

# EDITORIAL

with Dawn Brown

## Setting aside the screen

Earlier this summer, a number of my friends with younger children announced they had plans to limit their children's screen time—iPads, iPods, etc.—for summer. They stocked up on board games, made trips to libraries and book stores, looked up crafts and any number of day trips. These same friends reported mostly success, that after some initial complaints, their children quickly adapted, and so they intend to make a concentrated effort to continue to limit the time their children spend on their devices when school starts in September.

The interesting part of all this to me was that most of these updates from parents were made on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, which got me thinking—if too much time on electronic devices is detrimental to our children, what about us, the parents, the adults? Aside from the reality that children will mimic their parents' behaviors—if we spend all of our time with our noses pressed to the screen of our phone or tablet, we shouldn't be surprised when our children want to do the same—but if we believe too much time in front of a screen limits our children's creativity, affects their moods in a negative way, then couldn't the same be true for us?

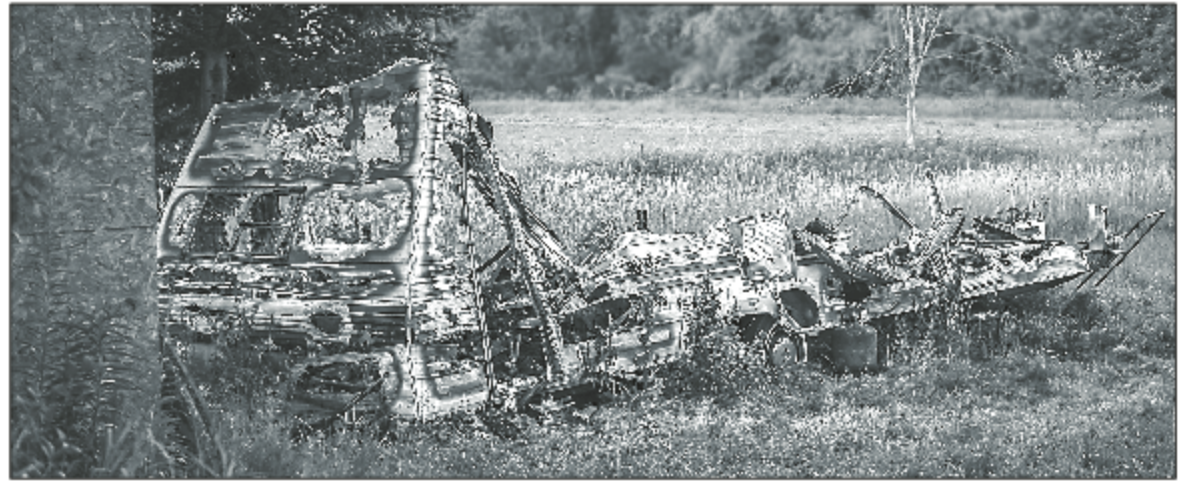
Let's face it, the amount of time spent reading texts, emails and social media updates is growing. How often do you see people in a restaurant or at a party checking their phone instead of interacting with the people around them? How often do you hear about people putting themselves in dangerous situations for a selfie to generate 'likes' and 'shares'?

Recently, a photo made the rounds—on social media, of course—of group of people on a gondola in Venice each with their attention fixed on their devices rather than the experience they were no doubt posting about. I'm sure most of us would look at that photo and tell ourselves that it would never be us. But haven't we all done something similar—posted a picture of a family event, a party with friends, a holiday rather than being present and enjoying the moment?

More and more studies show social media can affect us negatively, leading to addiction and even depression. But there is also just the sheer amount of time wasted. What could you do with the time spent reading posts, looking at other people's vacation photos or bizarre articles you're not even sure are true?

Inspired by the parents who took their devices from their children, last month I deleted the social media apps from my phone. I still checked in on my social media accounts—shutting them down completely wasn't an option since I use them for work—but I logged in with my computer once or twice a day instead of checking in periodically throughout the day. As a result, I was more productive at home and at work, I read more, and spent more time having actual conversations with the people around me.

Now that my month long experiment is over, I won't be adding the apps back to my phone. After all, I didn't miss them. For anyone who wants to limit their time on social media, but not delete their apps entirely, there are other apps that will do that for you. Less time on social media and more time in the world around us is a good thing, and if we ask it of our children, then shouldn't we also ask it of ourselves?



This burnt out shell of a camper on 32nd Side Road, also known as the Milton / Guelph-Eramosa Town line, located southeast of Rockwood may be another addition to the list of suspicious fires in the area. - Les Schmidt photo

## Unexplained fires raise concerns

Like many kids, I'm usually the one my folks call to help them out with electronics, and like most kids, I do my best to help them. Over the years, I've been called upon to help out with a wide variety of electronics from cameras, to printers and emails, to cell phones, and even CD or DVD players and televisions. My parents asking me for help is probably no different than in any other family. When any parent asks for help, it's not because they are inept. It is usually just because the younger person is more up to date with technology.

Then there comes that time when the kid is the older adult and technology seems to be running past them. Technology isn't running past me yet, but it's certainly walking at a fast pace. This realization has come about more than once in the past little while.

A few months back, the Dude was going away for a short business trip and wanted some—dare I even call them this—videos on his iPad. He remembered me telling him about how Netflix movies could be downloaded onto a device. After a few tries, he asked me to help him out. "Just show me how to do it so I know," he instructed. The prob-



By  
Angela Tyler

lem was I had never done it. At that point only two people in our household had; one was six and the other one was seven years old, and both were sound asleep as it was well past their bedtime. Before our bedtime, we had both given up trying. Later, the seven year old showed me how.

Back in the winter, we received a notification from our satellite carrier that our old box was obsolete technology. It was for our downstairs television which isn't used a lot so I really had no idea that it didn't receive half the channels our other receiver did. I called them up, and they agreed to waive the fee of the new box because it wasn't my fault their technology had changed. My technology still worked...sort of. Within days I received the new "digital" box that would fully emerge us in the world of HDTV.

The only problem was, our technology was still working so I just wasn't all that inspired to install it. However, like all good things that time ended, and I was

forced to comply with technology. I was now bonding with my parents, realizing how they must have felt when I told them their cell phones were old and they had to upgrade to a smart phone. I had to give in to the new technology. However, I was the one who figured out the Apple TV—yes, I know it really is only one cable, but that was a big deal for me. Surely, figuring out the satellite box couldn't be harder than that?

I unhooked all the cables from the old box and went to install the upgraded model, but realized I had two problems: First, it was smaller, and second, the cables weren't the same. Apparently, things had changed a bit in 10 years. So I did what I thought was best...I left it and went back to watching television upstairs.

However, I am determined not to let new technology defeat me completely. After all, I was the one who figured out where to plug in the HDMI cable into the Apple TV. Before the long weekend I will have this box hooked up, or I will have hired a teenager to do it for me because our kids aren't old enough yet. Then again, they probably do know how to do it and I should just ask them. #circleoflife



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**CONTACT US:**

379 Queen Street East  
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2  
Tel: 519-853-0051  
Fax: 519-853-0052

**E-MAIL:**

General: [thenewtanner@on.aibn.com](mailto:thenewtanner@on.aibn.com)  
(including Advertising and Circulation)

Editorial: [tannereditor@bellnet.ca](mailto:tannereditor@bellnet.ca)

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