



Emotional Learning Works!

Researchers from Loyola University and the University of Illinois studied more than 200 social and emotional programs in schools nationwide. Their conclusion? When kids are taught how to behave, academic performance also improves. Experts advise that schools should focus on well-designed programs that teach internal motivation and how to treat one another.

"Schools have had the unfortunate role in society of taking up all sorts of jobs that they weren't originally designed to do. Society breaks down and they end up doing more and more and a much larger role in socialization. I would think that if they're going to take that role, probably a better focus would be on character and on getting along with people and treating people with respect, self-control, self-discipline," says Keith Campbell, Ph.D., of the University of Georgia.

With budget cuts in a down economy, many schools are forced to eliminate programs that are not specifically focused on academic achievement, but experts warn teachers and administrators to think carefully before cutting social and emotional learning. Kids who are taught how to manage their emotions and build positive relationships are also more likely to achieve high grades.



"This is the best thing I've ever done. The absolute best thing I've ever done as a social worker. And I've seen some changes, some real changes," says Pamela Moore, a school social worker.

(Source: connectwithkids.com; 03/07/11)

BOYS And Body Image

When it comes to issues about body image, what concerns should we have about boys in search of that perfect "cut"? "I wanna have big arms and have nice abs," "Just push yourself till you know you can't go anymore," "You want to get bigger, you want to get stronger, you feel like you can't stop," were comments made by boys ages 12-17.

Called "bigorexia" by some clinicians, it is a body image issue that your muscles are never big or strong enough. In a culture of bulging biceps and six-pack abs, for many teens body building is a way to change how you look...and how you feel. "Because they're also in a way building self-esteem, building acceptance, building a way to feel better about themselves," says Dr. Randy Beggs, a psychotherapist.

If your teenager spends more than two hours a day in the weight room and is obsessed with protein drinks and dietary supplements, experts say parents may need to explain that being a man isn't all about muscles. This behavior can actually be unhealthy. Boys are comparing themselves to hard body, six-pack-stomach, Adonis-type bodies that are airbrushed, unrealistic images and of course coming up short.

Experts encourage parents and educators to talk with kids about not buying into unrealistic body images and to emphasize making choices that lead to a healthy, active way of life.

(Source: connectwithkids.com; 05/02/11)



facebook Depression

The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a clinical report on the impact of social media use on children, adolescents and families. It urges parents to work on their "participation gap," so that they can understand this new technology and relate to kids' online challenges... something researchers have termed "Facebook Depression."

Here's what teens have to say about their online world:

- "It's real but it's not real life. And that's what people don't understand. The pictures are real, the messages are real, but it's not real life,"
- "Yeah, I feel like it's hard to live up to everything online."

On Facebook, anybody can look happy and popular – an online world in which competition and adoration seem to reign supreme. Experts say these shallow connections can fuel a rampant lack of compassion and empathy.

"It's an inflated view of yourself. You think you're better than you are; you think you're superior to other people; you feel special; you lack real empathetic relationships. You can have lots of shallow relationships, but you don't have the empathy or caring that makes positive long-term relationships," says Keith Campbell, Ph.D., professor at the University of Georgia.

The American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines on social media encourage families to talk about specific issues like cyberbullying, sexting and managing time online, and to develop a family online use plan, with an emphasis on citizenship, healthy behavior and what constitutes *real* friendship.

"The deep relationships, of course, are the buffers against anxiety, and when those aren't there, then people run into problems. They don't have something to fall back on, and that leads to stress," adds Dr. Campbell.

(Source: connectwithkids.com; 04/04/11)





MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO: VIOLENCE AFFECTS KIDS

On TV, in the movies, online and in video games, what do teens have to say about the violence they see?

"I just think it's pretty cool. Blow up somebody, and his guts go everywhere," says one 16-year-old. "Just like stuck 'em on a hook and it came through the stomach," another 15-year-old says. A 12-year-old adds, "You can do anything. Just try to kill him. Like right now, I'm attacking this guy with like punches and kicks."

A report published in the *Journal of Social Psychological and Personality Science*, titled "Monkey See, Monkey Do, Monkey Hurt" researchers say that the more children are exposed to violence, the more they think the violence is normal. Experts call some kids desensitized. "They become desensitized to aggression and violence. And I think that the more they're exposed to it as well, the more they're likely to use that form of behavior to solve problems," says Dr. Jennifer Kelly, a psychologist.



Parents can't eliminate all media violence in a child's life ... but experts say they can use a violent scene to teach kids about the reality of the problem.

"And talk about what you think happened to that person's family...the mourning that occurred and how the parents or somebody else's life could be changed as a result of this aggressive, violent act," says Dr. Kelly.

(Source: connectwithkids.com; 04/11/11)

A "Ruff" Way to Get High

A new trend seems to have surfaced which involves snorting dry dog food to get high.

The Lancaster County Juvenile Drug Court indicates this is something they have recently heard kids are doing and they are able to show up negative on a urine drug test.

Pet food, particularly dog food, is crushed, cooked to an ashy state, then snorted. The cooking chemically alters some of the additives used to cure meat byproducts that are added to pet food.



The FDA put out a warning in 2007 about the potential dangers of this practice, called "puffing". Concern was that tainted pet food could cause increased danger from an already dangerous activity. The cooking process also magnified the negative effects from the melamine tainting that was responsible for the pet food recall.

Puffing, or pet food huffing, may have increased in popularity as it can be a cheaper alternative than using other expensive inhalants.



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Oxymorphone on the Rise

A new narcotic has begun to appear on the radar of local law enforcement. Oxymorphone, sold under the name Opana, is a time-release version of the painkiller oxycodone, most commonly known as OxyContin.

Due to it being abused and tampered with, the formula for OxyContin was changed in 2010, making it more difficult to manipulate. The reformulation was intended to make it much more difficult to crush down and snort or inject. Opana can be crushed, which makes it a more appealing option, and an easier alternative.

Oxymorphone is a highly-potent opiate analgesic 6-8 times more potent than morphine, and has a higher incidence of euphoria compared to other opioids. It is highly addictive, and physical and psychological dependence develops very rapidly. Oxymorphone is a central nervous system depressant, so combining it with other substances that have this effect could compound the effects. Taking it with alcohol can depress breathing and respiratory function. Drowsiness can be magnified by taking it with other narcotics, allergy medication and sleeping pills. Other side effects can include: dizziness, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, dry mouth, confusion, anxiety, or seizures.

While the drug is fairly new, it is common enough that law enforcement in some Nebraska communities are seeing it on the street.



(Source: Lincoln Journal Star, July 2011; www.wlky.com; March 2011)