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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

LIVING THE SIMPLE LIFE

**6 Things Happy Families
Do Differently**

Parenting from the Heart

Technology's pros and cons



- 3 **Living the Simple Life**
- 4 **Death of Horseshoes**
- 6 **The Effects of Technology on Vision**
- 8 **6 Things Happy Families Do Differently**
- 10 **Parenting from the Heart**
Technology's pros and cons
- 11 **Answers to Your Questions**
Kids and iPads
- 12 **Notable Quotes**
Technology

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The world has changed, and is changing at a rapid pace. Just in my lifetime, I've gone from using a manual typewriter to a laptop computer—and there would not be enough space in this short intro to describe all the “new” gadgets that I saw invented and learned to use in between.

Has it made my life easier? Definitely! Does the technology that now pervades just about every aspect of our lives have some drawbacks? My answer to that is also definitely!

Being able to connect 24/7 makes it difficult sometimes to stop my work and take much needed time to relax. Technology has sped up our world, and it's not always easy to slow down along life's road.

It all comes down to using the technology that we have available to us today in a way that helps our lives to be better. It can help us get in touch with loved ones around the world with a click of a button, and that's great. But that same device used during mealtimes can cause us to communicate less with those who are right there with us.

Technology, burden or blessing? The articles exploring the pros and cons of technology in this issue of *Motivated* helped me want to work on living a more balanced life, and keep my use of technology in check. I hope it will do the same for you!

Use it, but don't let it use you!

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Living the Simple Life

By Leo Babauta, adapted

For almost 9 years now, I've been learning to live a simpler life—an uncluttered life with space for what really matters. A life that isn't constant busyness and rushing, but includes contemplation and creation, connection with people I love, and time for nature and activity.

That doesn't mean I have zero clutter or complications: I'm a part of the world, not a secluded monk. I have possessions, electronics, distractions, and occasional busyness. I just have reduced it to make space.

Some things I've learned about living the simple life:

- A quiet unrushed morning is a thing to treasure. I wake early so that I have some quiet time to read, write, and meditate.
- You can't have a simple life if you're unwilling to let go of what you're used to.
- Letting go can be difficult, but is easier if you do a one-month challenge. Let go of something for a month and see whether you like it or not.
- Letting go of cable TV was one of the best things we did early on—no more constant television in my home, no more ads for things we don't need.

- Simple, whole, healthful food is not only much healthier than junk food—it's a pleasure.
- You have to make time for what's important: time with your kids, time with your spouse, time for creating, and time for exercise. Overcommitting is the biggest sin against simple living most people make. I painfully cut out a huge number of commitments to simplify my life, and I'm glad I did. I do this every year or so because I keep forgetting.
- I keep my days mostly unstructured and unscheduled so that I have room for the little things that are so important: reading with my child, going for a walk, taking a nap.
- By saying no to things that sound really cool, I'm saying yes to what's truly important to me.
- We overemphasize productivity. Focus, priorities, and effectiveness are more important. So is a nice walk with a loved one.
- Buying things doesn't solve our problems. Neither does food.
- Your attention is your most valuable possession. Give it as a gift to the people you love most. Give it to the work that matters most, not distractions.
- Sometimes distractions are nice. ■

DEATH OF HORSESHOES

By Curtis Peter van Gorder, adapted

I vividly recall the men in our neighborhood gathering every evening after work in a vacant lot next to my house for a game of horseshoes. The pace of life was more relaxed when I was a child. Work was from nine to five, and then it was time to knock off and play horseshoes.

You may not know the game of horseshoes. A U-shaped metal horseshoe is thrown toward a metal stake placed in a sawdust or dirt square about 13 yards (12 meters) away. The player to land his horseshoes closest to the stake is the winner. When a horseshoe encircles the stake, it is called a “ringer.”

It was a perfect time to chat about the day. The men would relate their latest triumphs or woes, or talk about current events. It all went over my head, of course, but I could see they enjoyed it.

All of that disappeared with the advent of TV. As each family bought a TV set, people spent less and less time playing horseshoes. Instead they spent their

evenings in front of the new marvel with its flickering black-and-white images. And that was just the start.

According to recent research, Britons spend more than 50% of their waking day using technology devices, including watching TV, surfing the Internet, and communicating via social media. The daily average of 8 hours and 41 minutes is more than an average night’s sleep! The first commercial flights were only one hundred years ago. Now more than 8 million people fly each day on average. It is questionable whether this speed has made us happier. Nor do I think the advance in technology has brought us peace of mind.

We race from birth to death with hardly time to stop and smell the roses. Do more, do it better, do it yesterday, get rich quick—or in debt quick. Fast food, fast computers, fast money, fast cars in fast lanes, fast talk in sound bites. “Live fast” seems to be our slogan.

Sometimes we pile so much stress on



ourselves in this speedy lifestyle that we find it hard to cope. Sometimes we get under stress and don't even know it. On a recent trip to the dentist, I found that I had developed cracks in some of my teeth. My dentist explained that stress had apparently caused me to bite and grind my teeth in my sleep.

Major studies have been done on the subject of stress alleviation, as inefficiency, lost production, and absenteeism—all of which have been linked to stress in the workplace—sap the economy of billions each year. So what's the cure? We can't turn back the clock, nor do we necessarily want to.

The world today is different from the one I grew up in, and we need to adapt our strategies.

Thankfully, some of the practical solutions these studies have come up with seem easy enough to practice:

- Take up gardening.
- De-clutter your home or your work environment.
- Give more love and affection, and allow yourself to receive them in return.
- Get a massage.
- Work on developing loving relationships.
- Make healthy changes in your diet and lifestyle, such as cutting down on caffeine, or stopping smoking.
- Exercise—in nature if possible.
- Give three sincere compliments at work each day.
- Get a good rest.
- Get or spend time with a pet.
- Have a good laugh.
- Listen to soft music.
- Take a mini-vacation.
- Take some time to pray or meditate.

Give these a try and they are sure to refresh you, relieve some of the pressures of modern living, and bring back some of the joy and peace of mind our predecessors experienced in years past. ■



THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY ON VISION

By Dr. Janvier, Web Reprint

Let's look at this scenario: Most of us work eight hours a day. During this time, many of us spend five to six of those hours staring at a computer screen. Now we get home, and what do we do? Check our e-mails, pay bills online, shop online, and go to Facebook (we've got to find out what our friends and enemies are doing). Then we go to the smart phones (Blackberry, iPhone, iPod, etc.) to check for text messages, find out how to get to grandma's house, or check out the new restaurant menu around the corner. Now let's add a few more hours at the video games (X-box, Wii, PlayStation, etc.). So now we have been staring at some type of computer or hand-held visual screen for 10-12 hours. Wow!

The point here is that we spend a great deal of time on any given day staring at some type of visual screen, whether for work or entertainment. This

not only applies to working adults, but also to children: computers at school, smart phones in hand, and hours on the entertainment screen of choice. The large computer screens are bad enough, but now we are also using much smaller visual screens with smaller displays, and not well-formed lettering (fewer pixels). This is placing even greater strain on the eyes and visual system. The important question is: How does all of this affect our eyes, and is it detrimental to the visual system?

Some studies indicate that as many as 100 million people are affected by eye strain and focusing problems from staring at computers or other hand-held visual screens. Known as VFS (Visual Fatigue Syndrome) or CVS (Computer Vision Syndrome), this constant staring can cause eye strain and fatigue due to our eyes having to focus on these screens

for extended periods of time. Symptoms from VFS or CVS can include:

- **Headaches**
- **Eye strain**
- **Fatigue**
- **Burning, itchy, watery eyes**
- **Loss of focus**
- **Blurred vision (can occur at near or distance)**
- **Double vision**
- **Neck/shoulder pain**
- **Sensitivity to lights (photophobia)**

The work place is not going to give up computers, and we are not going to abandon our Blackberries, smart phones, and other techno-gadgets (how would we survive?). So, what can we do?

LET'S EASE THE STRAIN A LITTLE. Let's stop using computers/hand held devices! Buy a kayak and look out across the water. How relaxing to the visual system (and the mind) that will be. Boy that was easy, but unfortunately not realistic. So, what else can we do?

REST. Look off (20 feet away) for 20 seconds every 30 minutes, and make yourself blink repeatedly for 10 seconds (great for eye moisture, especially if you're wearing contact lenses); and actually take a 10-minute break away from "your station" every two or three hours. (Please do not read on your break.)

ADD DISTANCE. Keep the visual screen as far away from the eye as possible, the closer the screens are to the eye (may make reading easier), the more strain on the visual system. The closer you view an object, the more your eye has to focus. Whenever possible, increase the font size, and adjust the screen resolution and contrast.

PROVIDE PROPER LIGHTING/SCREEN CARE. Distant or frontal light can cause a great deal more glare off screens, which makes focusing even more challenging. If possible, ambient overhead lighting provides good results. And remember to clean your screen once in a while!

LOOK DOWN. It is easier on the eyes to focus on reading material below eye level. Keep computer screens and hand held devices so that they are viewed below eye level. Optimally, the computer screen should be 15 to 20 degrees below eye level (4-5 inches) and at least 26 inches from your eyes.

KEEP EYES LUBRICATED. Keep those lids blinking, and use over-the-counter moistening eye drops. This is especially important if you wear contact lenses. One to two drops per eye of moistening/lubricating solution for every two to three hours is a good rule of thumb.

GET A CHECK-UP. When was the last time you had your eyes examined to see if your glasses/contact lenses are still adequate? Or maybe you should be wearing glasses for those tasks and you are not. Or, maybe you're wearing the wrong type of glasses. Bifocal and progressive lenses are not always the best remedy for long-time computer use.

DISCONNECT. Turn the screens and hand-held stuff off! Go outside and look off at the distance. Mother Nature is pleasant on the eyes and the mind.

Will you be able to alleviate all these visual fatigue symptoms (VFS/ CVS) by following these steps? Probably not, but it will definitely help! If you try all this and are still "seeing" no improvement in visual fatigue symptoms, try the kayak. ■

6 THINGS HAPPY FAMILIES DO DIFFERENTLY



Like it or not, technology is in our world, and our generation doesn't know life without it. Of course, technology has its benefits. It helps us coordinate our busy schedules, it provides safety in that we can quickly get in touch with loved ones in case of trouble, and it has opened the doors to closer connectedness. However, there are also some drawbacks, and no doubt technology within family life can have its conflicts. But there are ways you can manage those challenges. Read on for some great tips on how to have a happy family life.

By Marc Chernoff, adapted

Last night, an old friend from high school—a hometown success story and entrepreneur who owns and operates a large public trading company—a man whom I have a great deal of respect for—came over to our home for dinner.

After a delicious meal, he and I chatted for a couple hours in the family room and caught up on old times. As we wrapped things up, he said, “I admire you. I admire the love in this home—the obvious love between you and your wife. I admire the close relationships you’ve built and nurtured. When I’m here it feels like I’m part of the family. Nurturing a happy family is one of the things I never got around to. So it was great to see it, feel it, and be a part of it tonight. Thank you.”

My friend’s remarks got me thinking.

What does nurturing a happy family really mean? What are some things happy families do differently?

Here are some thoughts I had:

1. Every day, every member chooses to be part of the family. First and foremost, family are the people in your life who appreciate having you in theirs—the ones who encourage you to improve in healthy and exhilarating ways, and who not only embrace who you are now, but they also embrace and embody who you want to be. Family members can be your best friends. And best friends, whether or not they’re related to you by blood, can be your family.

Families grow from the heart, through mutual love and respect. So build and maintain ties with the right people and

nurture them with love every day.

2. Family members go out of their way for each other. Family bonds are tied with true love, and true love involves attention, awareness, discipline, effort, and being able to care about someone and sacrifice for them, continuously, in countless petty little ways, every day. You put your arms around them and love them regardless, even when they're not very lovable. And of course they do the same for you.

A healthy family is about sacrifice. It's about knowing that some days you will have to do things you dislike to make the people you love smile, and feeling perfectly delighted to do so. That's what it means to "be family."

3. Everyone takes responsibility for their own happiness. Happiness is a choice that comes from within. Being happy doesn't mean everything is perfect, it means you've decided to look beyond the imperfections. There are choices you can make every day to feel the effects of happiness. Choose to do something meaningful. Choose to take care of your body. Choose to be around the right people. Choose a good attitude. Choose to express gratitude. Choose to forgive. Choose to focus on what you have, not on what you haven't. The choice is yours. Your family can support you, but they can't choose happiness for you.

4. Caring words are used to communicate, always. You can measure the happiness of any close relationship by the number of scars that each member carries on their tongues and inner cheeks, formed over many years of biting back angry and insensitive words.

Bottom line: Be careful what you say.

You can say something unkind in less than one second, but more than a year later the wounds are still there. Don't do this to your family, or anyone for that matter. Every time words are spoken, something is created. Be honest, but also conscious of what you say and how you say it. Use words that build up, appreciate, encourage and inspire.

5. Patience and forgiveness are practiced daily. No matter how honest and kind you try to be, you will occasionally step on the toes of the people closest to you. And this is precisely why patience and forgiveness are so vital. Patience is the ability to let your light shine on those you love, even after your fuse has blown. And forgiveness is knowing deep down that they didn't mean to blow your fuse in the first place.

Patience and forgiveness can be bitter at first, but the seeds you plant now will bear sweet fruit in the end.

6. Everyone makes QUALITY time for each other. Here's a harsh reality of life: Regardless of the quality of your relationships with your parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, or close friends, you will miss them when they're gone. And someday they will be. Limit the use of technology and set aside quality time to express your love openly and honestly with your family. Tell them what you need to tell them. You never know when you might lose your opportunity.

The floor is yours...

What has helped you create happy relationships and strong family ties?

Tell us about it at:

motivated@motivatedmagazine.com. ■

TECHNOLOGY'S PROS AND CONS

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



By Emily Morman, adapted excerpts

Perhaps the most obvious changes between today and 25 years ago are the technological advances made, particularly in fields of communication. What a quarter of a century ago had to be done by mail or telephone can now be done in the blink of an eye by email, text, and social networking.

These revolutionary breakthroughs do have their good points. It's now easier to keep in touch with teachers, your children, and family members who live far away. Using a cell phone, parents can also easily contact their children anywhere at any time; with the right equipment, parents can even track young drivers' locations and speeds.

With the increases in fast, convenient communication, however, come some negatives. Nasty rumors, threats, and hateful words from peers no longer stop at the front door like they did in years past; now, children can be cyberbullied from their computers inside their homes. A decrease in face-to-face communication, something that many parents regret, is another casualty of modern technology. A lot of people feel isolated now, but the need to bond together with others transcends all generations. That need hasn't gone away.

Another positive about the gains in technology is that more information is more easily accessible to parents than ever before. Moms needing information have turned "from the front porch mom-to-mom talks" to "a more research-based information center" online. But there is also such a thing as being inundated with too much of it, and info-seekers must be wary of whom they trust online. The number of viewpoints about parenting found online can be overwhelming.

Often, parents may not even realize how glued to their computers, cell phones, and TVs they are. One way to combat that is to unplug and spend one day doing non-electronic activities as a family. There's

just no substitute for sitting down and connecting emotionally, and talking with our children.

The past 25 years have brought numerous changes in parenting styles—some positive and some negative. As far as what's ahead in the next 25, no one can say for sure.

In the end, though, the goal of parenting remains steady: to help children learn, grow, and take on a productive role in society. And parents are, and always will be the biggest influence on their kids. ■



Answers to Your Questions

Kids and iPads

Q: “My toddler has discovered my iPad, and now she loves playing with it. Should I feel guilty about letting her use it? Or are there benefits of iPads for toddlers?”

A: Of course your toddler is drawn to a shiny, colorful screen that responds to her touch by lighting up, moving, and making noise. It’s the coolest toy ever! And no doubt you’ve figured out that your iPad can magically captivate and occupy your tot during waits at the doctor’s office and long car rides.

Not only is the iPad an engaging toy that’s small enough to fit into your bag and take on the go, but it can have real educational benefits for young children. There is also evidence that in children with cognitive delays, iPad apps can boost language use and social interaction. iPads can also be plain fun.

Even though there may be benefits of iPads for kids, that doesn’t mean you should let your child use an iPad for hours on end or stick a screen in front of her face every time she’s in a waiting room, since that’ll keep her from learning how to occupy herself with her thoughts and imagination.

Also keep in mind that iPad use should not crowd out other toys, games, physical activity, creative free play, and face-to-face social interaction. After all, a screen offers a limited sensory environment and no physical exertion.

Adapted Web Reprint

Your child can’t feel an app the way she can feel her stuffed animal or her dress-up clothes. She can’t smell an app the way she can smell the cookies you bake together. She can’t hold and manipulate an app the way she can hold and stack blocks or Legos. She can’t run with an app the way she can romp in the fresh air, and she can’t connect with an app the way she can when she hugs you. All of these real-world activities offer rich opportunities for your toddler to use her body and experience her environment and human relationships. So while you don’t need to feel guilty about letting her use your iPad in moderation, make sure it’s just one of many activities she gets to learn from, explore, and enjoy.

When it comes to kids and iPads, your best bet is to follow the guidelines that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has set regarding other screen time. The AAP recommends no more than two hours of screen time (such as TV, computers, and video games) per day for kids two and older, and ideally no screen time for children younger than two.

Though experts haven’t fully figured out the downsides or benefits of iPads for kids, there is no evidence that using an iPad will harm your toddler’s physical or cognitive development—as long as you practice moderation.

Hope you and your tot have (digital and real-life) fun! ■



Technology

NOTABLE
QUOTES



The number one benefit of information technology is that it empowers people to do what they want to do. It lets people be creative. It lets people be productive. It lets people learn things they didn't think they could learn before, and so in a sense it is all about potential.—Steve Ballmer

Technology gives us power, but it does not and cannot tell us how to use that power. Thanks to technology, we can instantly communicate across the world, but it still doesn't help us know what to say.—Jonathan Sacks

Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.—Bill Gates

We are the children of a technological age. We have found streamlined ways of doing much of our routine work. Printing is no longer the only way of reproducing books. Reading them, however, has not changed.—Lawrence Clark Powell

Technological society has succeeded in multiplying the opportunities for pleasure, but it has great difficulty in generating joy.—Pope Paul VI

You affect the world by what you browse.—Tim Berners-Lee

If we continue to develop our technology without wisdom or prudence, our servant may prove to be our executioner.—Omar N. Bradley

Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them.—Steve Jobs