

THE UNION

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KVMR town hall tackles epidemic of screen addiction in kids

BY THE NUMBERS

70-100: Average number of texts sent daily by high school students

8-10 hours: Time the average sixth grader spends on recreational screen time daily

11-14 hours: Time the average high school student spends on recreational screen time daily

The effects can be crippling.

Anxiety. Depression. Stunted emotional growth. Isolation. Lack of social skills. Intellectual regression. The list goes on and on.

These aren't symptoms of a genetic illness. According to psychotherapist and author George Lynn, they're the result of a self-inflicted problem that has snuck up and become an epidemic faster than the issue was realized. It's robbing children of their identities.

It's screen addiction, the obsession to spend hours a day scrolling through Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and other social media platforms that keeps us locked into our smartphones, tablets and computers.

Lynn, whose new book "Breaking the Trance: A Practical Guide for Parenting the Screen-Dependent Child," addressed the problem on Tuesday's "Screen Dependence in Children" town hall discussion at the Nevada Theater. The event was hosted and live broadcasted by KVMR.

The average sixth-grader, Lynn said, spends between 8-10 hours a day on screen media. That number jumps to 11-14 hours a day for high school students.

"It's taking over our culture," Lynn said.

Lorrie Fredrickson, a school psychologist with the Grass Valley School District and A New Day board member, said she's seen a dramatic rise in apathy, depression and anxiety in the classroom in recent years.

"When I interview kids on a daily basis, I'm hearing the same thing. ... The common denominator is they're embedded in screen time."

PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED

Lynn focused much of his talk on the role of parents in controlling screen use and their failure to understand how important that role is.

"Parent who think they can just let it go, they can't," he said.

Lynn's recommendation: Limit recreational screen usage to no more than two hours per day, preferably less than one hour. They also need to fight through the urge to appease their kids and get past the guilt associated with saying no or putting up boundaries.

"Children don't pick up self control intuitively," he said. "They pick it up from their parents. ... Say no out of love rather than yes out of fear."

Lynn made some other suggestions. Among them, devices should be absent during family dinners, homework and family outings.

EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA

In Tuesday's question-and-answer session, a number of educators commented or asked about the use of technology in schools. They referred to screen addiction as a crisis that's creating a culture of isolation.

Here's the problem: Computer technology plays a vital role in education. Information is gathered online. Tests are taken online. Projects are created online. The goal is to find the right balance. How do you do that?

Yuba River Charter School Director Ron Charles, one of Tuesday's panelists, has been with the school since 2003 and its director since 2015. Yuba River has a low-tech approach to education. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade are completely screen free, sixth graders are introduced to technology in a slow, conscious way, seventh graders do more research on computers, and eighth graders prepare for the jump to high school with video editing and presentations.

It's a balance, Charles said, that keeps the younger students from developing abusive screen media habits while also preparing the older students for reality.

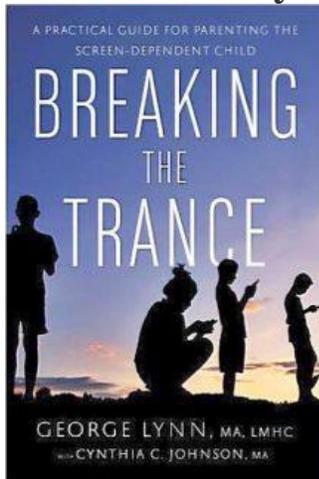
"We can't send students out into the world without knowing how to use a computer," he said.

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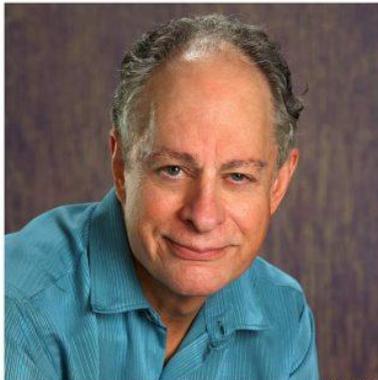
April 5, 2017

5 panelists to address child screen dependency at town hall in Nevada County



Submitted photo |

George Lynn's book, "Breaking the Trance"



Submitted photo |

George Lynn will lead a town hall at Nevada Theatre.

Panelists Bios

— George Lynn: MA, LMHC, Author "Breaking the Trance"

Lynn is a licensed mental health counselor from Bellevue, Washington who has pioneered the use of psychotherapy for adults and children with neuropsychological issues. He has lectured internationally on the subject and is the author of four popular books on parenting children with extreme behavior challenges. "Breaking the Trance" was published in October 2016.

— Ron Charles: director, Yuba River Charter School, Nevada City, the first Waldorf Charter School in the country

Charles has been Waldorf charter educator since 2003 and has served as the school director since 2015. As a Waldorf-inspired school, YRCS institutes refrain from use of technology and "screens" for students, as it interferes with their developmental processes and curiosity and love of learning.

— Lorrie Fredrickson: school psychologist, Grass Valley School District & A New Day, board member

Fredrickson has worked in education for almost 30 years, receiving a master's degree in educational counseling and educational psychology. She has worked as a school counselor and school psychologist for the Grass Valley School, supporting children pre-K through high school. She also serves as a case manager for the Adolescent Family Life Program.

— Annie Keeling: MFA, parent educator, founder of Start Small Parenting, NEO Youth Center board member

Keeling, a columnist for The Union, is a parent educator, writer, music teacher and founder of Start Small Parenting. Since 1998, she has brought her expertise in early childhood and behavior education to family programs locally and online, as well as private coaching.

— **Jennifer Sale: behavioral health director, LCSW, Western Sierra Medical Clinic.**

Sale is a licensed clinical social worker who has been providing counseling services for 25 years in Nevada County. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from UC Santa Cruz and master's in social work from San Diego State.

Bellevue, Washington author and child psychology expert George Lynn will visit Nevada County April 18 to lead a public town hall on the issue of children's dependency on cellphones, tablets and computers.

Lynn is co-author of a new book, "Breaking the Trance: A Practical Guide for Parenting the Screen-Dependent Child."

The program will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Nevada Theatre, 401 Broad St., Nevada City, and will be broadcast live on KVMR radio 89.5 FM. Admission is free.

Lynn will be joined on a panel by: Ron Charles, director of Yuba River Charter School; Lorrie Fredrickson, Grass Valley School District psychologist; Annie Keeling, parent educator; and Jennifer Sale, clinical social worker at the Western Sierra Medical Clinic.

The panel will discuss the impacts of over-use (and abuse) of computers, tablets and smartphones on young people's mental health, identity-development, self-concept and social organization.

Also, the panel will offer practical solutions parents can undertake to protect their children and assist teachers in bringing out the best in their students.

Melissa Seibold of KVMR Community Radio said the event is one of a series of town hall meetings organized by the radio station on important issues facing the community.

"Many parents report major struggles over the amount of 'screen time' their children spend on cellphones, tablets and computers," Seibold said. "Recreational screen media use is quickly replacing family time.

"Teachers see sleep-deprived children who are unable to focus and aren't keeping up in class," she added. "Some experts now describe the digital code in online games as an addictive substance like heroin, in the way it acts on the developing human brain.

"Worldwide revenues from creation of these 'substances' now tops \$100 billion," Seibold said. "What are parents to do?"

Seibold added that Lynn will also be going to Yuba River Charter School to speak to sixth, seventh and eighth graders at an Awareness Assembly the morning of April 18.

In addition, The Union science columnist Alan Stahler will interview Lynn on KVMR's "Soundings" at noon Tuesday (April 11) with an opportunity for call-in questions, Seibold said.

Support for this event has been provided by the Rotary Club of Nevada City and Yuba River Charter School.

KVMR Town Hall Forums are a free, community service to the public.