

# Encouraging Your Wellness

Volume 4, Issue 3

September 24, 2012

*In this issue:*

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

- **Mental Health—**

Are you Happy?

- **Dear Pam,**

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

- **Couple's Corner**

Renewing Your Marriage Contract?

## Positive Parenting— Handling Teens and Technology—Part Two of a Two Part Series

My last issue included Part I of this series, “Handling Teens and Technology” which began to address that parents of teens today are the first generation of that must parent our children in the real world AND the virtual world. If we are not a parent in both, we are missing at least half of our kids’ lives as well as many opportunities to help our children be safe and well rounded. We know that setting boundaries and limits in the real world is simply a part of our jobs as parents. But, guess what? Setting boundaries and limits in the virtual world is JUST AS IMPORTANT, or possibly even more so! Allow me to illustrate. It’s late at night, an odd man knocks at your door and indicates that he is going to head up to your daughter’s room, spend some time with her alone, and indicates that you should ignore them and go about your business. No parent in their right mind would agree to this, but this is very much the decision we are making when we allow our kids to be on their computers in their rooms unsupervised. Predators are rampant online! I cannot tell you the number of teens that I have worked with who have (usually in secret) met up with someone they have met online. Several of them were sexually assaulted! The troubling fact is that most of them knew better, but insecurity and the desire to be special in someone’s eyes led them to believe the enticing person online. They are vulnerable, and teens need our constant awareness, involvement, supervision and guidance. We must set virtual world boundaries and stick to them if our teens are to navigate their virtual worlds. Following are some examples of virtual world boundaries you need to consider. (cont’d on pg. 2) Many



## Are You Happy?

Last quarter, my mental health column was entitled, “Our Thoughts are in Charge of our Moods?” I promised then that I would be writing more about the power of changing our thoughts in helping us to be happier individuals. I spend a good part of my therapy time with clients educating them about the great things we are learning about the brain. One of the most fascinating concepts is that of neuroplasticity, which is a very fancy term for the fact that our brains are adaptive and changeable. I have personally witnessed transformation in my clients when they apply this concept to the way they think about situations in their lives. I know of a person who recently took an exotic trip, laid on an unbelievably beautiful beach in near perfect weather, and instead of touching on any of that, conversed about what was wrong with the day/experience. We’re (cont’d on pg. 2).

---

## Dear Readers,



Hallelujah for September! I don't know about you, but I am very happy that the hottest summer on record is coming to a close, and the fall temperatures are here to reinvigorate me. 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!

When my middle school daughter arrives at school each morning, she sends me a text to let me know she is there. She will often also make some sort of a funny comment or give me a message for my day. Recently, she sent me a text that read, "Have a grateful day." What she meant was to have a day full of great things, but I liked the message, Have a *grateful* day even more. When I am mindful about being grateful, my days go so well. I slow down to think about all that I am grateful for, and before long, I am overwhelmed by the gratitude I am feeling. When people ask me how I listen to stories of pain and tragedy all day long, it throws me. The way I see it is that I am so amazingly lucky to spend time with people who are willing to let me in; to see a part of their painful journeys, and trust me to offer them something along the way. So, to all my readers and clients, both past and present, thanks for making me have Grateful Days!

*"Use of  
technology is  
a privilege  
and it requires  
that a parent  
know their  
child's  
passwords."*

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

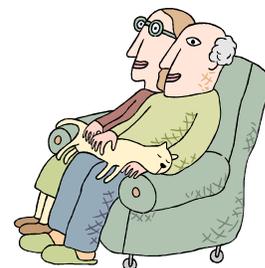
- Educate your child that they are to never share their password with friends or extended others, including their BFF!
- Use of technology is a privilege and it requires that a parent know their child's passwords. Regularly check it to make sure your child has not changed it.
- Look at your phone bill. You need to know how much your child is texting, and when. If they are texting late at night, it is interfering with their sleep and therefore, school and health. If they are texting all through homework and studying, they need a limit set for them.
- When your teen is involved in online gaming, know that "relationships" develop. These gamers become trusted others to your child. Have a rule that they play online games with others they know in person, or that those friends remain online friends only!
- Establish a rule that an adult is the only one allowed to clear the browser history and keep a log of when this was last done to ensure this rule is followed.

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

talking minor blips! When one of my clients tends to be stuck in this pattern, we try to begin to change the "super-highway to the negative" pathway in their brain. When we force ourselves to intentionally look for all that is positive in a situation, before looking to the negatives, our brain begins to adapt to more positive thinking. I once worked with a teen who described herself as the most negative person she knew, and unfortunately, she was right. However, she worked hard at this concept of changing her negative-thinking pathway in her brain, and really embraced forcing herself to find the good, even in very difficult situations. I am happy to tell you that, at the end of our work together, she could have been the poster child for optimism. It brings tears to my eyes when I think of how much happier she became by working hard in this way. A client of mine recently brought me a simple flow chart titled Are You Happy? If you answered Yes, it led to "Keep doing what you're doing" but if you answered no, it led to "Do You Want to be Happy?" (cont'd

## Couple's Corner—

When our wedding anniversary approaches, my husband and I often joke that it is time to decide if we are renewing our contract. We joke about the pros and cons of renewing the contract, and what addendums are required. After 18 years of marriage, I guess we have decided to renew that contract a lot! As with any contract, both sides get something they are after. A contract with the cable company means we get a gazillion channels and they get a chunk of our hard-earned money. A business contract outlines both what we give and what we get in return. Typically, a contract is negotiated so that both parties get something they want in exchange for something they are willing to give. Marriages aren't so different. Happy marriages are most often those where both parties feel like they are getting a good deal—they are willing to give for what they get in return. In my experience, couples most often decide against renewing their contract, i.e. divorce, when one or both feel like they are not getting an amount that is equitable to what they are giving. When we are contemplating a contract, we negotiate for what we need in order to make it mutually beneficial. We need to do this in our marriages as well. For example, I am willing to \_\_\_\_\_ if you are willing to meet me halfway by \_\_\_\_\_. When we are willing to give something in order to get something we need, both parties feel a sense of collaboration and contribution. The “contract” tends to feel mutually beneficial, which leads to a desire to renew it, year after year!



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

- Online pornography is not the Playboy of yesterday. It is seriously messing with the sexuality of viewers, including young people. Talk with your kids about this issue and the inherent dangers from a realistic standpoint; it interferes with normal sexual development.
- Establish a contract and have your child sign it! The contract should include all of your rules for technology use as well as the consequences of violating the rules. Refer to Part I of this series for more language and boundaries to include in the contract. Stick to the contract!
- Put all computers in a central area of the home and make yourself a pain by continuously looking at what your child is doing online.
- Spot check everything including online browser history, cell phones, facebook, twitter and let your child know you are doing it. If it is part of the contract, it should not have to be done with sneakiness.

There are entire books written on this topic, and I know I have only covered the very basics. My intention is to inform parents that there are very good kids, from loving families, that are in desperate need of parents to guide them in this arena. We cannot afford to be ignorant in this area, and in fact, our kids need us to be their parents in this world possibly even more than their real world. Please let me know if I can help you in any way with this.

*“...make yourself a pain by continuously looking at what your child is doing online.”*

## Thoughts and Moods... Cont'd from pg. 2

To this question, yes led to “Change Something” and no led to “Keep Doing what You’re Doing.” I think I liked this so much for its simplicity. If we are unhappy and want to become happier, we must change something. I suggest that we start by changing our way of thinking. Looking for what is right instead of what went wrong, looking for what is good rather than what appears bad, examining and embracing our strengths rather than obsessing about our weaknesses, considering what it is that we are grateful for rather than what others have that we don’t. If the “super-highway” in our brain is leading repeatedly to the negative, it is time for some new road construction. We can give our brain a new super-highway if we work hard at intentionally building that new pathway. It is hard at first, to come up with the positives in some situations. However, with practice, I promise it becomes easier. Without much maintenance on the old super-highway, the new positive super-highway will soon be the most traveled one in your brain. Let me know if I can help.



Pamela Boaz, LCSW

2095 W. 6th Ave. Suite 212  
Broomfield, CO 80020

Phone: 303-906-8992  
Fax: 303-460-7850  
Email: [pamelaboazlcsw@cs.com](mailto:pamelaboazlcsw@cs.com)  
Web: [pamelaboaz.com](http://pamelaboaz.com)  
Karen, Office Manager 303-460-3881

I'm on the Web! Visit me  
at [pamelaboaz.com](http://pamelaboaz.com)

*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,**

*My former wife and the mother to my children just had a serious suicide attempt. How do I talk to my children about this? FRW*

*My daughter's mother recently relapsed with drugs. What do I tell my daughter? RL*

I am going to answer these very similar questions together, because they have a lot in common. First, we must keep in mind the age of the kids and what information they are equipped to handle. Here's the most important consideration: We must tell them the truth in an age appropriate way. When we are dishonest with kids, even with the intention of protecting them from the harsh truth, they learn that they cannot trust us. At a time like this, they need to know that they can trust us, and that they can ask us questions because we have already put the topic on the table. One thing to keep in mind is that we give general and truthful information, and then allow the child to ask questions. Kids will ask questions until they feel satisfied and then will stop. That is when they no longer need additional information. A conversation might start something like this: *We know that things can sometimes go very wrong with our bodies, and sometimes this can happen with our minds, too. Sometimes, people's minds get very mixed up and it causes them to feel hopeless that they can ever feel better. This happened to mom and it made her not want to live anymore. She tried to hurt herself and now there are doctors and other helpers that are trying to help her heal and get better. I know this is very hard to understand, and you are likely to have lots of questions. Most importantly, none of this is in any way your fault. I am willing to answer any questions that I can for you.* Or, for the mom who relapsed with drugs... *This happened to mom and it made her make some bad choices about using drugs. We know that drugs are harmful and your mom is going to need help to heal and get better. There are doctors and other helpers that can help if your mom decides to get help. I know this is very hard to understand...* Without a truthful account, kids tend to make up their own stories which create more confusion, fear and isolation. Our kids always need us to be truthful, and a crisis is no exception! Thanks for asking.

