A recent study of divorcing couples found that 66% of them had never tried marriage counseling before deciding to end the relationship. It appears that it is even harder to ask for help in a marriage than it is with conditions like depression and anxiety. So researchers are trying out a new concept that mirrors routine medical and dental care. They propose that most people do not wait until there is a problem to see their doctor or dentist, and that preventative care is critically important. So, they are testing out an annual Marriage Checkup. They are hypothesizing that if people were to bring in their marriages for a check up on an annual basis, it would provide the same sort of benefit that an annual health checkup provides. Although the researchers are still tallying early data, preliminary findings show that couples who take part in this type of program experience improvements in marital quality. By working with couples before they are unhappy, the checkup identifies potentially “corrosive” behaviors and helps couples make small changes in communication style before their problems spiral out of control. It is a concept that makes a lot of sense to me. With the pain, misery and cost of divorce, an annual checkup in your relationship not only makes mental health sense, but good financial sense as well. A good place to start is [www.relate-institute.org](http://www.relate-institute.org) where you can complete an extensive online marital assessment that will generate a lengthy report with color coded graphs as well as marital strengths and areas of need. The cost is \$40 per couple and can offer invaluable benefits.



## Handling Teens and Technology –cont'd from page 2

*cell phone, Facebook, Twitter and all other forms of technology you use to ensure that you are maintaining the rules of our agreement. If I find that you are violating these expectations, I will remove technology until such time that you are more capable of handling it responsibly.”*

Ever heard of “virtual courage?” Essentially, it means that we will say things and do things from behind the assumed protection of our computer or cell phone that we would not do in person. We can attack more viciously, and brave the social world much more so than we can in person. Most girls would never imagine going up to a boy they liked, removing their shirt, and asking if the boy now liked her. Most boys would not take a look, and then parade her in front of their friends to get all of their opinions as well. But this is exactly what is happening in the virtual world, and the consequences to our children are devastating. As the first generation of parents that have to guide our children through the realities of their virtual world, we must be educated, prepared and active in the guidance of our children to utilize the incredible benefits of technology while also navigating the pitfalls. It's now as much our job as it is to parent them in the real world. Be a parent in both.

*“...we can say and do things from behind our computers or cell phones that we would not do in person..”*

## Thoughts and Moods... Con't from pg. 2

confronting her head on. Turns out the person was avoiding Trudy because she is terrible at keeping secrets and worried she might “slip” on the surprise that was about to happen to Trudy. Whoops! Now a simple thought has turned into both a physical and behavioral response that were incorrect from the beginning. We must train ourselves to consider *other* thoughts as well. CBT is not all about positive thinking; it is about thinking more broadly. One way that I work with clients is to help them ask themselves an important question. “What’s another possibility?” And again, “What’s another possibility?” until they have several possible reasons that something is happening. As you help your brain consider alternatives, it dilutes the intensity of the *one* thought and emotional response you were leaning toward. If Trudy had asked herself this powerful question, she likely would have diluted any strong emotion and in turn likely avoided the behavior that made her look seriously over reactive. I will write more next quarter about the power of changing our thoughts, but for now, put this question in your pocket and use it with any one-track thought. “What’s another possibility?” Then come up with several. It can begin to change your feelings/behaviors in no time!



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*If you are in need of individual, couple or family help, call me. Together with you, I will design a treatment plan that helps you achieve your goals and gets you on the road to feeling life more fulfilled. I specialize in working with teens, adults and children who are struggling with depression, anxiety, low self-worth, past experiences of abuse, and who are believing there must be more to life than what they are currently experiencing. I look forward to speaking with you.*

**Dear Pam,**

*Do men and women handle stress differently? P.T.*

The American Psychological Association conducts an annual survey on Stress in America. The 2011 results are in. The survey found that women historically have reported higher levels of stress and did so once again in 2011. In 2011, both women and men were asked to rate their stress levels on a 1-10 scale from little-to-no stress to a great deal of stress. Women report stress at an average of 5.4 and men at a 4.8. Stress happens when the demands that a person faces exceeds their ability to cope. Some amount of stress is good as it can produce a boost to get through a difficult time. But too much stress is harmful to our health. Some estimates suggest that more than 75% of visits to our doctors are linked to stress. But how are we handling it, gender wise? The study finds that men don't place as much value on stress management as women. In fact, only 52% of men said it was "very or extremely important" to manage stress, compared with 68% of women. Consequently, men are not doing as many things that help to manage stress. Women are much more likely to be *actively* doing something about stress, while men tend to wait for it to pass. Some stress-busters that women are more likely to participate in include reading, spending social time with friends and family, exercising and practicing meditation. 70% of women say they've tried to reduce stress over the past five years, while only 50% of men confirmed this. So, it seems that women and men DO handle stress differently. Primarily, results suggest that women feel that stress is manageable if they are practicing stress busting activities. Men tend to ignore stress to a higher degree because of their lack of belief that they have the power to manage it. So, the next time you approach your husband with a plan for de-stressing, it may be hard for him to understand. He may wonder why you need a plan. Try not to take it as an invalidation of your stress level, rather a difference in approaching stress. Most importantly, continue to manage stress in the way that best suits you, because no one argues that stress affects your quality of life.

