

Let's Put Down the Remote in 2019

Technology has provided great benefits to us over that past decades. The television, telephone, and computer have certainly lightened the load and provided wholesome avenues for information, learning, and entertainment. Technology has also made home appliances more efficient and easier to control.

In recent years the creation of hand-held devices like the smart phone, tablets, and iPads, has certainly added to the myriad of devices that have made information and entertainment easily accessible. Unfortunately, although these tools are helpful, they also introduce different kinds of challenges that are proving to be more damaging than helpful to personal development, family and romantic relationships.

The development of high definition television has introduced a new kind of mesmerization we never thought would happen. The sound and video are so clear and real we are lured in to a trap of subtle hypnotism and even a kind of social laziness. The hand-held smart phone with the ability to literally connect to any part of the world while lying in bed, has introduced a new reason to be alone and to lock out family and friends around us. These new technologies, while providing positive avenues for leaning and entertainment in the privacy of our homes, are also locking us into dark abys of aloneness, disconnection, and selfishness.

As a mental health professional who specializes in relationship issues and personal development, I did not dream that there will be a time when people would be using electronic tools like the hand-held smart phone to have sexual affairs and romantic rendezvous. Twenty-five years ago, no couple came to me with issues of texting or sexting. I did not have individuals dealing with pornography addiction they accessed on a computer or smart phone. Today, I receive couples in my office every week complaining that the misuse of the smartphone is a central theme in their relationship. Who dreamt there would be such a thing like cyber affairs?

Less than twenty years ago, little children and teenagers enjoyed being outdoors, climbing trees, playing ball, etc. Today, children are stuck behind the television, smart phones, or computers; trapped into a world of make-belief and distorted information. Twenty years ago, the shouts of mom or dad throughout the neighborhoods were: "Children, where are you?" Or "It's time to come home, children." Today those shouts in the home are "Turn off the television." "Come off the phone." "Come out of WhatsApp, please."

Family dynamics have changed. There are new diseases and increase of certain psychological or developmental disorders that can be directly related to the overuse or misuse of technology—television, smartphones, tablets, etc. However, there are a few parents who refuse to allow technology to control their children's development. They have structured or supervised use of some technology or avoid using them altogether during a certain period in the child's life.

It is clear that the misuse of these modern technologies is doing more damage than good to our family life. In 2016, technology specialist, Andy Crouch, was asked by The Barna Research Group in the United States to write a book on technology and the family. The book entitled, "The Tech-Wise Family" has become a best seller in the United States and has circled around the world. In a recent article about the book, Andy Crouch stated: "As I emphasize every time I speak about *The Tech-Wise Family*, this isn't (just) about screens, it isn't (just) about "limits" or "screen time," and it definitely isn't (just) about the kids. It's about all of us asking, together, what kind of lives we want in our households, what kind of relationships we want with the people closest to us, what kind of people we are personally becoming—and whether our current use of technology is actually helping us become people of wisdom, courage and love. The people that, on our best days, we want to be."

I propose similar questions. Is the use of technology helping us have better relationships and families in The Bahamas? Is the use of technology truly helping us to be a better nation? It has become clear to me that I need to conduct seminars around our country to help families become "tech-wise." Yes, I have written several

articles on the topic over the decades. However, it is clear now that we need more direct teaching on the topic. These seminars need to target all parents—single and married, teenagers, and senior citizens. Furthermore, it is even wise to have seminars for educators and administrators in our educational institutions at all levels.

The purpose of these seminars will not be to tell parents or adults not to use technology. It will be to give them tools to wisely use technology and teach them the dangers of misuse or overuse.

I am happy for modern technology. Our cars are now equipped with Wi-Fi. Our airports have monitors displaying relevant flight information. Merchant stores are using the latest technology for cashing goods and monitoring premises. “Alexa” has become a wonderful new name in many homes. The digital device, controlled by your Amazon Prime account, can turn on your lights with voice activation, play on-demand music, games, and news. What a wonderful new world! However, we must become wise users of these technologies in 2019. Perhaps, we should set times to put down the remote in 2019.

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