

# Lakeview Beacon

*Helping People Find Solutions*

*Winter 2012*

**Lakeview Counseling**

1844 Oak Hollow Drive, Suite B

**Phone: 231.929.0300**

Traverse City, MI 49684

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*Darcy Britten is facilitating an ongoing Lupus Support Group. Please contact Darcy at x106 for more information.*

*Laura Slaughter will be starting an Adolescent Girls Group. Please contact Laura at x103 for more information.*



*Please feel free to make copies of your Lakeview Beacon*

At Lakeview we are seeing an increasing number of clients who are having challenges in their families with regard to internet use. We hope you'll find our newsletter helpful as you negotiate relationships and technology use.

## **Lakeview's Top 10 Dos and Don'ts**

**by Darcy Britten LLPC, NCC**

1. Do share the joke with your spouse/partner if you laugh out loud at something on your cell phone, computer or any other technological device.
2. Don't guess. If a text message is vague or confusing, wait until you are face to face with the sender to ask what they meant. Text leaves so much to the imagination that it's easy to let wishful thinking or insecurity to take over. When you get a message that makes no sense, respond with, "What? Let's talk l8ter". Then don't analyze.
3. Do respond ASAP. Most people are never far from their cell phones, so if you don't reply within an hour or so, people may assume they're being ignored. According to ATT&T, the biggest texting turn-off is a slow response. Rely with something like "stuck in mtg. will get back soon". If you can't do that, be sure to add "sorry, just got this." When you finally do text him or her back.
4. Don't start emotional conversations via text because it will never go well.
5. Do discuss with your partner about what technologies are okay for big discussions, or emotional topics. For example, since you have time to formulate your thoughts before typing, maybe conveying anger through an e-mail, is a good form of communication for both of you?
6. Don't e-mail or browse the net while talking to, or on the phone with, the other person. It is distracting for both of you and it makes it seem like you only half-care about what the other person is discussing.
7. Do put away your phone or computer on important occasions like when you have a rare date night together, without the kids, and have your partner do the same.
8. Don't try to convey sarcasm in texts, it's hard to express its jovial meaning, so just don't try.
9. Do text and e-mail your spouse or partner with the same care you did when you were first dating.
10. Don't send flirty messages on your company phone, unless you would like to share it with the company IT director!

## The internet and your family by Jill Kimball, LMSW

*Teach them to appreciate that everything they publish, from photos and comments to blogs and websites remain in the cyber world forever and could potentially complicate their future aspirations.*



*Keep conversations open regarding cyber bullying. Educate yourself in the realities of internet addictions and encourage limiting “screen time” for everyone, yourself included.*

Computers and smart phones have brought the 21st century directly into our homes. We now have access to an awesome array of information and resources online. Right at our finger tips we can explain frostbite to our children or figure out how to make homemade slime. We can stay in communication with our children’s teachers and our children can use the internet to enhance their learning experiences. There is no doubt the internet is a great tool; and with great tools comes great responsibility. Ultimately, as adults and parents, we are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the children in our home and this includes protecting them from potential dangers that the internet can present.

Most of us have worked to help our children understand “stranger danger”. We have taught them to never give out personal or identifying information online. We’ve encouraged them to come to us with anything that makes them uncomfortable. And hopefully we have talked with them about taking personal responsibility for their own actions and words. There is a plethora of information about internet safety, available online, of course!

There’s also a whole world of new social dynamics, information and misinformation, as well as temptations that both children and adults must be prepared to deal with.

Our kids are growing up in a sophisticated world that exposes them to things we never heard of until adulthood. But their developing brain’s ability to process, react and make sense of information is much different than our adult brains. There is a reason beyond food and shelter that children have parents! Keep in mind, something may seem logical and obvious to you as an adult but seem completely different to a young person. Some young people feel they “know” someone because they are their “friend’s friend” or they go to a school nearby even though they’ve never met the person. Many of them have strong emotional reactions to things they read or things their friends post or say online. They need guidance, and the benefit of our supervision and wisdom, to take full (and safe) advantage of the online world.

For starters, it is appropriate (and recommended) that parents’ have access to their children’s passwords for all accounts; and that you check in on things from time to time. You should discuss with your kids the reality that you reserve the right to monitor their cell phones, email, social networking, or gaming activities. At what age does a child earn the right or privilege to their privacy? This is a highly individual decision based on their age, behavior and judgment. Ideally older teens will be demonstrating their maturing judgment, ability to cope with life’s stressors and trustworthiness in ways that will show us they have earned more privacy and require less supervision.



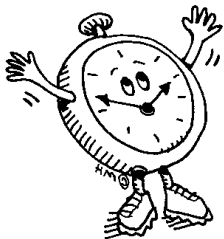
Young people need to be educated regarding the potential for misinformation online. Help them understand that published information is not necessarily true or reliable. To access specific information about keeping your children safe online: Web search “kids internet safety”. To help your family fully enjoy of the wonders of the internet, stay aware and involved.

## Technology and Marriages, important points to ponder

Carol Murray, LMSW

Please note: this article is not suitable for children.

*“Dates” don’t have to mean spending money; they mean: I care enough about you and our relationship to arrange something special for the two of us. And, remember to get out of the house. The old term “couch potato” could now be replaced with “internet slug”.*



*If you’re already misusing technology and/or your use is affecting your marriage, be frank with your spouse about this and agree to seek professional help for the sake of your relationship and your own well-being.*

Technology can be wonderful as it offers the ability to expand our lives. As a result, people have become more and more active with daily internet use because of the convenience offered. It is easier, quicker and less expensive to socialize, communicate, shop, educate, inform and create using the internet.

On the other hand, technology creates increased distractions and stimulation with increased tolerance and failure to realize the negative effects. It is important to note that technology can play a key role in marital separation and divorce. It used to be that the most common problems bringing a couple into marriage counseling were money and sex. The number one problem now is the internet! In fact, 1 in 5 divorces cite problems due to the internet. Access to pornography (an article in Time magazine reported there are 260 million pages of pornography online), connecting with old “friends” on Facebook, trolling for liaisons on dating websites and creating an alternate persona are all possible at any time of day in any location without the expressed consent or involvement of a real life partner. This behavior can be reinforcing as it encourages unrealistic expectations about appearance and intimacy and allows someone to engage in superficial two-dimensional interactions that are exciting, mysterious and entertaining.

The obvious negative impact on a marriage is interference with quality time that could be spent together and a loss of connection, or “disengagement”. Also, your partner is engaging in inappropriate and superficially intimate relationships with other people. Often the behavior is kept secret and when discovered has the same impact as discovering that your spouse has been having an affair.

To further complicate things, internet use can also be addictive. Although not yet a recognized medical diagnosis, “Internet Addiction Disorder” has been receiving a lot of attention in the field of mental health. In general, a person allows use of the internet to interrupt their daily life as well as escape the stress of their personal life. Eventually, there is a loss of control as with any other form of addiction. Addiction treatment specialists are seeing more and more clients with this disorder.

So what can and should a couple do to prevent technology from negatively impacting their relationship? First of all, have an open and thoughtful discussion about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior with regard to the internet, and reach an agreement about this. Second, take time to turn off the technology. As simple as that sounds, it will take some practice to do this as we have become so dependent on and tolerant of technology. Imagine having dinner together without the buzz or beep of email and voicemail and without the constant continual disruption of texting! Third, schedule time to be together. I encourage couples to take time every day to prioritize spending time together without technology; for example, dinner time and an hour or two thereafter. You can also make dates with each other.

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Getting outside together means getting away from the interference of technology and sharing the fresh air, beauty and mystery of our natural environment. Next, use technology as a way to engage in spontaneous communication with each other: flirt, say “I love you” or “I miss you” or “just thinking of you”. Imagine how good it will feel to receive unsolicited messages such as this. And last but not least, agree not to keep secrets. If you find yourself being drawn into something questionable online, ask yourself: would my spouse be OK with this? If you’re not sure, go ask.

For further reading please look at the links below

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080520161340.htm>

<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2010/03/is-technology-taking-its-toll-on-our-relationships/>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/01/23/us-gadgets-idUSN2221996620080123>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/rediscovering-love/201103/can-love-survive-in-the-age-technology>

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