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BOOKMONGER

To wean youngsters from screens — best to start early

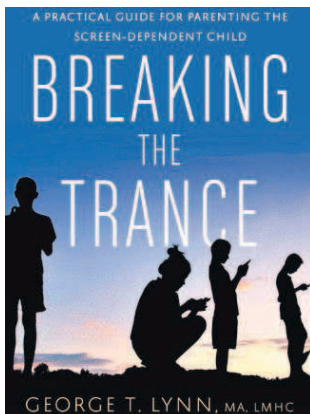
By BARBARA LLOYD McMICHAEL

Last week I saw a father and young son waiting in a car outside the grocery store. In the front seat, Dad tapped away on his smartphone. In the car seat, the tot swiped at an iPad. They were there when I went into the store, and they were there when I came back out — neither one talking to the other.

It looked like a missed opportunity to this outsider. Dad could have turned their stuck-in-the-car moment into bonding time with his son — a chance to crack some goofy jokes, or discuss the cars in the parking lot, or surmise what people might be carrying home in their grocery sacks. A chance to employ language and encourage imagination.

I'm not alone in thinking that people are spending too much time on their screens. Bellevue, Washington-based psychotherapist George T. Lynn and therapeutic tutor Cynthia C. Johnson have written a new book called "Breaking the Trance." It's a guide to help parents limit their kids' recreational media use.

One of the first things this book does is point out that the symptoms of screen dependence often look the same as those relating to a psychiatric condition or learning disability. In fact, it's not uncommon for screen dependence to co-occur in a child who has been diagnosed with a disability



Breaking the Trance – George T. Lynn with Cynthia C. Johnson
Central Recovery Press – 298 pp - \$16.95

or illness. If a child has one of these disorders, compulsive media usage can be especially problematic. The authors provide encouragement and advice for dealing with this issue.

Lynn and Johnson are emphatic that while screen use today is pervasive, we shouldn't feel that it is inevitable. They reject the "screen addiction" terminology used by some other experts.

Instead, they point out that there is a range of dependence on recreational screen media. Some kids may seem to be inordinately tethered to their cellphones, but they also have other interests that don't involve a screen interface. On the other end of spectrum are youngsters who retreat from social interaction and even

family engagement, choosing instead to hole up in their rooms and play video games day and night.

No matter the degree, the authors assert that screen dependence can lead to regression not only in social and emotional capacity, but also in cognitive skills. And they remind us that gaming manufacturers actually hire experts to design compulsion loops in their products, triggering the brain's neurotransmitters in ways that mess with ordinary executive function.

"The brain can heal, but it needs time and cessation of the hyperadrenalized state for a period to recharge."

There's plenty here to convince parents of the need to effect change, but how do they go about it?

The authors recommend convening all family members to write a values statement and having youngsters maintain handwritten planners.

This, frankly, sounds like a whole new strain of virtual reality. How would you get multiple generations with their diverse personalities, much less one screen-dependent teen, to cooperate?

The authors' better piece of advice: intervene when the kids are young.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlinc.com

COLUMBIA BAR

Pineapple Margarita

By RYAN HUME

Inferno Lounge in downtown Astoria recently won the Coast Weekend Readers' Choice Award for Best Bar, and I realized it had been awhile since I'd seen what they were pouring at Rich Ewing's bar on Pier 11.

On a recent Sunday afternoon the crow's nest DJ booth overlooking the cozy wooden interior was dark, and the air was pleasantly filled with soul music. The Inferno's front-row view of the Columbia River's shipping lane offered plenty a hull to ponder as the bar pilots did their thing on the lapping water just outside.

The only thing missing was a beverage, but I had to look toward a different bar for that. This Pineapple Margarita is emblematic of the Inferno's appeal, featuring an infused

spirit in a playful application. Do not forego the salt: It adds a complimentary dimension to the sweetness of the pineapple juice.

Ingredients:
2 ounces pineapple tequila*
1/2 ounce sour mix
1/2 ounce pineapple juice
3 lime wedges
Pineapple wedge
Kosher salt
Ice

Directions:
Line the rim of a cocktail glass with the salt and set aside. Muddle the limes and ice together in the bottom of a cocktail shaker. Once some of the liquids and oils have given out of the citrus,

add the liquid ingredients, shake until cold, and roll the drink out into cocktail glass. Garnish with pineapple slice and serve.

—Recipe courtesy of Mark Barsekian and Rich Ewing, bartender and owner, respectively, at the Inferno Lounge, Astoria, Oregon



*The Inferno uses silver tequila for this infusion. Remove the rind from a pineapple, and slice up the sweet flesh. Submerge the pineapple in the tequila, place in a non-reactive container and let it steep for about two weeks before using. If you do not use your pineapple-infused tequila with the frequency that the Inferno Lounge does, you will eventually want to strain out the fruit after about a month or so to keep it from spoiling.

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