



EXPERT Q&A: DR. LISA STROHMAN OF TECHNOLOGY WELLNESS CENTER DISCUSSES TECHNOLOGY ABUSE, ITS IMPACT ON FUTURE GENERATIONS, AND RAISING AWARENESS NOW

(Scottsdale, Ariz. - October 24, 2014) - Technology is arguably here to stay.

From school e-mail alerts, to company progress reports online, to tablets that deliver everything from information to streaming movies on the go - we need it, just as we need food, to keep going. However, if we abuse our consumption of all things tech, we begin to suffer its effects.

Recognizing this and attuned to the impact of technology on future generations, licensed clinical psychologist Dr. Lisa Strohmman launched Technology Wellness Center this past fall with co-founder Dr. Melissa Westendorf. Strohmman and Westendorf will now have access to the necessary information and support to help children and families struggling with technology dependency. They also are both parents. (Dr. Strohmman is married to fellow physician William J. Strohmman, M.D. who practices at LifeScape Premier, where TWC is located).

Technology Wellness Center will provide resources, strategic tools, counseling, and education to help combat the social and emotional issues resulting from technology overuse.

Beginning in October, Dr. Strohmman launched a free seminar series for the public about technology abuse. The next event, "Press Pause to Connect" takes place on November 10th.

Here, *SB+L* addresses questions about the impact technology is having on neurological development and more:

SB+L: It sounds like the initial focus of your seminar series is on children and adolescents. Explain briefly how upcoming generations are actually developing differently due to hyper-exposure to technology almost from birth?

Dr. Strohmman: Children are growing up with an exposure to technology that no other generation has ever experienced. There are interpersonal, behavioral, emotional and physical implications when children are given unrestricted access. Most obvious are the issues that begin with 12-14 year olds when the parents have less oversight and they are often given mobile devices that allow access to any place they would like to go online. Younger children who have been provided access from a much earlier age are at an even greater risk, given they started using technology without an understanding of the necessary boundaries needed to encourage a balance with friends' offline and activities that are not technology based. Recent research indicates that development has changed both structural and chemical pathways in the brains with the use of more than three hours per day.

SB+L: Is there anything good about the technology exposure – any skills that the younger, highly-exposed generations are manifesting?

Dr. Strohmman: Like anything, there's good and bad, particularly when it comes to the area of technology exposure. The younger generations are computer literate very early on and they are showing aptitude in uncovering a diverse array of learning sources and techniques that without the internet would not be possible. These skills will stand to them when entering higher education and eventually choosing their career paths. However, it is pertinent to acknowledge that there must come a time to unplug as this can have a worrying impact on interpersonal skills.

SB+L: What are warning signs parents need to look for in terms of addiction or technology abuse? As with alcohol or drugs, when is it time to get the help of a professional?



Dr. Strohman: Warning signs would include: drastic change in mood, reclusive behaviors, increased anxiety, depressive symptoms, argumentative over technology reduction, inability to go without technology, would be the top signs I would recommend considering. I personally feel that getting help from a professional is better *prior* to having a severe issue and is a primary directive of the Technology Wellness Center. We are focused on providing a comprehensive, holistic approach for families seeking advice and guidance so that they can be proactive in their own journey with technology. For those clients that do come in after an alarming situation has come to their attention, we take the time to work through that situation and then address the policies they have had in their home and how we can work as a family to create new healthier ones.

SB&L: Cyber-bullying is a hot topic. What is new among school aged children and teens?

Dr. Strohman: I am not sure whether there is something new per se, except the platforms that are coming online are providing teens with a multitude of apps and forums that allow anonymous bullying without any restriction or oversight. What is new, worryingly is the number of teens jumping into forums like "Am I Pretty" (has more than 500,000 videos) asking unknown strangers to weigh in with critiques. This is an open invitation and the teen will most certainly fall victim to cyberbullying. Additionally, many teens are starting to "fight back" and standing up for their friends invites even more targets for these incidents.

SB&L: Adults are (perhaps) well-versed at the legal issues of cyber-bullying and technology addictions, so I would imagine they are far more subtle. What do you see among adults? What do you hear from clients who engage your services in the corporate realm?

Dr. Strohman: When you speak of adults there needs to be a clear categorization between those in their twenties and those post thirties. The behaviors among young adults, i.e. those in their twenties, is considerably different as the frontal lobe of the brain is not fully-developed until after the age of 25. Much of these behaviors present a problem well into the twenties while they are still in college and entering the dating world. The frontal lobe of the brain is responsible for judgment and decision-making. Post-30 adults display behaviors that may appear more subtle but clinical data and now research indicates that older adults get into trouble via online affairs. Much more adultery (whether emotional or leading to physical) is occurring in the adult population. In the corporate realm, we see issues with productivity, lack of enforcement regarding policies for technology and issues with employees airing private corporate issues online.

Then, when it comes to adults who are parenting, they are not very well-versed in the legal implications that often present themselves. Most parents are quite shocked to find that the phones they provide their kids (under their name and contract) contain child pornographic images which are sent back and forth via "sexting". This creates a liability issue for parents that is way over their heads and the phone company's.

SB&L: Given legal and medical background – and the fact that you are a parent – what is the single picture issue that you feel all citizens should care about most where technology abuse is concerned? I.e. if you were asked tomorrow by a legislator for your input on where we are headed, what would you talk about – given what you already know?

Dr. Strohman: I would argue that we are headed directly to a lack of community, with little to no interpersonal connections with those around us. From a political standpoint, I feel there must be some legislation that recognizes that technology has become very predatory and manipulative toward the younger generation. For example, simple programming that states you must be 13 or older to view, but on the contrary does not have any oversight on who is signing up and is in truth marketed toward the younger population. A child under the age of 13 does not have the ability to make a well-informed decision about what programming is deemed suitable for their age group.

We are at a tipping point in our country, losing the younger generations to a virtual world that is much more alluring to them than the real one.

Here's more about Dr. Strohman's next free, informative event at Technology Wellness Center:

Press Pause to Connect is the second installment from Dr. Lisa Strohman's monthly seminar series. Dr. Lisa will educate parents on how to create a balanced family environment in an increasingly technology-driven world. A mother and clinical psychologist with over a decade of experience in counseling, Dr. Lisa will offer guidance on how to set boundaries for children while providing tips to help define the rules for pressing pause in order to keep family members connected with one another.

Founder and Director of Technology Wellness Center Dr. Lisa uses her expertise to provide resources and counseling to families and teens battling issues related to technology overuse and addiction.

WHEN: Monday, November 10th, 2014, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

WHERE: LifeScape Medical Associates, 8757 E. Bell Rd., Scottsdale, Ariz. 85260

WHO: The event is open to parents, educators and adults working with children. Light refreshments will be served.

COST: FREE, but attendees must register by phone or email as seating is limited.
DrLisa@technologywellnesscenter.com or (480) 220-4702

WEBSITE: <http://technologywellnesscenter.com>