

Put down that iPhone and connect with your child

By JOSHUA MCGRAW

In the era of technology – tablets, phones, computers, and video games – children and adults are becoming more and more disconnected. We sit in the same room as others, yet we are miles apart zooming through social media, checking in on our to-do list, or making sure the hottest new celebrity hasn't done something that's gone viral and we missed it. We get sucked into the social media world and forget about the world right in our own homes. We often miss out on the happenings in our living rooms with our family and friends. We mentally check out as our children attempt to bring us into their world, the world of imagination and creativity.

Conscious Discipline shows us in order to truly connect we need four simple things – **eye contact**, **touch**, **presence**, and **playfulness**. It is impossible to get these four, critical elements through a device. When one-on-one time is cut short, with an adult or another child, because of a tweet or text we lose the connecting opportunity and deepen the disconnected society.



Their brain tells them “I’m not as important as the ding from a cell phone.” This disconnect continues generation after generation simply because the first generation was not taught how to connect with others in the first place. We are not capable of forming bonds with others when we have not seen what true connection looks and feels like.

One would think the ease of texting makes it easier to connect with others. But is a simple text “hey” enough? Do we create a more connected universe by sending those three letters? Our community is

growing further and further apart when all the technological advances should be bringing the outside world in. So what is missing? Why are we disconnected starting at such a young age?

The four critical elements of connection are missing from the technological world we live in. Touch, eye contact, presence and playfulness releases oxytocin into our bodies, giving a sense of joy and happiness as we begin to feel a deeper connection with those we love.

We are at a critical point in our world where we must learn how to make contact, empathize, and show we care about people around us. It is time to put down our cell phones, put down devices, and learn how to connect with our children so they become reconnected to their peers and community. It starts with the adults and continues with the children. What kids see adults do is what they will do when they are adults. No matter how quiet, easy, or glorious it is when a child is plugged into a video game, I

challenge you: choose to play a game together, discuss the things your child wants to discuss, and show genuine interest in the things that excite our next generation of leaders.

The children in our community are building connections with each other and adults in school through the structures of Conscious Discipline. Our children are learning how to turn off devices and truly connect with each other. Kids are noticing when their friends are upset, they recognize when a simple, kind gesture can change the path of peer. These

kids have the ability to empower themselves and each other and focus attention on being helpful members in a family. Allow our new generation of world changers to teach us about connection so our world can be a world of love, peace, and kindness. We are in it together and we got this! Our kids learn from us. Show them the light and be the change we want to see, so that our world is a world of peace.

I encourage you to have your child show you a few of the connecting activities we do in our schools. Help refresh their brains from summer by asking to see how to do the butterfly, salmon, or milking the cow.

Joshua McGraw is a kindergarten teacher for the Pendleton School District, a partner with the Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub, which works to bridge early childhood resources and prepare children for kindergarten. For more information visit www.bluemountainearlylearninghub.org.



**Open late, open Saturday,
here for the whole family!**

541-481-7212 • 450 Tatone Street, Boardman, OR 97818

