



Disconnected: How to Reconnect Our Digitally Distracted Kids

Thomas Kersting

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Tom Kersting is a nationally renowned psychotherapist, and school counselor. He appears regularly on the most popular talk shows and news shows and has hosted television series' and shows for A&E Network, National Geographic Channel, Food Network and Oprah's Wellness Network.

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Luke says

What if I told you the average family spends only 30 minutes of quality time together out of the 10,080 minutes in every week? That sounds crazy, but it's true. The leading cause of the demise of family time is the increased time kids are spending on their digital devices every day. Our children and teens have been programmed to be disconnected from the real world they are living in, addicted to their technological devices - cell phones, laptops, tablets have become constant companions from the first touch point of the day to the last images seen at night. A virtual world has replaced the tangible one and the effects on our children and the family are devastating.

Tom Kersting, a leader in our Boy Scout family, is a host on A&E television series, *Surviving Marriage*, which follows couples that are wanting a divorce who are stranded on an island for an form of therapy designed to repair their troubled marriages. He is a licensed psychotherapist, and is one of the most sought-after experts in the field of mental health, family & relationships. He has provided advice to millions through his television interviews and appearances. Mr. Kersting is the owner and founder of Valley Family Counseling LLC in Ridgewood, N.J. and has 20 years of experience working with individuals, including adolescents, and families. He holds many advanced degrees including a bachelor's degree in Psychology, a Master's degree in Counseling & Human Development, a second Master's in Administration & Supervision and also a Ph.D. in Clinical Hypnotherapy.

In his book, *Digitally Disconnected*, Mr. Kersting talks about how children today are disconnecting themselves from the real world causing stress, anxiety and depression unlike any generation before. Mr. Kersting begins by describing a child in the 80's,"playing tackle football without pads, riding a big wheel without a helmet and not wearing seat belts while in a car. Everyone played outdoors all day until dark, coming home for dinner as a family. There were no stresses over school or sports. Everyone just had fun. "Families bonded over meal time."(Kersting 1)

Conversely, in 2017 we are over scheduled. Our day is packed from morning through night, and we stress over school, sports and where we will be accepted at college from childhood through teenage years. We don't spend time communicating with people. Our parents are forgotten. We spend hours on our phones and computers connecting on social media with one of our thousand "friends" or watching YouTube personalities we have never met. People ask why we are witnessing more stress, anxiety and depression in our children. "The answer lies in the devices we have allowed children to begin using at early ages that begin to replace human contact and eye to eye communication." (Kersting 3) What's happening in today's society is kids are losing more and more real world skills as their digital skills improve. This is due to spending more time on a device than going out into the world to use their real world skills. This is very harmful both physically and mentally and no one knows the future ramifications.

I have experienced incredible quality time with Mr. Kersting over scout campfires, outside in the woods where there is no Internet connection. He expanded further on his book, explaining how kids are losing real world communication skills in today's society and the detrimental effects. "When we use our devices we lose our basic functions and skills..."(Kersting) In layman's terms, our brain is full of nerves and when we use our devices our brain actually has to rewire itself to compensate for it. Then the brain cuts off nerves that it doesn't find useful, this can be things like being able to have a natural conversation in person or having issues focusing when someone is talking etc.

It's not that we should abolish using technology all together, but we should figure out better ways to balance the use of technology with communicating with people directly, having fun, relaxing more, not stressing over school and sports, playing outside, hanging out with friends in person and maybe we will start to see improvements in our anxiety ridden, depressed children. More children today are taking anti-anxiety medication than ever before and this is a trend that needs to change for the long term well being of our society. Parents can help their children by monitoring time spent on devices and not allowing a TV or computer in their kid's room at bedtime. This will help their children get well needed sleep and better themselves in school by being more attentive and awake.

Work Cited

Kersting , Tom. *Disconnected: How To Reconnect Our Digitally Distracted Kids*. USA: Tom Kersting , 2016. Print.

Jim Brown says

"If you fear that your children will fade into irrelevancy and you strive to ensure they fit in with everyone else, **YOU ARE TEACHING THEM TO BE ORDINARY**. Teach uniqueness and let your children grow from that." This is just one quote from a book that contains many such valuable quotes.

I have for many years felt our society and more importantly our children were on a path of self-destruction due primarily to the use of phones, tablets, notebooks, computers, television and movies especially those that feature sex and violence. I also felt like maybe I believed this to be true because that is what others have said of me and/or because I was just getting older and therefore I was misreading what was actually happening.

Having no medical background, I had no hard evidence to support my beliefs at least until now. **EVERY PARENT OR PERSON WHO MIGHT EVER BECOME A PARENT NEEDS TO READ THIS BOOK! WITHOUT EXCEPTION!**

Why? Because the author is trained to observe what we have all observed and probably have also become ourselves to some degree; people distracted by electronic devices. I believe that the mind cannot do two things equally as well as it can do just one thing very well. Yet if you look around you see people of all ages trying to do two or more things at one time and one of those "things" usually involves using an electronic device(s).

The message of this magnificent book is summed up in that one quote above. It asks the question as to whether we are teaching our children to be leaders and stand out from the crowd or are we permitting them (as opposed to teaching) to just fit in and become ordinary. **WOW!!!** Think about that for a moment.

Do yourself and your family a tremendous favor and read the book. It's short, easy to read but packs a tremendous wallop! You just might see yourself on the pages of this book and I know you will recognize a good number of your friends and family as well. But what will you do with the confirmation of the knowledge that should lead you to do what you may have been avoiding?

Who should read this book? **EVERYONE – NO EXCEPTIONS; NO AGE RESTRICTIONS**. Would I buy

this book as a gift? ABSOLUTELY! Will I read it again? MOST DEFINITELY OR AT LEAST REVIEW CERTAIN SECTIONS.

Pam says

Fascinating and extremely relevant to today's parent.

Mimi says

Doesn't really tell you anything earth shattering and much of its recommendations are common sense, but nonetheless a good read for any parent or anyone who has young employees etc. The moral of the story -- put your devices down, eat dinner and TALK w your loved ones, be mindful about what you are doing and enjoy life's moments instead of documenting them. Easy 110 pages!

David Steele says

Riveting

Heidi Martinez says

Interesting facts, little follow through

This was recommended by a counselor to help with managing our child's fixation with electronic devices. While I found some good insight to help justify why we should continue in this vein, there was almost no practical help. I will have to find other resources for the "how to" portion.

Gail says

An absolute must read for everyone who uses technology. Otherwise -- everyone.

Virna says

This is an important read for parents of kids in the digital age. I'm going to make this required reading for my teens as well. They need to understand the impact that technology is having on their brains and development. Technology is robbing our kids of their potential and it's time we do something about it.
