COOK COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
MINNESOTA

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES

Sawtooth Mountain Clinic
Together Through Life
a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization

April, 2018 | **Topic of the Month** | **Free - Help Yourself!**

Great conversations begin with great questions.

StoryCorps mission is to preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world. *Here are some suggestions to help get started with some "connection conversations."*

Who has been the most important person in your life?

Who has been the kindest to you?

What are the most important lessons you've learned? From whom did you learn them?

Are there any funny stories or memories or characters from your life that you want to tell me about?

What are you proudest of?

When in life have you felt most alone?

If you could hold on to one memory, forever, what would it be?

How has your life been different than what you'd imagined?

How would you like to be remembered?

Do you have any regrets?

What does your future hold?

What are your hopes for what the future holds for me? For my children?

If this was to be our very last conversation, what would you want to say to me?

If you could send a message to your great-great-grandchildren, what wisdom would you want to pass on?

Is there anything that you've never told me but want to tell me now?

Is there something about me that you've always wanted to know but have never asked?

To learn more about Story Corps, visit:
https://storycorps.org/

Creating Connection

People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. *Maya Angelou*

Building deep connections with others is important, not only for our individual well-being, but also for the well-being of our communities.

Here are some ways that we can be purposeful in how we both create and nurture our connections with others.

✓ **Notice how you answer another person's requests for your attention.** Author Maya Angelou proposes that in every interaction we all are asking :
  • Do you even notice I'm here?
  • If you do notice, do you care whether I'm here or not?
  • Am I enough as I am, or will I have to change in order for you to care about me?
  • Can I tell that I'm special to you, just by the way you look at me?
The next time you interact with someone, pay attention to how these questions are answered, both as the giver of attention, and as the receiver.

✓ **If you find that you've checked out, choose to check back in.** This can be as simple as pausing long enough to make eye contact and share a smile, or slowing down a bit for a chat. The length of time spent connecting is less important than the quality of time.

✓ **Choose kindness.** It turns out that kindness isn't just something we do or feel, it's what our bodies need. Being unkind makes us feel disconnected at the same time it's damaging our body. Kindness, on the other hand, really does make us feel better - mentally and physically. It doesn't take huge acts of self-sacrifice, either. Small acts, done consistently, can have lasting benefits, both for the giver and receiver.

✓ **Become good at disagreeing.** We're not all going to agree all the time, and that's a good thing - if we disagree well. Paul Graham, "the hacker philosopher," developed a hierarchy of disagreement. Better outcomes happen when we elevate our debate from lowest levels (such as name-calling and attacking the person, instead of their argument) to the highest, most effective ways of disagreeing (refuting a direct quote or better yet, refuting an argument's central point). To find out more about the "Disagreement Hierarchy," check out http://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/how-to-disagree-well-7-of-the-best-and-worst-ways-to-argue .

✓ **Disconnect to reconnect.** Being overly "plugged in" to technology is a barrier to creating and nurturing the connections we need. Flip this page over for tips on how you can take back control of your technology usage and reconnect to the people around you.

Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support. We're here to help! *Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk.*

Ditching Distractions...

Our mobile phones have morphed into our watches, cameras, calendars, music and movie players, remote offices, list keepers, and family trackers. As their functionality has expanded, so has the amount of time that we spend using them.
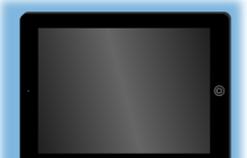
Smart phones have become so much a part of our lives that being without them can cause anxiety for some people. Would **YOU** feel anxious without instant access to friends, family, social media, or information? Take the "Nomophobia" Questionnaire to check if NO Mobile Phone phoBIA is impacting your wellbeing. https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/30/health/smartphone-addiction-study/index.html

If you answered "yes' to the above question, you're not alone. According to a recent poll, 50% of teens believe they are addicted to their mobile devices, and 72% of them feel that they must respond immediately to any notification. Parents aren't immune to the pull of technology, with 69% of them reporting that they check their phones hourly, and 52% reporting that they often or occasionally try to reduce their own time on devices. Perhaps most surprisingly, 54% of children report that they think that their parents check their devices too often, and this is among kids old enough to voice an opinion.

But what about the littlest ones, who can't yet ask who we love more, them or our phone? Today's children often have to compete with mobile devices for their parents' attention. This can be problematic, since experiences in the first years of life affect the very structure of a child's developing brain.   If those experiences include a parent providing loving attention, a child's brain develops optimally. If those experiences more often include being ignored, brain development is impaired.

Parents that are addicted to mobile devices fail to give their babies the interactive face-to-face time that they need. This can mean that babies don't get the language practice that they need, or patient support as they learn to manage their emotions, or encouragement as they explore their world. This lack of connection in early childhood can cause further problems when turbulent teen years hit. On the other hand, emotional connectedness with loving adults can be protective for teens-- buffering them from depression, addiction, and low self-esteem.

Luckily there are lots of ways that we can have our technology and use it too! Below are ideas to help you use these powerful tools in ways that improve your life, instead of taking it over.

...and plugging in to what matters.

We can fall into habits that are harmful or we can build habits that are helpful. Here are some tips to help you build healthy tech habits.

✓ **Check your checking.** Do you start your day by picking up your phone? What if you pushed that back until you're *completely* ready for work or school? What other times of day do you automatically reach for the phone? The following tips will help you reduce both the number of times you check your phone and the amount of time you're on your phone.

✓ **Keep your phone where you can access it, but not automatically.** That means out of your pocket, off your desk, out of your bedroom. How about zipped in your purse or backpack, or charging in a less-used room?

✓ **Turn off the notifications:** No more email pings, text message beeps, or social media swishes. Check those things when YOU decide to, not when THEY tell you to.

✓ **Choose some tech-free times and zones.** For instance, last call for tech is ?:00pm. After that, screens off. What about setting aside a weekend morning as screen-free? Maybe meals return to being times of *just* talking, not texting.

Use technology to maintain control of your technology use. How do we balance healthy tech connections and healthy human connections? Fortunately, there's an app for that!

✓ **Checky** - This very basic app shows you how many times a day you check your phone. Just this little bit of awareness can help you change usage habits.

✓ **Moment** - tracks the amount of time you're on your phone, and breaks it down by type of use, so you can see where you're spending your time You can set limits and even monitor your children's phone use.

✓ **Space** - also allows you to track and analyse your usage. It offers notifications to interrupt unwanted use, and tools, such as screen dimming, to help you disconnect.

✓ **Flipd** - blocks access to specific apps during set times.

✓ **Forest** - gamifies decreasing phone use. Plant a tree that will grow into a forest - as long as you don't wander off into another app!

For more information on changing tech habits, check out: https://www.popsci.com/cure-smartphone-addiction#page-4