



Tools of the Trade
for family improvement

by Heidi Kiebler-Brogan, M.A., LPC



“PLUGGED IN” BUT DISCONNECTED

As a licensed professional counselor, wife and mother of three school aged children, I certainly see the difficulties that families are faced with in today's fast paced world. Be sure that whatever you are struggling with, you are likely not alone. We all hit bumps in the road and could use a little help and support from time to time. Check in with me each issue as I offer you some "Tools of the Trade" to help you better manage and enjoy your life and your family.

As I sat down to write this article I had to “LOL” (laugh out loud). I had my laptop open, my trusty blackberry by my side, and the Giants in the background on the TV. Technology has so rapidly changed and improved that we can be connected to everyone at any given moment.

The advancement of technology is having the biggest impact on our children. If we want to see a glimpse of our future, we only have to look at current youth behavior and attitude. There is an abundance of technology available to them, but an absence of universal codes of conduct and firm boundaries. **Many children are more informed and confident when dealing with others, but noticeably more emotionally detached and less loyal and caring in their relationships.**

From Baby Einstein tapes for infants, to Reader Rabbit software for two-year-olds, to Nintendo consoles given as early as a fifth birthday and beyond, technological advancements designed to stimulate the intellect and entertain the soul are overwhelming many 21st century kids. Just look around our middle schools; most kids have a cell phone, an ipod and some handheld video game. The incidents of cyber bullying are extremely high in most middle schools and high schools. Facebook and My Space provide forums to say things one would never say face to face. Chat rooms expose our kids to predatory risks and false

pretenses. The Internet provides access to everything from pornography to how to build a bomb. Too much of adult life is exposed to them too early in their formative lives and because kids lack the comprehension and maturity to deal with it, they have become increasingly anxious and fearful. **Children of this tech savy generation are at great risk of significant relationship and interpersonal difficulties as they mature into adulthood.**

Technology access has been linked to positive developments such as improved reading skills, but too much technology can impose dangers such as vision impairment, technology addiction and sexual solicitation. It is overwhelming for young children and creates patterns of behaviors similar to addiction patterns. Their brains get used to too much auditory and visual stimulation and in the absence of these stimulations, they do not know what to do with themselves. They get anxious, restless, bored and aggressive. It really is no surprise that many children, (and adults), are having increasingly difficult times focusing, paying attention and controlling impulsive urges. Incessant exposure to "all day TV," violent video games, instant messaging, and the always accessible cell phone, interferes with the development of psychological traits such as self control, a trait known to be essential to positive personality development.