***CYBER ADDICTION RECOVERY CENTER***

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***Cyber Wellness***

Cyber wellness is a term that refers to the positive well-being of internet users and a healthy cyber-culture for the internet community. Cyber wellness involves an understanding of the risks of harmful online behavior, and awareness of how to protect oneself and others from such behavior, and recognition of the power of the internet to affect positive change in oneself and the community at large.

The internet and gaming are here to stay and we need to develop a way to use the internet and gaming to enhance the quality of life of children, teens, and adults while simultaneously enhancing our social communities. Parents need to prepare their children to be critical thinkers, creative producers of content, and pro-active citizens within the cyber community.

Cyber wellness includes embracing the potential positive effects of cyber-action: empowering learning, improving teamwork and self-esteem, improving work-life balance through telecommuting, improving job marketability, creating political and social opportunities for disenfranchised and marginalized populations, and providing opportunities for information and “user” generated content across socioeconomic and cultural boundaries (art, photography, music, writing).

Children and young people are becoming ***active producers and consumers*** of online content, services, and communication platforms. With these opportunities, come extraordinary freedoms to express one self and also bring new and complex responsibilities and risks. This fundamental change in children and young people's relationship with new media means it is imperative adults empower children and teens with the necessary tools, knowledge, and skills to create cyber wellness and the ability to make informed decisions about appropriate and safe use of new technologies.

Cyber wellness also involves ***balance***: the ability to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunities to be creative, to connect, to empower, to entertain while simultaneously taking advantage of off-line opportunities to experience travel, food, new cultures, teamwork, collaboration, love, and committed partnerships.

Cyber wellness also includes physical and emotional health: exercise, healthy dietary practices, recreational interests that include connection to nature, and relaxation/rejuvenation practices that maintain health.

Achieving balance in the 21st century is perhaps the greatest challenge for both youth and adults. The dynamic and constantly changing world of new technology and media can easily consume one's time and energy, whether a person is in early elementary school or an adult. The opportunities for recreation and distraction are also at an unprecedented level via the internet and gaming. The combination of stimulation and unlimited access to both cyber and gaming media can lead easily to an imbalance in one's life -- especially for at risk youth.

***Who is most at risk for a cyber-imbalance? Those with neurological, psychiatric, and environmental challenges and deficits: ADHD, depression, anxiety disorders, trauma, autism spectrum disorders, and impoverished resources within one's environment.***

Achieving cyber wellness, or a true balance between cyber and three-dimensional worlds, is an ongoing challenge for the 21st century. The crucial first step is awareness of the need to carefully analyze and question the way we interact with new technologies and media. We must adopt a critical stance at all times, whether it is our personal use, the use of our children, and more broadly the use of our community and political and social systems.

**“THE TECH DIET”**

1. **Limit technology to two hours per day (non-work or school related use).**
2. **Spend one hour per day, one day per week, and four days per month during which everyone in the family is completely unplugged –TOGETHER.**
3. **Institute a “tech curfew:” no recreational use of any technology after 9:00pm.**
4. **Keep all forms of technology out of bedrooms at all times.**
5. **Turn off smart phones at 10:00pm (no texting, surfing, etc.)**
6. **Collect all tech gadgets after curfew and have them “sleep” in the kitchen or family room (at a power bar).**
7. **Take family “field trips” at least once per week (parks, food, beach, museum, hiking, movies).**
8. **Exercise as a family: biking, hiking, swimming, treadmill, sports, boogie boarding, bowling).**
9. **Do not have conversations or meals with a tech devise in hand.**
10. **Structure/budget your tech/cyber day: set specific times for emailing, Facebook, chat rooms, eBay, research, etc.**