

The internet and family relationships

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



The Internet and Family Relationships Fifty years ago, a family would get together after a long day, eat dinner at the dinner table, and share the details of the events of their day. Families were connected with each other on a personal level and enjoyed each other's company. Nowadays, it seems as though children and teenagers are too preoccupied with their cellphones, computers, and tablets to even carry on a decent and well thought out conversation with their other family members. Internet usage and electronics such as laptops and iPad's have negatively affected the way children and their families interact with one another in a major way. In Adam Gopnik's article "The Information," Gopnik very briefly discusses how family life can be torn apart by cellphones and computers from the Better-Never's view point. In William Powers' book *Hamlets Blackberry*, Powers recounts stories about family problems relating to technology. Additionally, an article by Sook-Jung Lee and Young-Gil Chae called "Children's Internet Use in a Family Context: Influence on Family Relationships and Parental Mediation" discusses a survey conducted on whether children's use of The Internet affects their communication abilities with their families. In the debate over whether The Internet affects family relationships in a negative way, it is arguable that the most important thing to do is to monitor the websites visited by children to and limit the time spent using electronics by children and adolescents. It appears as though teenagers nowadays have a hard time connecting with their family members. Some tend to favor playing on their handheld video games or browsing Facebook on their phones than interacting with their families. Gopnik momentarily touches base on the idea that family life can be affected by children's excessive use of The Internet.

He references Powers' book and adds a quote taken from the book:

Somebody excuses themselves for a bathroom visit or a glass of water and doesn't return. Five minutes later, another of us exits on a similarly mundane excuse along the lines of " I have to check something"... Where have all the humans gone? To their screens of course. Where they always go these days. The digital crowd has a way of elbowing its way into everything, to the point where a family can't sit in a room together for half an hour without somebody, or everybody peeling off... As I watched the Vanishing Family Trick unfold, and played my own part in it, I sometimes felt as if love itself or the acts of heart and mind that constitute love, were being leached out of the house by our screens. (Gopnik 5) Powers is a Better-Never, a person who believes it would have been better if The Internet had never been created. Gopnik included him in his essay to illustrate one argument the Better-Nevers have as to why the invention of The Internet was a bad idea. From observations of children nowadays, Powers seems to have grasped the right idea of how teenagers act in today's world. Gopnik appears to be an Ever Waser, or a person who believes that life with The Internet is the same as it ever was. Gopnik thinks spending less time on The Internet is a better solution than doing away with The Internet all together. " An unplugged Sunday is a better idea than turning of the internet completely, since it demonstrates that we can get along just fine without the screens, if only for one day" (Gopnik 9). Gopniks suggestion makes sense because The Internet and today's modern technologies have many benefits, but when people let it completely take over their lives, it turns into a very negative thing. In Powers' Hamlet's Blackberry, he writes about how technology, such as new

electronics, demands that everyone in the world must be connected to each other. A slender wire has become the highway of thought. Messages follow each other in quick succession. Joy spreads on the track of sorrow. The arrival of a ship, news of a revolution, or a battle, the price of pork, the state of foreign and domestic markets, missives of love, the progress of the courts, the success or discomfiture of disease, the result of elections, and an innumerable host of social, political and commercial details, all chase each other over the slender and unconscious wires (Powers 184). He discusses how relationships between loved ones can crumble when technology and The Internet are used excessively. Powers makes the observation that for centuries, people have found it easier to communicate with each other from a distance than having to communicate in person. Isn't this what we live for, when you come down to it, time spent with other people, those moments that can't be translated into ones and zeros and replicated on a screen? Obviously relationships are about more than being with others in a literal, bodily sense. They can be maintained and nurtured across great distances using all kinds of connective tools. For centuries, letters served this function beautifully, allowing people to conduct elaborate, long running dialogues that could be more intimate and affecting than in-person conversation (Powers 53). It seems people will stop at nothing to avoid personally interacting with others. Technology has made it all the more easier to stay connected with others, yet never have to see them in person. Powers seems to think so as well: " If we've all learned anything in the last decade about technology and human interaction, it's that as screen time rises, direct human-to-human interaction falls off proportionally (Powers 51). Internet

usage by children and teenagers is getting out of control. If children do not unplug themselves from the World Wide Web and limit their internet use, they will lose the ability, once and for all, to be able to interact with humans on a personal level. Children and adolescents use The Internet for many purposes, such as research for homework, social networking, and video calling friends and family overseas. With all the benefits The Internet makes available, the majority of American households have an internet connection. " By 2004, 74% of American young people ages 8 to 18 had access to an internet connection at home" (Lee & Chae 1). But, like everything in life, with benefits come detriments. Much of the negative side of The Internet is from online gaming and social networking. Playing video games online can cause children to disconnect from their family and friends because they are too focused on what is going on with their screens. " The frequency of using online games was a more significant factor than the total amount of time spent online... Playing online games was most significantly related to users' perceived decline in family communication" (Lee & Chae 3). Spending too much time on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace is also a danger to family time. With children wanting to spend more time messaging and chatting with their friends and posting pictures, there doesn't leave much room for true social interaction with their family members. There are many ways to make sure children don't spend too much time on video gaming websites and social networking websites such as blocking certain sites, enabling time limits for the computer, and using family friendly search engines as the main web page. Parents need to limit and monitor their children's internet use. The Internet is a great source for researching

homework subjects and keeping in touch with family and friends that are not physically around very often, but without taking the necessary precautions, children could be in danger of losing the ability to properly communicate with family and friends. Not only will that, but the time they spend with their family will slowly diminish until family time becomes obsolete. There is still time to undo the damage done by excessive internet use, but the time to start is now. Works Cited Gopnik, Adam. " The Information: How The Internet Gets Inside Us. " NewYorker. com. Conde Nast, 14 Feb. 2011. Web. 03 Dec. 2012. Lee, Sook-Jung, and Young-Gil Chae. " Children's Internet Use in a Family Context: Influence on Family Relationships and Parental Mediation." Academic Search Premier. EBSCO, Oct. 2007. Web. 1 Dec. 2012. Powers, William. Hamlet's Blackberry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in the Digital Age. New York: Harper, 2010. Print.