



Enuf Already!

Ted Pincus is a communications consultant who teaches at DePaul University in Chicago. In a recent column in the Chicago Sun-Times he posed a serious question as to whether our growing immersion in the world of all things technical might be just a curious trend or actually be a threat to achievement in education and the workplace. As a technology challenged person from the boomer generation, I immediately devoured his observations. I'm well aware of my status in life as hopelessly out of touch with the techie world of reality. However, I am not so naïve as to believe that pervasive technology is having little impact on life, on families, in our schools and in the workplace.

Paradox reigns supreme in this "brave new world" of gizmos. People, young and old, are starved for communication, yet rhetoric abounds about how unconnected people are, despite the pervasive options to connectivity. Parents complain that kids won't talk to them and kids respond by saying they are not cared for, understood or heard. Yet both parents and children enjoy the omnipotence of being on-line and begin to cherish their time to just cocoon. Walk down the street crowded with people and see scores of people isolated from each other with earphones resorting to sign language to communicate with those they can "merely see." Then we have this new level of self-absorption validated by the growing number of "life coaches" affirming that self-absorption is "OK." How convenient! Put together this growing need for technology fixes and add the over-programmed lives that most parents and children increasingly live and it is quite reasonable to expect breakdown in generational connections whether it be in the home or in the workplace. Our world is awash in irony these days. Huge opposition to the Iraq conflict is offered by the very group who can't even find it on the map. Economic empowerment is but a pipedream for those addicted to i-Tunes but blissfully naïve about the economics of the world that produced the i-Tune player. Life is too precious to remain neutral when the irony is so stark.

Let's say we accept that these are just the realities that are part of the 21st century. That still doesn't explain the steady downturn in SAT/ACT scores since the mid-1980's when technology began its current all-pervasive intrusion into our lives. No amount of rhetoric about the inadequacy of standardized tests to validate learning will erase the fact that nearly 1/3 of Americans between 18-24 years of age can't find the Pacific Ocean on a map, half can't find the Mississippi River and more than ¾ can't even find Iraq on a

map. In the inter-connectness that globalization brings into our lives, the suggestion that the sad figures I just quoted are irrelevant to life, is to demonstrate new levels of naivety and irresponsibility rarely seen in recent human history. To add fuel to the fire, a side-effect of self-absorbed technology overload is a rising sense of entitlement that is challenged by the declining reality that schooling and the workplace are capable of providing the visions of loveliness that are dreamed of while cocooning.

Before I overdose on the counter-productive dimensions of technology, I suppose there is some need for a reality check of my own. The fact you are reading this “rant” all over the world is testimony to the wonders of technology. Let me also go to an “ancient book” for some perspective. Yes, it was written when none of the current realities could even be imagined, yet it speaks timelessly of what is necessary for families to be cohesive centers of nurture, of secure and confident children. For example in Deuteronomy chapter six (verses 1-6) God provides a pattern of how cohesiveness between generations can be maintained. It is centered in parents who believe and practice the values they wish to pass onto their children, because duplicity in elders is easily seen by the younger. The instructions make clear that the proverbial quality versus quantity of time bifurcation is bogus. It takes steady verbal communication over a period of time for anyone to understand the values that bring about society that is fulfilled. Every aspect of life and every minute of the day are to be used by parents/elders to build an appetite to the values of sustainable life. Any intrusion into the necessity of transmitting the DNA of sustainable life must be subjected to critique by responsible people. The promise of this ancient book (Proverbs 22:6) is that paying attention to communication and the instilling of eternal values early in life has a life-long impact that is irreversible. The challenge is huge, but it will be addressed by people who realize when enough is enough and allow their sphere of influence to be retrofitted; avoiding the local 12-step program for technology addiction.

BYRON D. KLAUS

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
President