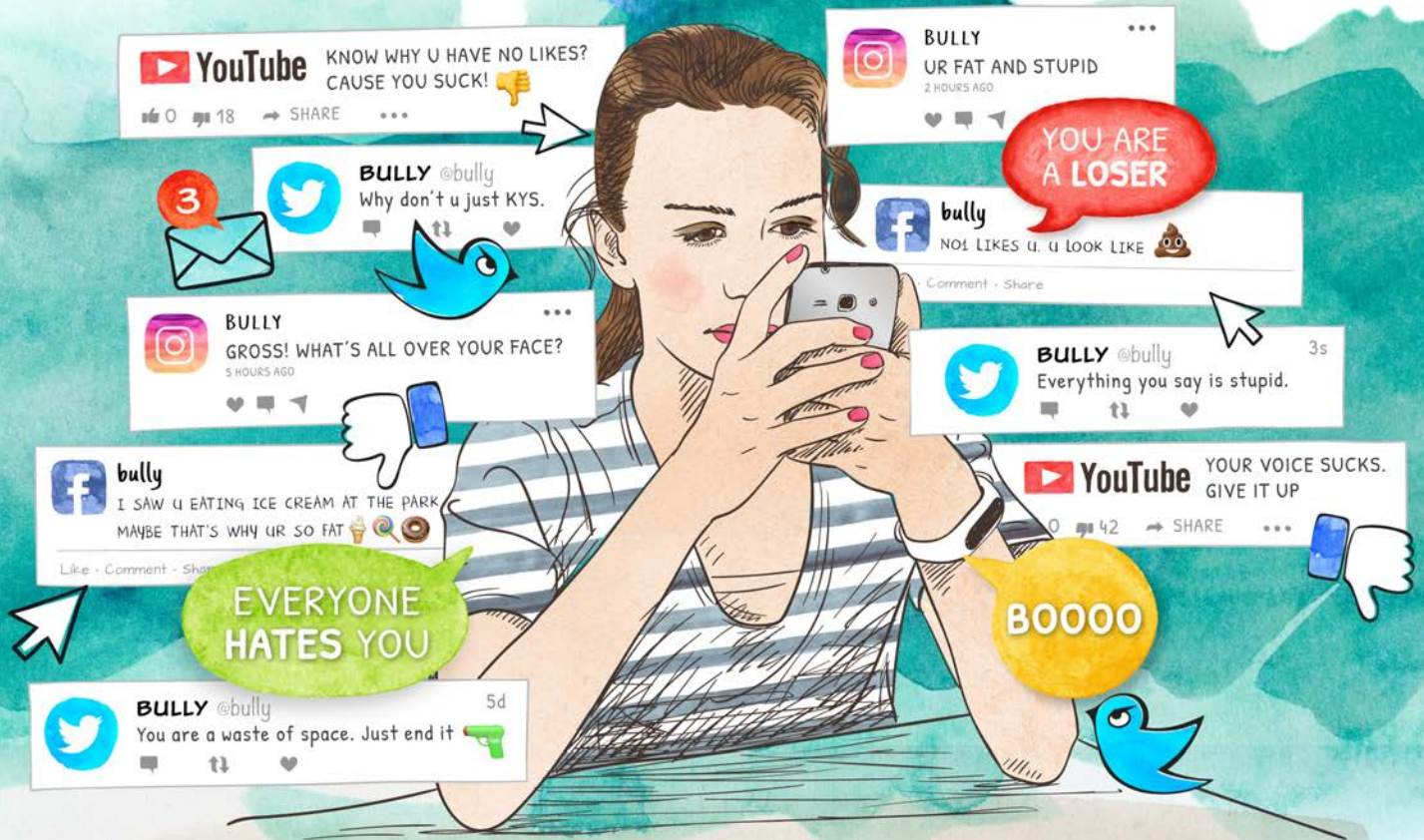


CURCIO LAW'S Living Safer

VOLUME 10 • EDITION 2

MAGAZINE



CYBERBULLYING

HOW TECHNOLOGY IS PUSHING BAD BEHAVIOR BEYOND THE PLAYGROUND

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Living Safer

A Letter from the Firm



Dear Friends,

As I have gotten older, axioms have taken on greater meaning. Once such axiom is "the only constant in life is change." And with that, I want you all to know that Steve Bergeron, my former partner, has decided to open his own law firm in Vienna, much closer to his house. As Steve has three school aged children, and his commute has doubled in time since he first began coming to Old Town, he decided he wanted to be closer to home. All very understandable, especially as we believe

that a healthy work-life balance makes us better people and better lawyers. It has been a privilege to have Steve work with me and I wish him much continued success and personal happiness.

A healthy, well-balanced life is one of the reasons that I am proud to be a member of the Injury Board, and this edition of Living Safer, like previous editions, contains articles that promote safety and well-being. Unfortunately, an unwanted result of the ease of social media and our constant interconnectedness is the advent of cyber-bullying. We have all become aware of the devastating effects this recent phenomenon can have. Please read the helpful and informative articles contained in this edition and discuss them with you children.

Stay well and take advantage of the summer to relax and recharge.

Sincerely,
Thomas J. Curcio

ONE Second IS NOT A VERY LONG TIME.

But when you're behind a steering wheel and your eyes leave the road—that ONE single second can change a life.

ONE second is all it takes to be distracted.

When you are driving, it should not be a secondary task—it should be the only task.

EndDD.org (End Distracted Driving) was established to raise awareness and generate action against the epidemic of distracted driving.

DISTRACTIONS INCLUDE:

Visual	Taking eyes off the road
Manual	Taking hands off the road
Cognitive	Taking mind off the road

While texting and talking on the phone are both mental and physical distractions, cellphone use is attributed to 18% of fatalities in distraction-related crashes.

What makes up the other 82%?

- » Putting on makeup
 - » Reaching to grab a drink
 - » Changing the music
 - » Dealing with the GPS
 - » Eating on the go
- The distractions are endless.
But they don't have to be.

The Core Mission of EndDD

Our core mission is to preserve life and promote safety on a large scale through advocacy, education and action. It is our hope that we can prevent families and friends from suffering the loss of a loved one because of distracted driving.

Together, let's work to prevent distracted driving from claiming another life.

VISIT US ONLINE

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twitter: [@end_DD](https://twitter.com/end_DD)

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End Distracted Driving is sponsored by the Casey Feldman Foundation and is dedicated to inspiring individuals and communities to take action to end distracted driving.

CONTACT US toll-free at 855-363-3478 or info@EndDD.org

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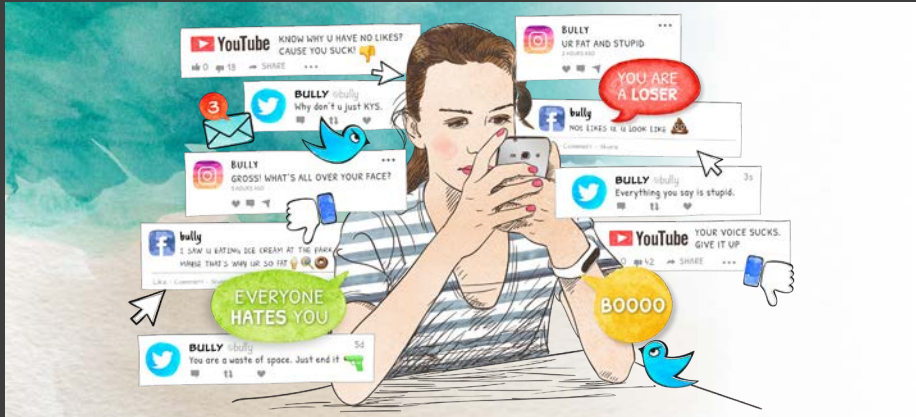


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ON THE COVER



30 Cyberbullying

How Technology Is Pushing Bad Behavior Beyond the Playground

Most all of us have been involved in a bullying situation at some point in our life. Whether the victim or the instigator, it's an unfortunate aspect of social interaction that one or more individuals might sense vulnerability in another, choosing to express dominance in a hurtful and repetitive way that can be insulting at the very least and threatening at its very worst.

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Small Hearts



Big Challenges

Early Detection Leads to Early Prevention

Small hearts can conceal big challenges, especially when it comes to congenital heart defects. Nearly one in three infants who die from birth defects has this condition. But a simple, non-invasive screening for all newborns could save the life of your child or the child of someone you know.

Tell your legislator to support pulse-oximetry testing for all newborns.
Get involved at YoureTheCure.org



Heart Disease and Stroke. You're the Cure.
YoureTheCure.org



Kids, Social Media and Technology: Could the Combination be Deadly?



by Bryan Silver

Unfortunately, the subject of suicide has recently soared to the top of our social consciousness, due in part to a sequence of high profile deaths—losing fashion designer and businesswoman Kate Spade along with celebrity chef, author and TV personality Anthony Bourdain within days of each other—as well as recent statistics that show suicides to be on the rise, especially for young adults. Even more alarming, the increase seems to mirror the rapid climb in both young people's use of technology and social media as well as the occurrence of cyberbullying via these digital forms of connectivity.

The risk to our young people is very real—one recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows the suicide rate among 15-17 year-old girls has doubled in just eight years, hitting a 40-year high (the suicide rate for similar-aged boys has also risen dramatically). "Why the change?" you might ask, and the answer could lie with another disturbing trend—one discussed in the cover story of this issue of *Living Safer*—in which more and more young individuals feel virtually under attack by constant cyberbullying.

Not surprisingly, cyberbullying victims are known to be twice as likely to commit suicide when compared to their non-bullied counterparts. Yet, studies have also shown a causal relationship simply

between suicidal tendencies and excessive use of social media and smartphones. One such study relied on surveys of more than 500,000 adolescents and shows a clear link between the explosion of smartphone ownership by teens starting a decade ago and the first major jump in teen suicide numbers in years. Dr. Jean Twenge, lead researcher and author of *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*, also found that teens were almost twice as likely to experience depressive thoughts and/or suicidal actions when their phone time jumped from two hours or less a day to five hours or more.

The question is, "do you know a teen, even your own child, who spends 5 hours or more a day using social media on their smartphone?" The fact that the answer is most likely "yes" is exactly why, as a parent and as a society, we need to say "no" to such behavior moving forward. But rather than making it about the technology—what teens can or can't use, how long they can use it, etc.—we need to emphasize reconnecting with family, friends and even our communities on a regular basis and in a very real way. We need to help this upcoming generation understand that—even with all of today's opportunities and their undeniable appeal—we should never let how we live be more important than why we live.

Apps Every Parent Should Know About

by Brittany Monbarren

Sure, you might be Facebook friends with your kids or have Twitter figured out, but apps like Snapchat, Calculator% and Whisper may be new to you. From messaging apps that delete conversations within minutes to apps that allow users to rate others based on their looks, there is an ever-increasing amount of apps available for kids today. To help parents get up to speed and keep kids safe, we've listed some of the most popular apps that kids are using.



SNAPCHAT

This is one of the most popular apps of 2018. While the app promises users can take a photo/video and it will disappear, recent features—including “stories”—allow users to view content up to 24 hours. Snapchat also allows users to see your location.

KIK

Kik allows anyone to contact and direct message your child. It also allows users to bypass traditional text messaging features that protect privacy. Kik has 300 million registered users and gives users unlimited access to anyone, anywhere, anytime.



YUBO (formerly Yellow)

Yubo has been called “Tinder for kids,” and is marketed to 13- to 17-year-olds as a way to make new friends. It allows users to swipe right or left to hook up.

OMEGLE

Omegle is a livestreaming video and chat app that allows anyone to chat with strangers. It's anonymous and can easily end up in bad conversations that kids shouldn't be having.



ASK.FM

This is a social networking site where users can create profiles and send each other questions. Sounds simple enough, right? The problem is that the app has also been linked to some of the most severe forms of cyberbullying.



CALCULATOR%

When opened, this app might look like a calculator but it actually functions as a secret vault. This is one of several secret apps used to hide photos, videos, files and browser history.

HOT OR NOT

Hot or Not is a “game” where users can upload photos and get rated by other users. Users can also check out other people in their area and chat with complete strangers. The ultimate goal of the app is to lead to a hook up.



INSTAGRAM

Instagram started as an image sharing platform but has gained many features such as messaging, which is very popular with kids when chatting across various devices. It can be dangerous because it allows users to create and use more than one account. In fact, many kids are creating fake accounts to hide content from parents.

WISHBONE

This app allows users to compare kids against each other and rate them on a scale.



WHISPER

Another anonymous app that focuses on having the user ask random questions to complete strangers who are close by. It also reveals a user's location so people can meet up.

What the Driver Sees



Behind this SUV is a group of daycare children. Not one of these children can be seen by the driver behind the wheel.



What the Driver Can't See

WORKING TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE IN AND AROUND VEHICLES

Before you turn the key...make sure you can see! Most drivers are unaware of the large and very dangerous blindzone that exists behind all vehicles. Every week at least 50 children are seriously injured or killed after being backed over because a driver was unable to see them behind their vehicle.

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Smartphone Apps to Better Your Personal Finances

by Michael J. Swanson

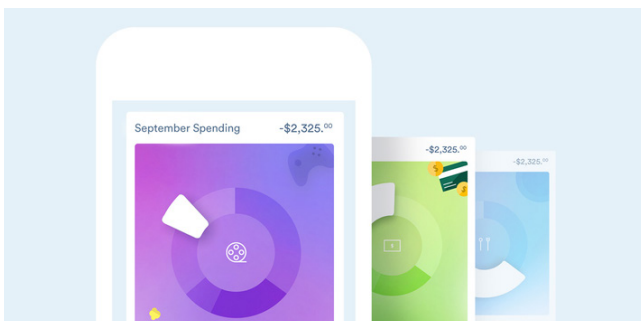
Most people carry their smartphone with them 24/7. Your smartphone is a great source for communication and entertainment, but it can also be a tool to help monitor your personal finances and accomplish your financial goals.



Mint

Budgeting and All-in-One Personal Finance Apps

If you would like to take control of your spending and save money, there are apps that can help you analyze your spending habits and create a personalized budget. One of the top-rated budgeting apps is Mint. The Mint app is a free, all-in-one personal finance tool to help you keep up with your bills, create a budget, and track your credit score. You can categorize and label your purchases and see how much you are spending on each category per month and per year. The app will also alert you to any unusual account charges and give you helpful personal finance tips.

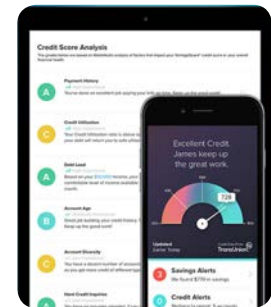


Clarity Money

Clarity Money is a similar app that can help you stay on track with your budget and savings. The app lists all of your subscriptions, such as Netflix, Hulu, Spotify, etc., in one place and shows you how much you are paying monthly. Not only does this feature make you more aware of what you are spending your money on and how you may be able to save money by changing your spending habits, it gives you tips on canceling unnecessary or unused subscriptions.



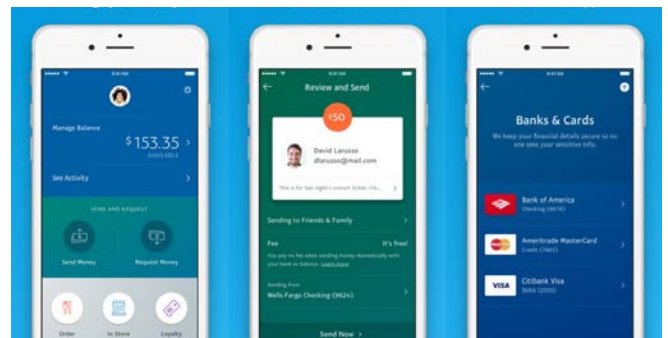
Credit Karma



WalletHub

Credit Tracking Apps

It is important to monitor your credit score and take actions to keep it high. People with higher credit scores are more likely to get better rates on insurance premiums, auto loans, mortgage loans, and more. The Credit Karma app is a great, free tool that will give you access to free credit scores and full reports anytime. You can also use the app to file your taxes and stay on top of any suspicious activity that may be identity theft. WalletHub is another free credit app that offers these benefits and can help you keep track of your credit score.



Paypal

Money Transfer

PayPal is a popular app that provides a secure and easy way to make purchases online and transfer money to other users. Cash App is another popular money transferring app you may want to consider. Apps like these are extremely useful for safely shopping online, splitting a bill between friends, or paying a babysitter. You should be careful to only use these money transferring apps with people you know and trust to avoid becoming the victim of a scam.

As you can see, there are many apps available to help you take control of your personal finances. By browsing through your smartphone's app store, researching apps online, and reading online reviews, you can easily find the best apps to help you accomplish your personal finance goals. [B](#)



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Make the Most of Your Workout with What to Eat Before, During and After Your Workout

by Hillary Rinehardt



Nutrition is a key factor when it comes to maximizing athletic performance, results, and recovery. What you eat before, during and after a workout can affect whether or not you will have the energy to achieve your greatest potential during each session.

Pre-Workout Meal

The goal of your pre-workout meal is to provide your body with energy but without stomach upset. What and when to eat before your workout will depend on the type, intensity and duration of the exercise you plan to do. Carbs will maximize your body's ability to use glycogen and are therefore good to fuel short/high intensity sessions, whereas fat will help fuel your body for longer sessions. Protein, made up of amino acids, will improve muscle protein synthesis, promote quick recovery and fight off hunger cravings.

Ideally, it is best to eat a complete meal containing carbs, protein and fat two to three hours before your workout. However, sometimes that is just not possible, especially if you are starting early in the morning or right after work. For most people, the perfect time for a pre-workout snack or meal is one to two hours beforehand. The closer it is to workout time, the smaller the meal should be, and the easier to digest—mainly carbs and some protein. If you can only eat five to ten minutes before your workout, just have an apple or a banana.

Good hydration is critical. Dehydration will decrease performance, while good hydration will sustain or even enhance performance. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends drinking 16-20 ounces of water at least four hours prior to your workout, and an additional 8-12 ounces 10 to 15 minutes prior to your workout.

Some pre-workout meal ideas good for burning fat and building muscles are:

- » Egg whites, almond butter, or avocado on whole grain bread
- » Oatmeal with low fat or almond milk
- » Tuna with brown rice
- » Grilled chicken with sweet potatoes
- » Low fat or fat free yogurt with fruit

Keep in mind, almond butter and avocados contain fat, which can slow down your body's uptake of nutrients. Fat should be eaten only if you intend to workout intensely for longer than 90 minutes.

During Your Workout

Whether you're an endurance athlete who trains for several hours or you have a low intensity routine, small, frequent sips of water will keep you hydrated during your workout.

Eating during your workout only makes sense if you are exercising for more than 90 minutes. Eating mid-workout is inconvenient and could make you feel sick if you are working out intensely. Proper pre-workout nutrition can provide you with everything your body needs for most workouts unless you are an endurance athlete. For longer, more vigorous workouts, 50 to 100 calories every half hour such as banana, raisins or low-fat yogurt may be helpful. Some people prefer to sip on a protein shake or drink amino acids. Much will depend on personal preference and what your stomach can handle.

Post-Workout Nutrition

Post-workout nutrition is essential for the best results. What and when you eat after training will not only affect your performance during your next workout but will also affect how sore you will be from the workout you just finished. The most important reason to eat after you work out is to help build muscle. If you skip this meal over time, you will lose muscle mass.

As opposed to pre-workout nutrition when complex carbohydrates are preferred, your carbs after training should be simple and easy to digest. The best choices immediately after the gym are fast-digesting proteins and faster-digesting, moderate-to-high-glycemic carbs. Fats should be largely avoided just as they were during the pre-workout meal.

Many people like to drink a protein shake or smoothie immediately after their workout. These shakes should have carbs and protein. Even if you drink a shake, your body needs the fiber and vitamins from an actual meal. Ideally, time your post workout meal within the first 30 minutes after you've finished working out or at least within one to two hours after you finish. Ideas of what to eat after your workout include:

- » Grilled chicken breast with baked sweet potato
- » Salmon with brown rice
- » Greek yogurt with berries
- » String cheese and an apple
- » Mixed green salad with shrimp, salmon or chicken
- » Omelet with veggies and feta. [ls](#)





Training Yourself to Exercise in the A.M.

by Matthew Devoti and Michael Walerius

You're busy. A new baby just entered the family. Your youngest child needs a ride to practice and your oldest has a weekend baseball tournament. Your employer demands your time, both during and after business hours. The "honey-do" list seems to grow every weekend. And, you promised to sell hot dogs at the Parish picnic, pick up trash at the neighborhood park or make cupcakes for the church potluck.

Oh, and your spouse. You need to make time for her or him, too.

But, what about you? ***It's difficult to give your best to life's demands if you're not at your best.*** So, how do we take care of ourselves? Exercise clears the mind, rejuvenates our body, and provides each of us a better opportunity to be around for our loved ones long into the future.

When do we find time to train? For many of us, ***the only real time to train is first thing in the morning, before our daily routine starts.*** The thought of training in the morning can be daunting. You're probably already creating excuses:

- » "It's hard to get up and out of bed."
- » "I'm not an 'A.M.' person."
- » "All the coffee in the world isn't going to help get me going!"

So, how do we jump start our early morning training journey? First, if you're considering exercising in the morning, you're probably driven by a lifestyle change of some sort. ***Recognize and embrace the change.*** New job, new family addition, new health goals; whatever the case, your schedule probably demands you invest your "P.M." time elsewhere. Perhaps your want is driven by the need to work on your fitness before breakfast. You have priorities and you've worked extremely hard after work and don't want to lose the progress you've made. Maybe you're just starting a new journey of exercise and the morning is the only time you can train to achieve your commitment to a healthier lifestyle.

Nevertheless, ***training before breakfast demands an analysis of your lifestyle and individual goals.*** Some fixes are simple: you must minimize those nights of staying up late and setting up

yourself to not get enough sleep. Here are other tips to jumpstart your way to A.M. training:

- 1 Understand WHY you are getting up** – You must answer the basic questions: "Why is exercise a priority for me?" and "What do I want out of fitness?" Making the switch to a pre-breakfast routine will be easier IF you understand and clearly identify your motivations.
- 2 Get more sleep** – Put the kids to bed, turn off Netflix and get the rest necessary to recover from the day's activities, restore energy and rejuvenate your body for the next day's tasks.
- 3 Drink more water** – Staying hydrated helps the body flush toxins, assists in absorption of nutrients and helps balance energy.
- 4 Plan your whole day ... the day before** – In other words, prepare your mind. Having a game plan helps you focus and stay committed to the process; planning also serves to hold yourself accountable.
- 5 Find your circadian rhythm** – Going to bed and getting up at the same time each day helps balance energy as well as routine and habit—the habit to get up in the A.M. to crush your workouts!!!
- 6 Get a professional coach** – Enlisting a professional trainer serves to hold yourself accountable; a trained coach also guides you onto the path of success by designing workouts that uniquely interest, challenge and motivate you.

How bad do you want to achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle? Feel healthier, be stronger, have more vitality? Start your training in the A.M.

Some of the above mentioned tips are OPEX Basic Lifestyle Guidelines. OPEX is a fitness education company with a global network of gyms and trainers that provide smarter coaching with better results through personalized fitness programs. OPEX St. Louis Central is the first OPEX gym in Missouri—empowering individuals to achieve greater through fitness. [IS](#)





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Boys vs. Girls: How ADHD Can Display Differently

by Florence J. Murray

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects adults and children nationwide. Various medical and governmental agencies estimate that between five and 11 percent of children in the United States suffer from ADHD. Most children go undiagnosed until they reach school age and their symptoms become more apparent. However, children as young as the age of four can be diagnosed. The symptoms of ADHD tend to be the same, but how boys and girls express their symptoms can vary drastically.

The hallmark symptoms of ADHD are well known and include limited attention and hyperactivity. These symptoms are often expressed as difficulty focusing, irritability, fidgeting, and a general lack of restraint. In boys, these symptoms frequently lead to behavior problems at school and at home. In the classroom, they may draw unwanted attention to themselves if, for example, they are unable to sit still for long periods. This not only affects the way they learn, but can distract those around them. Still, our society has the stereotype of “boys will boys”—causing boys to frequently go undiagnosed. On average, however, boys with ADHD are three times more likely to be identified and diagnosed than girls.

While boys normally express their symptoms outwardly, girls tend to internalize them. As a result, girls with ADHD will come across as withdrawn or ditzzy. They may also talk a lot, or cut others off when they are talking. Girls normally don’t exhibit hyperactivity. And since they don’t often show the typical signs of ADHD, they are more likely to remain undiagnosed and untreated.

Although the symptoms manifest differently in both boys and girls, they often lead to the same problems. It is not uncommon for children with ADHD to struggle in school. The inability to stay focused can result in poor performance, behavior issues, and lower grades. It is critical that teachers are trained to notice the symptoms of ADHD so that, if necessary, they may receive additional help as soon as possible. This help can come from additional one-on-one tutoring so the child can review the material at their own pace. There are also several types of tools that children can use to help release their energy in class. Recently, fidget spinners have become widely popular. Rubik’s Cubes can serve to keep a child’s hands busy during listening activities. Or, if a child tends to move his or her feet more when in the classroom, elastic bands can be placed around a chair to allow the student to quietly bounce their feet.

Recognizing that a child is showing symptoms of ADHD is not an easy task. Symptoms are frequently dismissed in boys, and in girls, the symptoms are sometimes difficult to see. However, remaining vigilant as parents and maintaining open communication with well-trained teachers can help ensure that, if your child is exhibiting behaviors associated with ADHD, he or she can be properly evaluated and diagnosed by a medical professional. The key is to identify those children who might have the disorder as soon as possible, so that they may receive the proper care sooner rather than later. [IS](#)

FYI, Your Water Bottle is Gross

by Stephanie Andre

Bad news for those who carry a reusable water bottle everywhere they go. While you should be congratulated for your dedication to the environment and hydration, you may want to also consider the latest studies that suggest you're carrying around the same amount of bacteria as a toilet.

Treadmillreviews.net recently swabbed the lids of a dozen reusable water bottles used by athletes, then sent the samples to a lab.

And the facts don't lie: The average water bottle contains nearly 314,000 CFU (colony-forming units) of bacteria. To put that in perspective, the average pet toy has approx. 3,000 CFU.

In fact, the act of quenching your thirst while you exercise could potentially make you sick.

Surprisingly, the type of water bottle had an effect on the number of bacteria it harbored. Ones with a slide-top were by far the worst offenders, with close to a million CFU. Squeeze-tops and screw-tops hovered between 159,000–161,000 CFU. And the best and "cleanest" choice was the straw-top.

But less bacteria doesn't necessarily mean "better." While half the bacteria on the slide-top bottles were considered the "bad" kind that can cause infections of the skin, lungs, and blood—not to

mention resist antibiotics—99% of the germs found on squeeze-top bottles were disgusting. (And 98% of the screw-tops were that nasty as well.)

So what should you do? Studies suggest the following:

- » Go for a straw-top bottle—both for the low prevalence of bacteria and the lack of harmful germs. It's less convenient, but not as gross.
- » Stainless steel over plastic. Yes, they're heavier, but also cleaner. Stainless steel is naturally antibacterial.
- » Keep your bottles clean. If you have to use plastic, please hand wash—frequently. Also, use a bottle brush to get the tough to reach places. Stainless steel vessels can get a regular run-through in the dishwasher.

If you're still noticing a strange taste or odor, try adding one teaspoon of bleach and one teaspoon of baking soda to the bottle, fill it with water, and let sit overnight. Rinse it out the next day and let it air dry. Germs be gone. At least for a minute.

And finally, get rid of those half-empty bottles! You're basically just turning your bottle into a germ incubator, which is neither tasty nor refreshing. [LS](#)





15 Things People Don't Realize They're Doing **Because of Depression**

by Mark Bello

Many people believe that depression is easily identifiable, manifesting itself as persistent sadness that doesn't go away. They make assumptions about how someone struggling with depression will look and behave.

While depression affects a person's mood, it goes beyond feeling sad or "down in the dumps." It can last months, years, or—more often than not—a lifetime. From a lack of will to physical pain, depression often drains one's energy, motivation, and concentration, even in performing normal, daily activities. Additionally, it can affect one's thinking, interfering with the ability to overcome even the smallest hurdles in life.

Depression expresses itself in various ways—sometimes obvious, while other times the signs are so subtle that someone personally affected by depression will not even realize it. Sufferers will not only fail to recognize symptoms for what they really are, but develop ways of coping with their problems and hiding their illness from others. Often times, they will think something else is wrong. As a result, many people go undiagnosed.

How can you tell if you are depressed? It seems like a silly question, but a surprising number of people fail to spot the signs. Due to a lack of awareness of what depression consists of or an aversion to admitting a mental or emotional illness, they see themselves as suffering from stress, fatigue, being overworked, or even a physical disease. The signs are ignored—from the dramatic and obvious to the subtle and the secret.

Here are 15 things people don't realize they are doing because of depression:

- 1 You just want to stay in bed. Despite getting plenty of sleep, you still wake up tired or fatigued. On the other hand, you may suffer from insomnia and forgetfulness.
- 2 You associate your afternoon slump with the need for copious amounts of coffee.
- 3 You confuse depression with sadness. For example, you attribute your thoughts and feelings to a major problem or life crisis such as a job loss or the death of a loved one.
- 4 You try to convince yourself you are fine and put on a facade everywhere you go. While you make your life look perfect on the outside, you are sad internally.
- 5 You have difficulty communicating your emotions.
- 6 You harbor negative energy inside; the only way to release it is to lash out at others. You tend to lose your temper easily and conflicts quickly escalate into fights.
- 7 You have mood swings without cause. You cry for no apparent reason. You could be happy one minute and crying the next. You may overreact to insignificant sadness and ignore major bad news.
- 8 You stop socializing and pull away from friends and family or from activities you once enjoyed.
- 9 You feel worthless and unloved and may be considering harming yourself or ending your life.
- 10 You have trouble concentrating on tasks; whether it be schoolwork, a job, or simply staying focused during conversations.
- 11 You engage in behaviors that signal "masked depression" to forget your problems. You may drink alcohol or look to food for comfort. You may lose the majority of your appetite as a subconscious need to control something.
- 12 You assume your mood is contributing to chronic pain or a medical condition or illness. However, some conditions such as hypothyroidism, cancer, and hepatitis can cause depression. Nutritional deficiencies and some medications are culprits, as well.
- 13 You choose to forego feeling altogether. You have a hard time responding to affection and concern from others.
- 14 You work harder, not smarter. The classic example is trying to exercise your way to happiness: If you already log a few hours a week at the gym, spending another 30 more minutes every day may briefly lift your spirits.
- 15 You are experiencing a marked slowing down of your motor responses such as eye-hand coordination. It manifests as a slowing of coordination, speech, and impaired articulation.

Depression is an illness—a chemical imbalance in the brain that takes more than a "band aid approach" to fix. Symptoms vary from person to person. If you have at least five of the signs listed above, that last for more than two weeks and are not clearly caused by a medical disorder, drug use, or the death of a loved one, you may be suffering from depression. It is important to seek medical advice as soon as possible, otherwise you risk heading into a spiral from which you may have a hard time recovering. More importantly, know that depression is highly treatable. [IS](#)



Vaping is Not a Healthy Alternative to Anything

by Lily Grace

Earlier this year, the Food and Drug Administration announced a "large-scale, undercover nationwide blitz to crack down on the sale of e-cigarettes—specifically JUUL [brand] products—to minors at both brick-and-mortar and online retailers," Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, MD, announced in a statement. The crackdown focuses on JUUL e-cigarettes as well as other brands and includes raids on retail stores suspected of selling the products to minors. Forty stores have already been cited for making illegal sales.

Bottom line: officials are quickly releasing that this is no alternative.

E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used form of tobacco by youth in the U.S., according to WebMD. And dual use, or using both e-cigarettes and conventional cigarettes, is common among youth and young adults 18-25 years of age.

Reasons reported by young people for using e-cigarettes include curiosity, taste, and the belief that e-cigarettes are less harmful than other tobacco products.

Flavored e-cigarettes are very popular, especially with young adults. More than 9 of every 10 young adult e-cigarette users said they use e-cigarettes flavored to taste like menthol, alcohol, candy, fruit, chocolate, or other sweets. More than 8 of every 10 youth ages 12-17 who use e-cigarettes said they use flavored e-cigarettes.

E-cigarettes are a \$2.5 billion business in the U.S. As of 2014, the e-cigarette industry spent \$125 million a year to advertise their products, and used many of the techniques that made traditional cigarettes popular such as sexual content and customer satisfaction. We know that marketing and advertising of conventional tobacco products like cigarettes can lead youth to use tobacco, and scientists are also finding that youth who are exposed to e-cigarette advertisements are more likely to use the product than youth who are not exposed.

So, what can we do to prevent harm? Educate!

It is important to prevent harm to youth and young adults from e-cigarettes. We know enough to take action now to protect the health of our nation's young people. Everyone has a role, including

parents, health care providers, teachers, and others who work with and care about young people.

Talk with your teen or other young people about the dangers of e-cigarettes.

You can start by talking to your kids or to other young people you know about the dangers of e-cigarettes. Tell them about the harm that nicotine (in any form) can do to their growing brain. Let them know that you stand strong against them using any tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, now or in the future. Even if you have used tobacco yourself, they will listen if you discuss your struggles with nicotine addiction.

The following are specific actions that parents and other adults can take to reduce young people's exposure to e-cigarettes, according to WebMD:

- » **Restrict E-cigarette Use Around Young People.** Don't let anyone use e-cigarettes or other tobacco products around young people. Not only are youth watching the behaviors of others as an example, but they're also at risk of exposure to nicotine and other chemicals that can be harmful to their health.
- » **Visit Tobacco-Free Locations.** Avoid restaurants and other locations that allow use of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.
- » **Ensure School is Tobacco-Free.** Check with your school administration to ensure your child's school, college, or university is completely tobacco-free, including being free of e-cigarettes.
- » **Make Your Home Tobacco-Free.** Make your home and vehicles tobacco-free by not allowing use of any tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, by family members, friends, and guests. This is an important step to fully protect your children from exposure to secondhand cigarette smoke and secondhand aerosol from e-cigarettes.
- » **Be an Example.** Be an example to youth by living tobacco-free. Even if you're quitting tobacco, share the reasons why you want to be tobacco-free and ask for support in your journey. [IS](#)



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What Metabolism Looks Like As You Age

by Lily Grace

It seems to be a given. Everyone says it: “As you age, your metabolism slows down.” Darn it! Now it’s even harder to lose weight.

But why? Well, we’ve taken a look at the science and explain it below. So, before you sit down with another bowl of ice cream, consider reading this.

In your 20s

Most women enjoy their highest basal metabolic rate in their late teens or early 20s, say most doctors. Some women will hit it a bit earlier, others later, which has a lot to do with genetics, but your activity level also plays a big role. After all, the more you run across campus or hit the gym, the more muscle you’ll build and the higher your metabolism will be. Plus, until you’re about 25 or so, your body is still building bone, and that process burns up calories.

However, it doesn’t last that long. According to the American Council on Exercise, your basal metabolic rate drops roughly 1-2% per decade. Generally, by their late 20s, many women notice that they can’t eat the same things they used to without gaining weight and that the weight doesn’t fall off as easily as it once did. Since this drop starts right about the time people settle into the (largely sedentary) workforce—and start losing muscle—an office job might be partially to blame.

In your 30s

As you lose muscle, your natural calorie-burning ability slows even more. And as you lose muscle and gain fat, fat can develop into the muscle and cause weight gain and metabolic dysfunction. Plus, during your 30s, you aren’t producing as much human growth hormone as before, which also leads to a dip in your

metabolic rate. However, strength training can help you build muscle and produce more human growth hormone, both of which keep your metabolism running as fast as (or faster than) it did when you were 20.

And then for women, there’s the pregnancy factor. A huge calorie burn comes from breastfeeding (should they choose to do so). The average woman who breastfeeding full time can expect to burn an extra 500 to 1,000 calories per day. Unfortunately, as soon as you start weaning your little one, your metabolism goes back to pre-pregnancy levels—as long as you haven’t lost any muscle since you got pregnant.

In your 40s

Women can say goodbye to your hormones. Around 40, levels of estrogen, progesterone, and (again) human growth hormone decrease. And metabolism follows suit. That means you’ll have to focus on reducing your caloric intake during your 40s in order to maintain your weight. If you’re working out, that might only amount to eating about 150 less calories per day. But if you don’t exercise and sit most of the day, you’ll probably have to cut more calories to stay svelte.

Also by 40, your body’s natural decline in muscle mass, called sarcopenia, sets in. To combat the loss of lean mass and keep your metabolism revved, you really have to turn to strength training. According to research from the Harvard School of Public Health, people who lift weights put on less belly fat as they age than cardio bunnies. While any exercise will help you burn calories while you’re at the gym, strength training gives your metabolism the biggest boost after your workout ends. Eating the right amount of protein (about 100 to 120 grams a day) will boost your efforts to get stronger. [IS](#)





Financial Security: Best Places for Retirement

by Mark Bello

Thinking about retirement? While “when” is often the main question, choosing the right retirement destination can make all the difference.

As you begin your search, looking at “best-places-to-retire” lists is a good start, but different surveys produce different results. Which city is best for you depends on your own personal needs and circumstances, however you define them.

Pulling up stakes and moving someplace new doesn’t have to be a difficult process, but it should include careful research, planning, and weighing of the pros and cons. Here are seven factors to consider:

Cost of Living/Affordable Housing

Before you start scouting out places, seriously look at your budget. What funds will be coming in from pensions or other investments? How much will you have to live on? Look for a place where you can retire comfortably and have a nice standard of living without struggling to make ends meet.

Proximity to Family Members

Do you want to be near family and friends? Will you be taking care of aging parents? If so, will you need to be close by? Maybe you want to be close to grandchildren. One of the biggest regrets that people often have at the end of life is they wished they had spent more time with family.

Tax-Friendliness

Look at sales tax, property tax, income tax, vehicle tax, and taxes on gas, alcohol, tobacco and travel. Keep in mind that higher taxes aren’t always a bad thing. In some cases, it can mean great public facilities. While a state with lower taxes can stretch your dollars further, if that means paying more out-of-pocket costs

for health care, it might not be worth it in the end. Your income sources and spending patterns will also factor into how a state’s tax structure will impact you.

Climate and Weather

Everyone has their favorite climate. Some people love hot weather and relaxing on the beach, while others prefer seasonal weather and are comfortable with cold winters. Despite nice cities in colder climates, wintry weather conditions present a greater challenge as you age.

Health Care/Medical Facilities

Health care is important at any age, but especially as you grow older. Before you move, check out the doctors, dentists, and hospitals in the area. It is important to consider distance to medical facilities, including emergency care, geriatric care, physical therapy and rehabilitation, and hospice. If you are unable to drive, are the facilities easy to reach using public transportation? You should also consider retirement homes and senior services, even though you may not need to use them until years later.

Safety/Crime Rate

Safety concerns can become a higher priority as you grow older and feel more vulnerable. Look at the crime statistics and economic data for places you are considering. An even better approach is to contact the local police and inquire about neighborhoods of interest.

Local Amenities

What amenities do you want/need? While nearby shops and medical services are standard considerations, what about cultural, educational, and recreational resources? Do you have interests/hobbies that play into where you want to live? In addition to learning whether your favorite recreational activities exist, consider how much of the year you will be able to enjoy them.

According to 2018 reports (from WalletHub, among others), Florida is one of the best states for retirement due to affordability and quality of lifestyle. Cape Coral is considered a friendly, diversified growing city, while Sarasota has award-winning beaches and a thriving arts and cultural scene. In addition to Florida, the states with the largest populations 65 and older include Maine, West Virginia, Vermont, and Pennsylvania. Colorado ranks highly in healthcare, although it tends to be less affordable. Minneapolis, Minnesota is the best for quality of life and health care but also has low affordability for retirees. New York is a good option for those looking for entertainment, despite the state’s low overall rating for retirement. Several Texas cities are among top retiree destinations largely due to affordable housing and low taxes. Looking at specific cities, Scottsdale, Arizona; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Honolulu, Hawaii rank highly for quality of lifestyle and healthcare—although cost of living is high in Hawaii.

The bottom line is that the best place for you to retire depends on what you value. One size does not fit all; no dream location fits every dream. Once you find your good fit, you can look forward to settling in and enjoying a new phase of life. [IS](#)





When Is It Time for Couples Therapy?

by Tammie McKay

No one goes into a relationship with the tools and knowledge needed to manage the many challenges that are to come. There is no “how to” book to purchase with step-by-step instructions or even to tell you when to seek help or counseling—but the answers to certain questions can be telling: Do you just continue through the everyday and accept that this is normal? Do you only talk things out with friends and not your spouse? Do you wonder who or where or how things went wrong? Maybe it is time for couples therapy.

The big question is: when do you know if it is time to consider marriage counseling? Here are a few signs that your relationship could use couples therapy:

- 1 You fight all the time** – If you can’t have a conversation without a fight, it’s time to learn how to communicate more effectively. All couples will have fights from time to time, however, there are healthy and non-healthy ways. Therapy can teach you how to diminish arguments, speak calmly and treat each other with respect.
- 2 You feel you’re speaking different languages** – Suddenly, what you are saying isn’t what your partner is hearing and vice versa. Therapy can help you understand the differences in communication styles and teach you to adapt to each other.
- 3 When you’re afraid to talk** – This can be anything from money to sex to children to annoying habits; because, regardless of the topic, it seems to get blown out of proportion. A therapist can help you become clear about issues and understand what is truly being talked about.
- 4 When you pretend everything is fine** – If you ignore important issues or pretend everything is ok, it might be time to consider therapy. A therapist can help you tackle issues head-on in safe, manageable ways.
- 5 If your sex life has changed significantly** – Sex is one of the main reasons couples fight. After being together for a while, it is not unusual for sex to taper off, however a significant change is a signal that something is not right. There could be an underlying issue that therapy can help bring to light and work toward resolution.
- 6 When you’re living separate lives** – Couples don’t have to do everything together, but if you are more like roommates than a couple, it is an indication that something is wrong. Therapy can help you sort out what is missing and help bring it back together.
- 7 If you have different views about finances** – Most couples will have some sort of argument about money, one usually likes to spend while one likes to save. This is one of the biggest issues for any marriage and causes the most fights. Couples therapy can help you understand and compromise your finances.
- 8 You’re thinking about an affair** – Fantasizing about an affair can occur for a number of reasons, but it’s usually a sign that something is broken in the relationship. If you are tempted to break the vows of marriage, it is better to seek counseling with your partner than to deal with the consequences later.
- 9 When you get more support outside of your relationship than from within** – You shouldn’t expect your partner to meet your every need; however, if you feel unheard, misunderstood or disrespected, it’s time for counseling.
- 10 If your partner asks for couples therapy** – When your partner asks to go to couples counseling, they are communicating that there is something wrong.

Couples counseling can be a huge benefit for any relationship, regardless of the severity. No relationship is consistently smooth sailing, problems can arise early on, after a long time of being together, or even from unexpected stresses. Just remember that a relationship is a living thing that needs to be nurtured, or it’s going to wither and die. [IS](#)

A woman with blonde hair, seen from the back, wearing a blue denim shirt with rolled-up sleeves, stands in the foreground. In the background, a young girl with blonde hair is sitting on a couch, looking down with her hands clasped. The setting appears to be a living room with a wooden shelf and a framed picture in the background.

Kids Are Tough How to Handle a Defiant Child

by Jim Edward

A

ll parents have been there. Your child throws a tantrum at the worst time. Talks back in front of others. You're embarrassed, enraged and at a loss all at the same time.

Children are defiant for a reason, and if this behavior isn't managed early on, you could find yourself in a very tough situation—for the long haul. According to Mighty Mommy, these eight strategies can help you cope before you lose your patience (and your mind):

Hold Your Child Accountable

Children of all ages need to know the family rules for everything from helping out with chores, to completing homework, to bedtime and curfews, to acceptable behavior toward others. The time to discuss these matters is when things are going well, not after an incident has occurred.

Sit down with your kids and let them know what types of behaviors you will not tolerate in your family. List examples of unacceptable behaviors. You cannot expect your child, regardless of age, to be compliant if he doesn't know your expectations.

Choose Your Battles

Parenting is exhausting enough when things are going well, but when one of your children is purposefully misbehaving, the difficulties are multiplied. So choose how you spend your energy wisely! For instance, if your high schooler wants to wear pants that are too big because that's the style, do you really need to start the day off on a negative note by hassling him over poor fashion choices?

Act, Don't React

When you witness defiant behavior from your child, don't get angry and lose your temper. Instead, take a step back and calmly tell your child that you don't approve of the behavior and that you will handle it at a later time. This will raise a sense of fear in your child's mind because he'll have time to think about the poor actions and the potential consequences. Not only are you using the time to calm yourself down, but you're also teaching your kids how to do the same.

Enforce Age-Appropriate Consequences

Effective consequences can largely be grouped into two categories: removals and impositions. A "removal" is taking something away from the child, such as your attention, an exciting environment, or a pleasant activity.

"Impositions" are consequences that impose a new

situation upon the child. Paying his own money into a family "fine" jar, doing extra chores, having to run errands with mom because he abused the privilege to stay home alone by inviting friends over without permission—these are impositions. But if you don't follow through with consequences for bad behavior, you send the message: If you wear me down, you'll get your way. Bad idea!

Keep Your Power

When you engage in an argument with your child, you're just giving them more power over the situation. In effect, you're enforcing the child's perception that they have the power to challenge you, which can lead to even more defiant behavior.

The next time your child tries to draw you into a power struggle over something just say, "We've discussed what is going to happen if you do this. I don't want to talk about it anymore," and leave the room. When you leave, you take all the power with you. Know that the more you engage your child in an argument, the more control you're giving away.

No Second Chances or Bargaining

Consistency is key if you don't want to reinforce bad habits. Once your child is old enough to understand that behaviors have consequences, don't give him repeat chances.

If your son calls his friend's mother a "fat butt" when you arrive for a play date, you firmly say, "You know we don't talk like that. We're going home now so you can spend some time thinking about what you said," and leave immediately after he apologizes. Do not bargain with your child, don't offer ice cream or money in return for better behavior. This is possibly the most damaging thing a parent or caregiver can do.

Always Build on the Positive

Make sure that you build on the positive attitudes and actions of your children. Praise your children for their positive behaviors, while rewarding them when they show a cooperative attitude. Positive reinforcement can go a long way in raising a responsible child.

Set Regular Times to Talk to Your Child

In a moment of downtime, when things are going well and you don't anticipate an immediate power struggle, sit down with your child and let her know that you take your job as her parent very seriously and your intentions are to keep her safe and help her grow into a responsible, productive, self-reliant adult who will be as happy and fulfilled in life as possible.

Remind her that your family has rules and values that are in place for her future, not to cause her grief while growing up. [IS](#)

Texting and Walking PEDEXTICATED — It's Dangerous and Deadly

by Mike Bryant

Part of the research: Sending or reading a text message can take up to 4.6 seconds. As you are walking, even at a slow speed, you travel some distance without paying attention to where you are going. If you do this on a sidewalk or along a busy highway, it can be dangerous and deadly.

I saw an example of this on a recent trip to the supermarket. I was pulling into the parking lot and ahead of me was a woman who was walking like she was drunk down the middle of the lane. She was busy texting or doing something on her phone. I saw her so she was safe from me but at least three backing cars almost hit her, including one she almost walked into. Pay attention while you are walking and be aware of your surroundings. Whatever is going on with your phone can wait.

Each year, statistics come out on the number of people killed on our highways. Over the past few years, we have seen an increase in the number of pedestrians killed in traffic. The highest number of fatalities in more than two decades came in 2016 according to the Government Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Report released in March 2017. Deaths are more likely to occur in situations where both the pedestrian and driver are distracted.

Beyond that, people can be injured by walking into poles or other people.

It is important to do the following things:

- 1 Stand still when you are texting.**
- 2 Don't use headphones when you are walking.** According to the study by Safe Kids Worldwide, one in five high school students and one in eight middle school students have been seen crossing the road while distracted. Of those students, 39 percent were texting and 39 percent were using headphones. Basically, texting while walking is like walking with your eyes closed.
- 3 Talking on a cellphone can be just as distracting as texting.** If the phone is up to your ear, you may be able to keep your eyes open. If you get too engrossed in your conversation, bad things can happen.

Overall, you need to stay safe and alert. If your nose is buried in your phone or if your sensors are blocked by a phone, you lose the ability to stay safe. [B](#)



"I Choose"

anti-bullying campaign

The "I Choose" campaign is a challenge and movement for change. It's about recognizing bullying for what it is: a choice. What you say or do to someone has the power to affect that person's life. The campaign challenges people to stop, think and remember that their choices matter.

What do you choose?

We believe that there are five powerful choices that kids and teens can make to counter bullying:

Friendship

Kindness

Respect

Compassion

Love



How you can be a part of the "I Choose" movement

Teachers

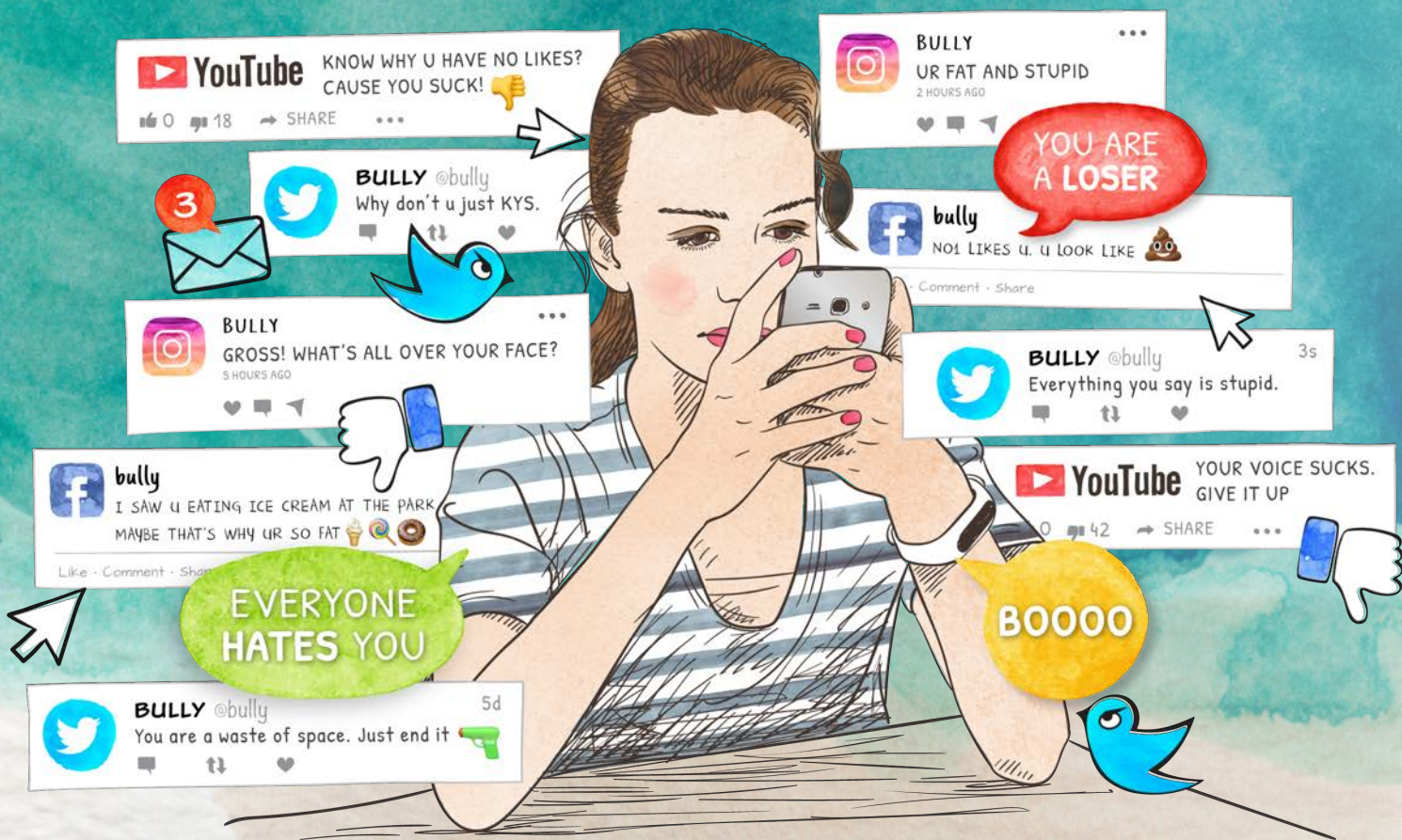
If you are interested in incorporating the "I Choose" Anti-Bullying Challenge into your classroom or school, please visit whatdoyouchoose.org and get signed up today.

Youth

Whether you were the victim or you know someone who was, your story has the power to shift someone's perspective. Visit whatdoyouchoose.org to share your story and make your choice.

Supporters

Spread the message by purchasing an "I Choose" bracelet for yourself or a child in your life.



YouTube KNOW WHY U HAVE NO LIKES?
CAUSE YOU SUCK! 👎
0 18 SHARE

BULLY UR FAT AND STUPID
2 HOURS AGO
❤️ 💬

3
✉️

BULLY @bully
Why don't u just KYS.
💬 🔒 ❤️

YOU ARE
A LOSER

bully
NO1 LIKES U. U LOOK LIKE 🤡
Comment · Share

BULLY
GROSS! WHAT'S ALL OVER YOUR FACE?
5 HOURS AGO
❤️ 💬

BULLY @bully 3s
Everything you say is stupid.
💬 🔒 ❤️

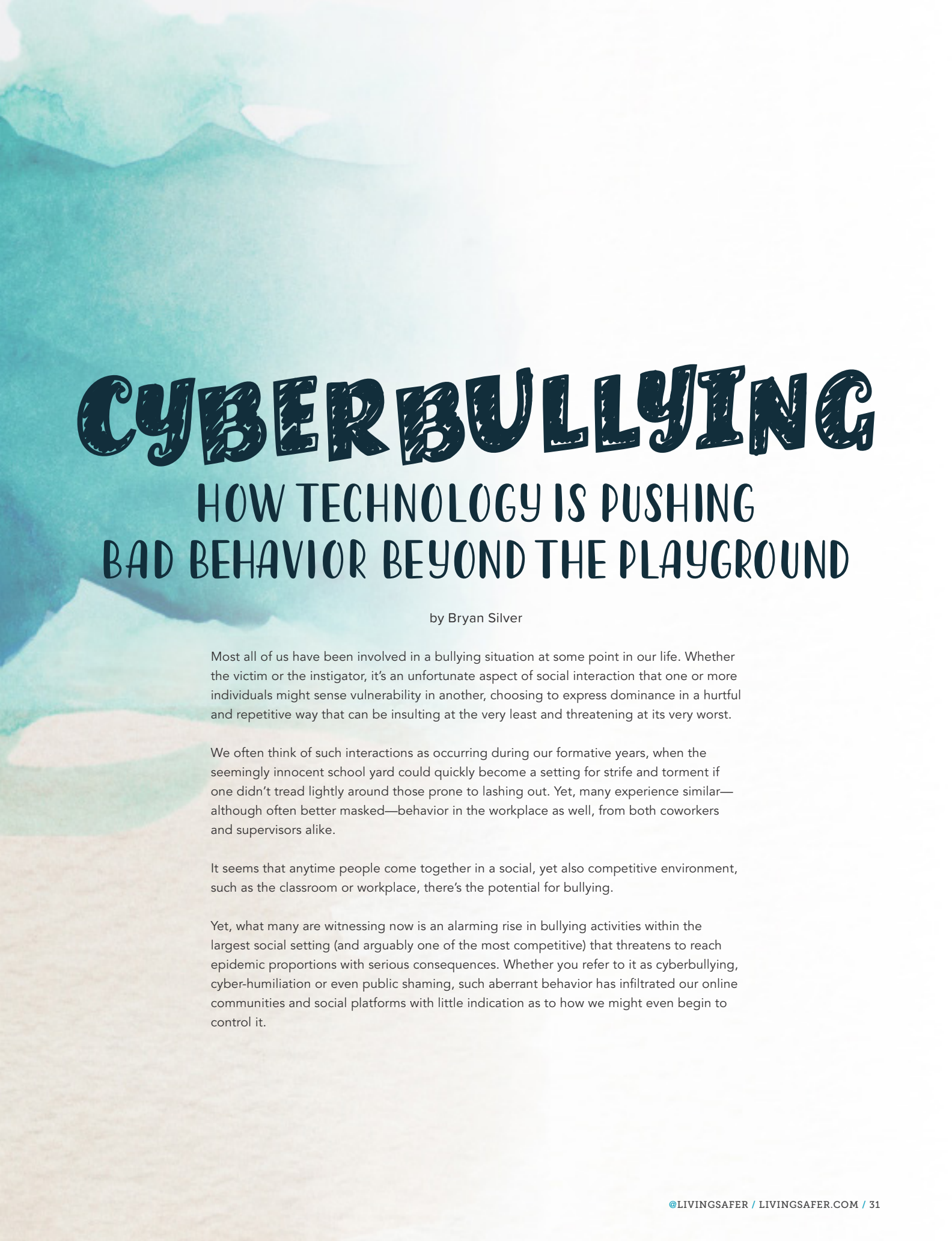
bully
I SAW U EATING ICE CREAM AT THE PARK
MAYBE THAT'S WHY UR SO FAT 🍦 🍌 🍩
Like · Comment · Share

YouTube YOUR VOICE SUCKS.
GIVE IT UP
0 42 SHARE

EVERYONE
HATES YOU

BOOOO

BULLY @bully 5d
You are a waste of space. Just end it 🔫
💬 🔒 ❤️



CYBERBULLYING

HOW TECHNOLOGY IS PUSHING BAD BEHAVIOR BEYOND THE PLAYGROUND

by Bryan Silver

Most all of us have been involved in a bullying situation at some point in our life. Whether the victim or the instigator, it's an unfortunate aspect of social interaction that one or more individuals might sense vulnerability in another, choosing to express dominance in a hurtful and repetitive way that can be insulting at the very least and threatening at its very worst.

We often think of such interactions as occurring during our formative years, when the seemingly innocent school yard could quickly become a setting for strife and torment if one didn't tread lightly around those prone to lashing out. Yet, many experience similar—although often better masked—behavior in the workplace as well, from both coworkers and supervisors alike.

It seems that anytime people come together in a social, yet also competitive environment, such as the classroom or workplace, there's the potential for bullying.

Yet, what many are witnessing now is an alarming rise in bullying activities within the largest social setting (and arguably one of the most competitive) that threatens to reach epidemic proportions with serious consequences. Whether you refer to it as cyberbullying, cyber-humiliation or even public shaming, such aberrant behavior has infiltrated our online communities and social platforms with little indication as to how we might even begin to control it.

WHEN DID CYBERBULLYING BECOME A “THING”?

While the term “bully” can be traced back almost 500 years—ironically, the original meaning of the word was one of endearment—the idea that an individual might intimidate, harass or abuse another simply for the feeling of superiority or power is most likely as old as humankind. Many experts point to such behaviors as possibly stemming from an individual’s survival instinct, but obviously the impulse has mutated—pushing a person’s inherent competitive nature into overdrive when it’s apparent that they have an obvious advantage.

In modern times, the potential for bully behavior to emerge has only been exacerbated. We’re taught to not only do the best we can, but to always strive for better. Whether it’s in regards to grades, economic standing or pure talent, there’s always the understanding that the bar can—and should—go higher. Such pressures, along with advancements in technology that have altered how we interact with each other, have pushed bullying to a new level in this self-proclaimed “social” age.

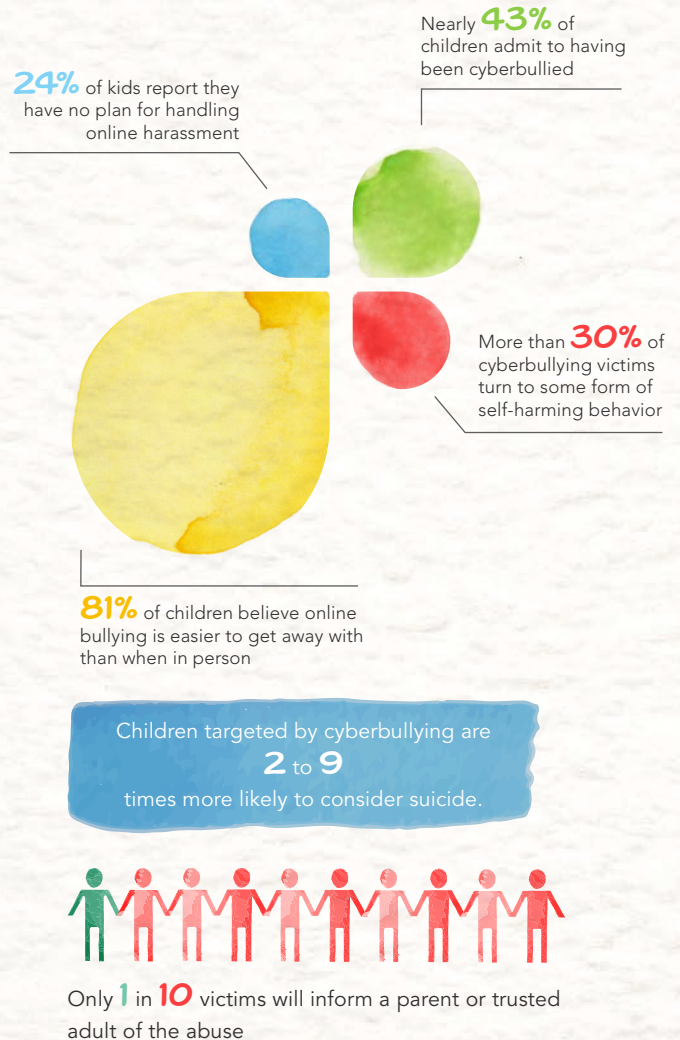
The idea of always being “connected” with others certainly has wide appeal. Sharing experiences with those who hold similar values and pursue like interests is critical to a feeling of belonging within a group—a desire that’s encoded in our DNA and dates back to a time before we became civilized. Even now, when many parts of the world enjoy a science-fictionesque standard of living where digital interaction is the connection du jour, such animal-like urges still lurk. It’s obvious that some still lack control over these impulses—acting out inappropriately toward others—the questions to answer are “where are we headed?” and “when will it stop?” While 24/7 connectivity has fueled social networking across numerous platforms, the spread of cyber-based harassment and humiliation has gone virtually unchecked.

WITHOUT BOUNDARIES, CAN CYBERBULLYING TRULY BE CONTAINED?

Bullying researcher Susan Swearer, Ph.D., has spent close to two decades amassing data on the bullying paradigm. What she has found is that the confines of an environment can distinctly alter the methods and the resulting outcome or affect of the actions. Consider inner city bullying: whether it occurs on a basketball court or within a corporate office, there is a certain level of anonymity. Due to the size of the environment, the assailant and the victim might not even regularly come in contact, thus diffusing the situation. It could also be easy for them to avoid each other or relocate entirely, visit a different playground or possibly change jobs and the problem is solved. Small town or rural bullying rarely presents such options, as the environment is much smaller. Everyone knows each other, and there could be just one school or one large factory where many of the community members work. With no way of “escaping” the bullying, things can quickly come to a head: either the individuals involved will resolve the conflict or the torment will escalate until untenable for the victim.

HOW PREVALENT IS CYBERBULLYING?

It’s somewhat difficult to designate definitive data as to how often cyberbullying occurs or to what effect, as widespread studies are only now being conducted on a phenomenon that is in perpetual metamorphosis. These are some of the more recent statistics that show cause for concern:



YouTube

In many ways, social media has created an environment very similar to the small-town scenario. While we think of the Internet as introducing us to a global stage, one that has no physical limits, most of us utilize social media as a way to interact within a small group of coworkers or friends. Similar to the grapevine gossip of small towns, it does not take long for a mean rumor to spread across the Internet—or at least across the handful of platforms your peers might interact with regularly.

2008: THE FIRST PROSECUTION OF CYBERBULLYING IN THE U.S.

It's been 10 years since a 49-year-old mother from Missouri was convicted on three misdemeanor counts in a Los Angeles federal court. Eventually acquitted (the defendant was initially found guilty of violating the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act by breaching the terms of service of the then-popular social media service MySpace), Lori Drew gained notoriety after it was revealed that she had tormented a high school classmate of her own daughter (who was thought

to be a cyberbullying victim herself) by first creating a MySpace page for a fictional boy named "Josh Evans" and then sending flirtatious messages to the young girl via the alias. At one point, "Josh" shifted tactics and began sending hateful messages—finally telling the 16-year-old that "the world would be better off without her." Case prosecutors claimed that this exchange pushed Megan Meier over the edge, resulting in her suicide.

*"There aren't options and it's impossible to get away.
Your world becomes an isolated and small place."*

— Susan Swearer, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Psychology Professor and Co-Director of the Bullying Research Network

Additionally, the "always on" aspect of digital forums has created an inescapability—again, much like living in a small town—from which victims may never find respite. In a previous era, bullies eventually tired of the torment and allowed the victim to seek shelter until the next confrontation. With many forms of social media used in cyberbullying, the words or pictures remain up even when the victim is not present.

While bullying in the cyber-realm might convey the feeling of a smaller, confined area from which there is no escape, the Internet has lifted most all boundaries for the bully. Far less frequently is there an opportunity for a teacher or boss to intervene and declare a stop to the petty attacks, often they have no idea the exchange is even occurring. The antagonist is no longer roped in by restrictions of proximity either. Previously, one needed to be at arm's length or at least within earshot of the victim to strike out—now a bully can land a devastating blow anytime from anywhere with just a few taps or a swipe.

Finally, there seems to be an aspect of online anonymity that emboldens many bullies. What they would never say to someone's face is suddenly fair game when it's issued from a "safe," digital distance. This is often seen in the modern workplace. Where issues were once discussed one-on-one behind closed doors, many managers now choose to disseminate discipline via group emails. While individuals are rarely named, the readers are usually aware of the real target. Some might claim it's a learning opportunity for all, but ultimately it could be sending the wrong message.

BULLYING, CYBER-HUMILIATION AND PUBLIC SHAMING: IS THIS THE WAY TO USE TECHNOLOGY?

Modern technology has given us a great ability—the chance to communicate with more people than previously possible, all with a minimal amount of effort. Yet, the flipside to this power is a dark one, as people have found ways to abuse it. Before you blast someone online, you might want to consider whether or not your actions are appropriate.

ONLINE ACTIONS THAT ARE NEVER OKAY

- ✗ Using texts, emails or instant messages to send mean or threatening words
- ✗ Posting in a public forum information that could be construed as rumors or lies
- ✗ Uploading pictures or videos that are personal and/or embarrassing to the victim
- ✗ Pretending to be someone else online to confuse or cajole a victim
- ✗ Sharing the personal information of a victim in a public forum



Remember that simply assigning different terms to such actions does not necessarily make them right. All of the above could be considered types of public "outing," online degradation and digital torment—even when the initiator's original intent was a good one. For example, someone might resort to cyber-humiliation as a way to teach a specific individual a lesson. One might take things a step further and employ public shaming in order to set an example for others, especially when a group as a whole needs to engage in corrective behavior. Even so, the actions listed above should never be considered appropriate no matter what the purpose.

NEWER TECHNOLOGIES COULD FUEL THE FIRE

Until now, the digital age has simply given bullies access to a much larger audience to whom they can spew their hurtful message. But what happens when advancements allow bullies to go beyond just the message? Even today, everything from magazine articles to appliance ads is talking about the possibilities afforded to us by the interconnectivity of objects in our daily lives. As more and more devices, gadgets, appliances and even vehicles are equipped with network access, the greater the chance that these elements can be controlled or hijacked through the same network. Now, manufacturers and technologists want to tell you all about the positives of this interconnectivity—how outside weather sensors will tell your refrigerator to make more ice cubes because it's going to be a hot one today, or maybe they'll let your alarm clock know to go off 15 minutes earlier because of heavy rains right before morning rush hour. Sounds great, right? But what if a bully has the ability to hack into these items and wreak havoc in your or your child's life? Previously, a bully's prank arsenal might have been limited to spitballs and wedgies, but soon they could choose to turn on all your lights at 4 a.m. every day of the week or pump all the water out of your pool. As far-fetched as it sounds, the potential is there.



NOW THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

For some, the way to fight technology is with more technology. Currently, there are numerous phone apps available that have made an impact on cyberbullying—mainly by allowing children to report acts of bullying without fear of retribution (STOP!t even produces a workplace version of their app for adults on the job). One app known as *Brighten*, takes a slightly different approach and gives kids the ability to compliment each other anonymously.



The makers of the app state that the intent is to teach children the power of positive comments as an alternative to the negative remarks that can often lead to cyberbullying. Currently, only available for the iPhone, *Brighten* has had more than 1 million downloads since its release in 2015.

While the makers of these apps and the schools that use them claim a reduction in the amount of bullying both in-school and online, it's obvious that results are dependent on the participation of students—a factor that can be hard to predict.

IS DOXXING A FORM OF CYBERBULLYING?

Better known as the practice of collecting and revealing an individual's personal data and documents, doxxing has actually been around since before the Internet. But today's technology has made it easier to uncover such personal information—including one's Social Security number, voter registration and financial information—as well as to distribute it to thousands if not millions of people simply by posting it on the web. For years, doxxing has been used in the corporate and political arenas, but now more than ever individuals are suffering from this humiliating form of harassment.

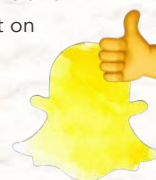
WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM DOXXING

- ✓ Make all your social media accounts private
- ✓ Avoid ever sharing details, such as age, gender, date of birth or usernames
- ✓ Never post compromising photos online



THE SOCIAL MEDIA SHIFT THAT MIGHT SIGNAL A TRANSFORMATION

Recent research by the Pew Research Center—the Washington, D.C.-based fact tank that conducts empirical social science research on social issues, public opinion and demographic trends—hints at an unexpected movement growing with teens and young adults which could have an impact on cyberbullying in the future. According to the study entitled *Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018*, 45 percent of teens admit to being online “almost constantly,” but how they spend their time is changing. While Facebook was once the leading online platform, U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 now say that Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube are their go-to apps. In fact, only 51 percent of those surveyed said they even use Facebook—down from 71 percent in 2015 when data was last collected. One possible explanation for the decline is how the age group perceives certain social media platforms. Of the 1 in 4 teens who stated that websites like Facebook have a mostly negative effect on people their age, a majority of 27 percent said the view is due to cyberbullying and rumor spreading.



DIGITAL SELF HARM

In 2013, Hannah Smith—a 14-year-old girl living in Leicester, England—began receiving vile, hurtful messages on Facebook. To her family and friends, Hannah seems to take the comments hard, becoming more withdrawn as time went on. Months later, she was found dead, having committed suicide.

EVERYONE
HATES YOU

Almost immediately, investigators looked toward the recent spate of hateful comments as their primary lead. To that end, they were right; but police soon realized that something more bizarre was behind these incidents of cyberbullying. Further investigation revealed that the hateful messages had come from Hannah. In other words, she had bullied herself.



While it might be hard to believe at first blush, the phenomenon is not that surprising in this era when more and more adolescents are living a good portion of their lives online. The “phenomenon,” a new study by Florida Atlantic University—a well-known research institution based in Boca Raton—has gathered some of the first recorded data on the topic. Similar to scratching, cutting or burning, the study showed that one out of 20 middle and high school students engage in the self-harm activity of posting self-hate content online.



YOU ARE
FAT AND
DISGUSTING

“This finding was totally unexpected, even though I’ve been studying cyberbullying for almost 15 years,” declared Dr. Sameer Hinduja, the author of the study. Child psychologist Sheryl Gonzalez-Ziegler of Denver has witnessed this growing problem among the teens she counsels, claiming that many are so fearful of being assaulted online by their peers that they hope to lessen the blow by beating their tormentors to the punch and posting negative comments first.

BOOOO

After observing the online activity of almost 5,600 students between the ages of 12 and 17, Hinduja’s researchers found that the occurrence of self-cyberbullying occurred slightly more often with boys than girls, but the reason behind their actions differed greatly for the two groups. While boys were often found to do so as a way to get attention or as a self-deprecating joke, girls more frequently indulged in this type of behavior due to emotional or psychological reasons such as severe depression.



JUST KILL
YOURSELF LOSER

WHAT’S NEXT?

It’s difficult to predict what the future holds in regards to these forms of cyber-harassment, many might readily admit they didn’t foresee technology taking us to the point we’re at right now. Some futurists warn that things will only get worse, as new technologies create new opportunities for bullying and other bad behaviors. So where do we, as a society, go from here? In a way, it has been our emphatic embracing of new technologies that has opened the door to this darker side of online interaction. Do we truly believe that we can combat or contain such appalling content with AI filters or reporting apps? There’s little doubt of our collective desire to end this repugnant phenomenon, but

it’s possible we’re looking to bring about change in all the wrong ways. While advanced tech or more regulation could facilitate better control of cyberbullying and other incidents of cyber-humiliation, we must realize that such irresponsible acts are best countered by an even greater outpouring of responsible actions.

If we are wanting to diminish the occurrence of bullying in our society while also diffusing its effect on individuals, we must each make an effort to be more responsible in how we communicate with one another while also being more accountable for how we let the words of others affect us and our lives. [IS](#)

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'Dear Food Diary, Today I Ate...' Best Apps for Food Journaling

by Alexis Bradford

Have you ever daydreamed about having a dietitian on call to help you navigate the confounding labyrinth of nutritional tenets like: "healthy eating," "dieting," "weight loss," and "meal tracking"? What's more, have you ever fantasized that this illustrious nutrition guru would offer you their expertise for free?

For most, having an esteemed dietitian at their beck and call is just that—a daydream. However, what isn't a daydream, is the convenient and economical alternative of having a preferred digital dietary resource available to you 24 hours a day. Whether you enjoy snapping photos of your food or logging your calorie consumption the old-fashioned way with pen and paper, food journaling apps are an efficient modern method of tracking your food intake throughout the day.

With so many food journaling apps to choose from, it may be difficult to narrow down the app that suits your lifestyle, personality, and nutritional goals. While modes of dieting often vary, the aims are virtually unchangeable: feel better, look better, and lose weight. Whatever your personal nutritional goals are, rest assured that there is an app to help make those goals achievable.

Here is the *skinny* on the best food journaling apps for your individual weight loss or overall nutritional improvement goals:

MyFitnessPal

This app is one of the most sought-after apps in the food diary game. The MyFitnessPal app boasts a food database comprising over two million items. Indicate your current weight, what your target weight is, height, age, activity level, exercise regimen, and how many pounds you would like to shed per week, and the MyFitnessPal app will assist you with staying on track toward your target weight loss goal. In addition to logging what you eat and what you've had to drink throughout the day, this app tracks your fitness regimen and provides support and motivation from fellow users. The *MyFitnessPal app* is available for free through iTunes and Google Play.

Fitocracy Macros

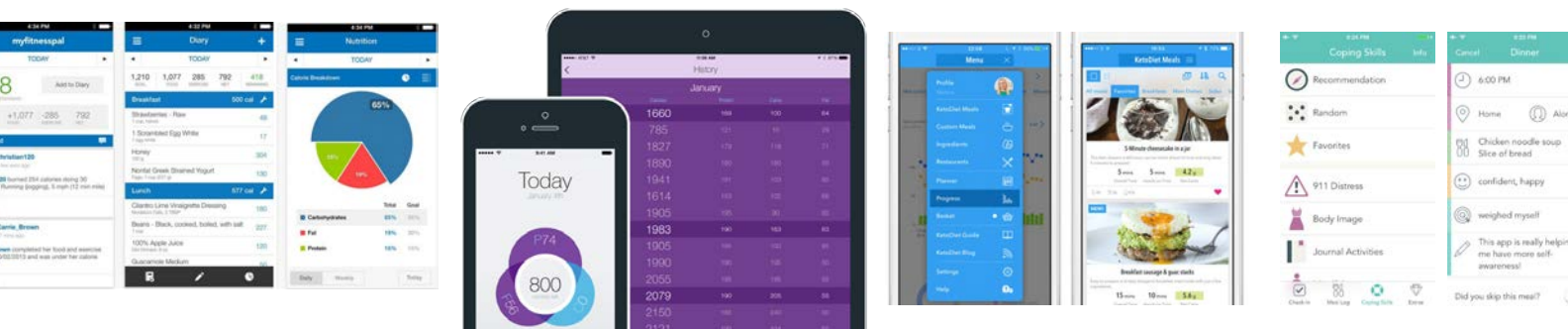
Macros is shorthand for *macronutrients*—specifically the nutrients that your body needs in copious amounts (hence the term "macro"). Carbohydrates, fat, and protein are the holy trinity of the macro diet. So, whether your journaling focus is on carbs, fat, or protein this app will tell you how much of each nutrient you need. The Macro Coach feature will also scan barcodes on food packages to find the nutrition facts of your favorite foods for you. The *Fitocracy Macros app* is available for free through iTunes.

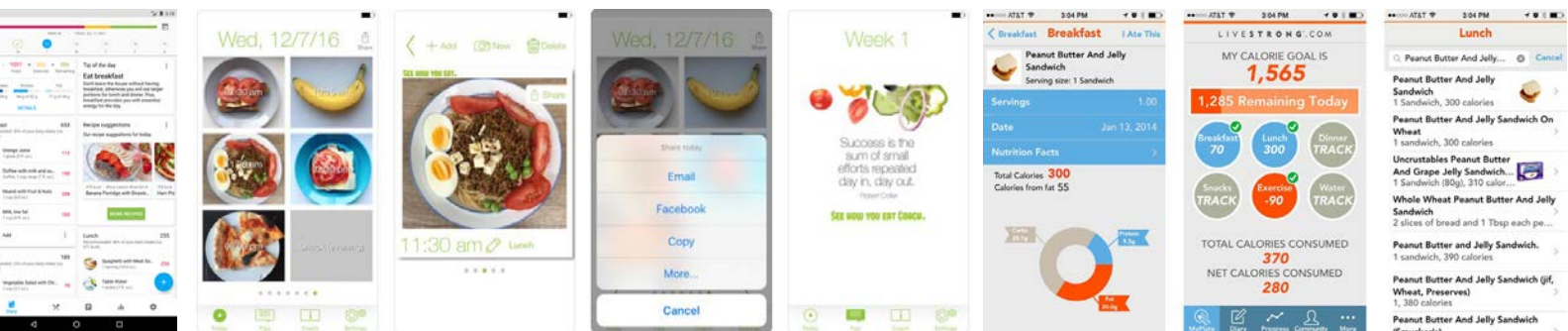
Keto Diet Meal Plan

Weight loss is not the only reason the high-fat, low carb ketogenic diet is touted as a diet actually worth its weight in results (no pun intended)—research also suggests that the ketogenic diet may be an effective regulation tool for improving your mental health by decreasing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and ADHD. The Keto Diet Meal Plan app provides you with meal plans within your carb limits. An expedient and convenient feature of this app takes care of the tedious carb-counting work of traditional dieting for you. The *Keto Diet Meal Plan app* is available for free through iTunes.

Rise Up

Perhaps dieting, exercise, and better nutrition are not the only concerns you have about keeping close tabs on how much you eat. Body image is also a fundamental concern of those seeking to improve their health. Rise Up is an app designed with eating disorder sufferers in mind. Its basic principles of self-monitoring are derived from tenets of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). In addition to logging your meals, you can add distinct details like: the location of where you ate, whom you were with, and your mood at the time you ate. The *Rise Up app* is available for free through iTunes and Google Play.





Yazio

Whether your desire is to lose weight, acquire more muscle, or to just feel healthier, this app caters to the versatility of the average individual's weight loss goals. Utilize this app to track your daily activities and manage your food diary. A built-in bar code scanner enables you to efficiently search for the food you want to include in your log. *The Yazio app is available for free through iTunes and Google Play.*

See How You Eat

The rise of social media colossuses like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook has taught us two basic truths: (a) selfies are an indelible feature of the modern digital landscape and (b) as a runner-up to taking pictures of themselves, people love snapping and sharing photos of food. The See How You Eat app was designed with visual learners in mind. Using this app, you can see at a glance all of the food you have consumed that day. Visual reminders of what you've had to eat on a given day create a compelling argument for making healthier choices. This app promotes healthy eating at regular intervals to boost energy and abate impulsive food choices that can wreak havoc on your long-term nutritional goals. *The See How You Eat app is available for free through iTunes and Google Play.*

MyPlate

In addition to an online food diary, this app promotes a comprehensive database of 625,000 foods and 1,500 fitness-related items that enable users to monitor their daily calorie consumption as well as how many calories they burn. Calories can be tracked over a specified period and delineations of how those calories were acquired or burned are also provided. *The MyPlate app is available for free through iTunes.*

YouAte

This app takes the tedium, guilt, and ambiguity out of classic food journaling. YouAte encourages users to steer their focus away from traditional carb counting and calorie emphasis by simply taking a closer look at the food choices they are making.

Maintaining a food journal on this app is as convenient as snapping a photo of everything you munch on throughout the day. Reviewing snapshots of the food they eat motivates users to consistently evaluate whether the choices they're making are really helping them to achieve their goals. *The YouAte app is available for free through iTunes.*

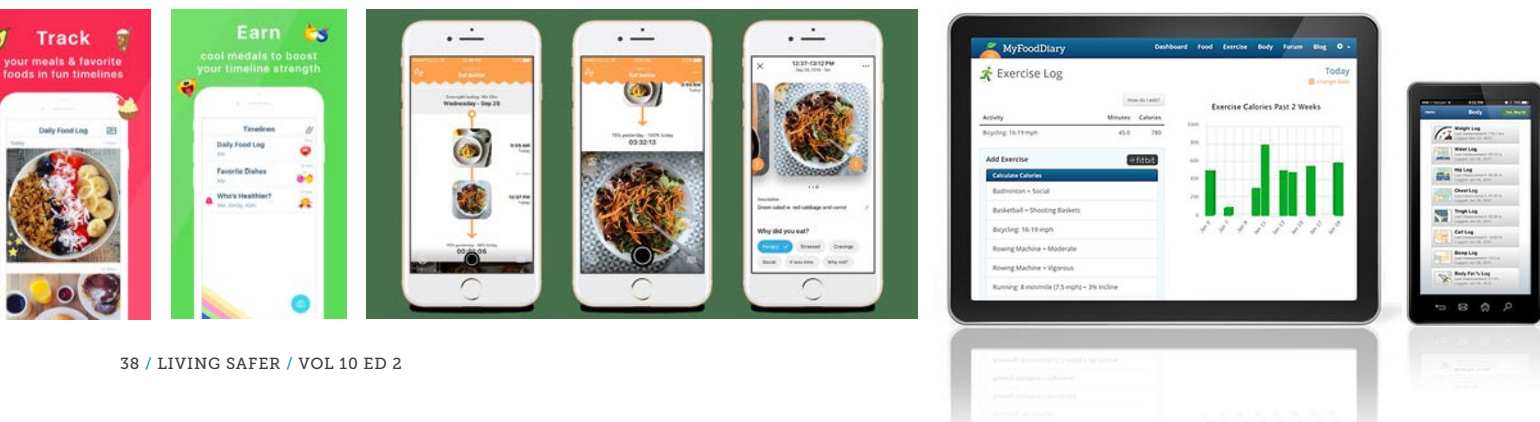
Pukapal

The Pukapal app is an imaginative and interactive spin on the traditional food diary app. Users of this app "feed their puka" by documenting and sharing their meals and by liking their favorite dishes. Pukapal allows users to upload photos of their food to their timeline, add captions, and earn rewards by sharing and inviting friends to join. This collaborative app also offers weekly timeline suggestions to motivate and inspire users to continue tracking their culinary adventures. *The Pukapal app is available for free through iTunes.*

My Food Diary

This app takes a holistic approach to helping you achieve your weight loss goal. My Food Diary features seven different methods for logging meals and a vast database of 80,000 expertly compiled food items. If you wish to share your account with a spouse, friend, or significant other you can also log recipes that you and your companion commonly make. My Food Diary provides color-coded nutrition reports daily and you can even assemble your own graphs using personally selected data. *The My Food Diary is available for free to members of the MyFoodDiary website.*

So, whether you are a snap-and-post food journal enthusiast or more of the meticulous and traditional recordkeeper variety—maintaining a log of what you eat just got easier, more convenient, more modern, and more fun with the creation of these vastly popular food tracking apps. Nutritional goals may vary from person to person, but rates of achieving long-term success can grow exponentially when you have resources and collaborative feedback at your fingertips. [IS](#)



Do Insta Pot Pressure Cookers Reduce the Nutritional Benefits of Foods?

by Bret Hanna



Insta Pot pressure cookers are the current cooking rage for all types of foods. Insta Pots are able to increase the boiling point of water over conventional cooking methods such as slow cookers, ovens and stove-tops, which—along with the steam and pressure generated by the cooking process—reduces cooking times. Shortened cooking times means pressure cookers are more energy efficient than other cooking methods. Also, since steam can't escape pressure cookers, foods do not dry out during the cooking process. To the contrary, the pressure that develops in the cooker forces the steam moisture created during the cooking process into the food. While the process sounds great, the first question most people ask is whether pressure cookers destroy food nutrients during the cooking process.

It is a fair question, since food is cooked so much quicker with pressure cookers. Many think the faster cooking times is because high heat is utilized, and that high heat has negative effects on nutrition retention as it may with broiling or grilling. But as noted above, the quicker cooking times are the result of the higher water boiling point of pressure cookers along with the steam and pressure generated in the cooking process. So, pressure cookers actually use lower heat to do the cooking, but the cooking is faster.

The reality, however, is that all methods of cooking reduce nutrient levels in food, but all methods are not equal when it comes to how much those levels are reduced. According to a study done in the mid-90s, pressure cooking is the best method for nutrition

retention with a general rate of 90 to 95 percent. The belief is that shorter cooking times translates to less nutrient depletion. Steaming and roasting methods come in second, with a range of 50 to 90 percent retention. Boiling foods is the worst for nutrition retention, with a range of 40 to 75 percent.

Although the general rule is that all cooking methods reduce nutrient levels to some extent, studies show that pressure cooking increases certain levels of nutrients in cooked foods. For instance, the antioxidant levels in quinoa shoots up 33 percent over uncooked quinoa, and 18 percent over other cooking methods. Pressure cooking also leads to more retained proteins in meats like chicken.

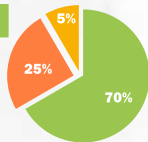
As an aside, pressure cooking offers benefits other than just nutrient retention. Pressure cooking potatoes and letting them cool actually converts starches to a "resistant" form that the body uses like fiber, resulting in lower fats and blood cholesterol. Pressure cooked foods are also more flavorful, because they contain more nutrients and vitamins. Additionally, pressure cooking kills bacteria that causes food borne illnesses. Finally, pressure cooking allows for safe cooking of frozen meats.

And last but not least, a pressure cooking pro tip: There is some evidence that nutrients can be transferred from food being cooked to the liquid it is being cooked in during the cooking process. As such, using the liquid from the cooking process in the final dish maximizes nutrient content of the meal. Think gravies, sauces and the like! [IS](#)

10 Questions:

THE KETO DIET

by Jared Smith



What is the Keto Diet?

The keto diet is a meal plan that consists of up to 80 percent fat and little to no carbohydrates. Essentially one trains the body to burn fat for fuel as opposed to carbohydrates. The process by which the body burns fat for fuel is known as ketosis.

What are the purported benefits of a Ketogenic Diet?

In theory, there are many benefits of a ketogenic diet, which include but are not limited to: weight loss, decreased acne, lower bad (LDL) cholesterol, lower blood pressure, better insulin control, improved mental focus, increased energy, and normalized hunger. It may also improve epilepsy in children.

How to do it:

To reach ketosis, one should strive to limit their carbohydrate intake to less than 35 grams of total carbs per day. One must also restrict their protein intake, as too much protein can result in lower levels of ketosis. For weight loss purposes, one should eat approximately 0.7g protein per pound lean body mass per day. In addition, one should drink approx. one gallon of water per day and exercise 20-30 minutes per day.

What can I eat?

To reach ketosis, one should eat a diet rich in unprocessed meat, seafood, natural fat sauces, vegetables grown above ground as these have fewer carbohydrates, high-fat dairy, nuts and berries. One will want to avoid foods full of sugar and starch such as: bananas, potatoes, pasta, bread, rice, beer, candy bars, doughnuts, soda and juice.

What can I drink?

One should primarily drink: water, coconut water, tea, coffee, some vegetable juice, some milk and the occasional glass of wine. One should avoid: soy milk, orange juice, soft drinks, energy drinks, smoothies, beer, vitamin water, sweetened coffee drinks, Kombucha, ice tea and milkshakes.

How to tell if you're (in ketosis) doing it right:

Individuals who have purportedly reached ketosis have reported that while in a ketogenic state: the frequency at which they urinate increased, they developed dry mouth and bad breath, and they experienced a reduction in hunger levels and an increase in their level of energy.

What to expect at first:

In order to burn fat for fuel, one's body must transition and create the proper enzymes. This transition period is known as "keto flu" because individuals have reported grogginess, nausea, and headaches for a period of one to two weeks.

Should you do it?

If your doctor gives you the green light, then sure, go for it. Be cautioned however, that although one may experience rapid weight loss while in a ketogenic state, they are likely to gain the majority of that weight back very quickly if they ever deviate from the keto diet, as much of the weight that is shed tends to be water weight. It can also be very difficult for one to consume proper nutrient levels while ingesting so many fats and so few carbohydrates. Therefore, to be prudent and safe, one may consider getting a dietitian involved.

Dangers/Side Effects

Common side effects of the keto diet include, but are not limited to: reduced physical performance, constipation, hair loss, indigestion, gallstones, heart palpitations, cramps and what has been termed the "keto rash."

Is the Keto Diet sustainable in the long-term?

Most agree that the keto diet is best reserved for a short-term weight loss remedy and that it is impractical and perhaps entirely unsustainable over long period of time. As is true of many diets, what suits Hollywood stars in preparation for a film is not practical or sustainable by the average person. [IS](#)



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Do You Have a Will for Your Family? You Should.

by Chad McCoy

So have you ever thought about what happens when you die? No, I don't mean the "BIG QUESTION" about afterlife; I mean the practical question of "What's going to happen with my stuff? What about my kids?"

Most states have a set of "default" laws—called the laws of intestacy—that govern the flow of real property (i.e., land) and personal property when a person dies. However, most states also have a set of laws based loosely on an ancient English law called the Statute of Wills that allows you, to some extent, to control the flow of real and personal property on your own.

Such control usually means it's a good idea to put some consideration toward how your will should be structured. To start the process, I always like to first draw a family tree and then—and here is the morbid part—start "killing" people and see where the property and money goes. If you have children, you will very quickly see that your kids might end up owning a lot of property at a very young age if you were to die prematurely.

To prevent 18-year-olds from becoming rich overnight, I suggest you think about creating a simple trust in your will. With a trust, you get to choose a competent adult to be in charge of your money and saddle them with the legal obligation to take care of your kids' financial needs with that money. It's important to choose someone you can trust, and it's also important to plan for the future by choosing a number of alternative trustees in case your first choice passes away before you.

A trust also offers flexibility and control. For example, with a trust in your will, you can leave money for the benefit of your children until they turn 25 years old.

Or, you could leave it in a trust until they get a college degree or maybe even until they accomplish some other task like climb Mount Everest. In other words, you can incentivize your children and make sure that you are not simply leaving money behind that will be consumed. I frequently draft wills that leave the money in trust until the child is 25 or earns a college degree—whichever occurs first.

Another consideration is who would you choose to be guardian of your children? This will be the person who is in charge of where they live, and it can be someone different from the trustee in charge of the money. Obviously, you will want to choose someone that you feel comfortable with, will take good care of your kids, and has the room, the means and the willingness to do so.

Finally, you should think about who will be in charge of your will—the person that will serve as the executor or executrix. They do not have to be a beneficiary and do not have to be related. In fact, it may be better if they are not.

So, before you hire an attorney to draft your will, ask yourself the following questions:

- 1 What do I own?
- 2 What do I want to happen to it when I pass?
- 3 Would I want my kids to have it all at a young age, if not, at what age or stage of life?
- 4 Who will be in charge of my child's money?
- 5 Who will have custody of my children.
- 6 Who will be in charge of my will and make sure my wishes are done? [IS](#)





Is Screen Time Affecting Your Kids' Mental Health?

by Florence J. Murray

Being in front of a screen is hard to avoid in today's world. Cellphones, computers, televisions, and game consoles have become ubiquitous in our daily lives. Social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram—has begun to consume children and teens.

It is important to understand how this shift in how we spend free (and work) time can affect our well-being. For example, studies have shown that children who spend too much time in front of a screen often exhibit signs of depression, bipolar disorder, or ADHD. But when given corresponding treatments like therapy and medication, these treatments fail to work and the behavior continues. What many of these children have in common is the amount of time they spend looking at electronic devices. Too much screen time leaves young brains overstimulated, which causes trouble sleeping and can lead to mood and behavior problems, even in the absence of a mental health disorder. This can lead to a misdiagnosed need for therapy or medication, increased problems between children and parents, and lower grades in school.

Although spending too much time in front of screens can mimic mental health problems, some children do in fact develop mental disorders. "Facebook depression" has become a common term, which refers to when someone compares their own life to the perceived lives of others based on their Facebook posts. This can

be applied to all social media platforms. Often times this can also lead to low self-esteem. If low self-esteem is not taken care of, it can lead to feelings of isolation and depression, which adolescents are already at a higher risk of suffering from.

Limiting how much time a child is on social media sites or in front of screens, generally, is very important. Experts in child development recommend that children be limited to about two hours of screen time a day if possible. If a child requires more than two hours a day, electronic "fasts" are helpful to reduce the potential negative effects. Parents can also focus on face-to-face contact, exercise, and spending time outside.

Taking away electronic devices or limiting their use may be difficult at first. A child can easily become addicted to being in front of a screen and will fight it at first. But once they get used to a routine of spending less time with their devices, it will become much easier for them to step away. Taking breaks also allows parents to observe if any symptoms of a mental disorder are reduced or eliminated.

Long hours staring at a computer, phone, or television screen is not good for anyone, especially children who are at a higher risk of overstimulation to their brains. Taking a step back is vital to making sure we don't allow the internet age to affect our children's mental health. [IS](#)

Is Homework Good for Children?

by Hillary Rinehardt

Every school year, parents are faced with the same dilemma, asking themselves, “what is the point of homework, and is it even good for my kid(s)?” Some parents have been lamenting the amount of homework that their young children are given on a nightly basis, but it may not be changing any time soon.

The homework standard, as is, calls for 10 minutes of homework per grade level, asking third-graders to spend about a half hour on homework per night, and high school seniors will average almost two hours of homework per night—according to the National Education Association. Elementary schools across the United States have been implementing policies calling for extra time in school to allow for children to spend more time with their families at night. However, according to research from a 2006 study by Duke University psychology professor Harris Cooper, there is a positive correlation between homework and student achievement—those students who do more homework are often better in school, this correlation increasing as students age through adolescence.

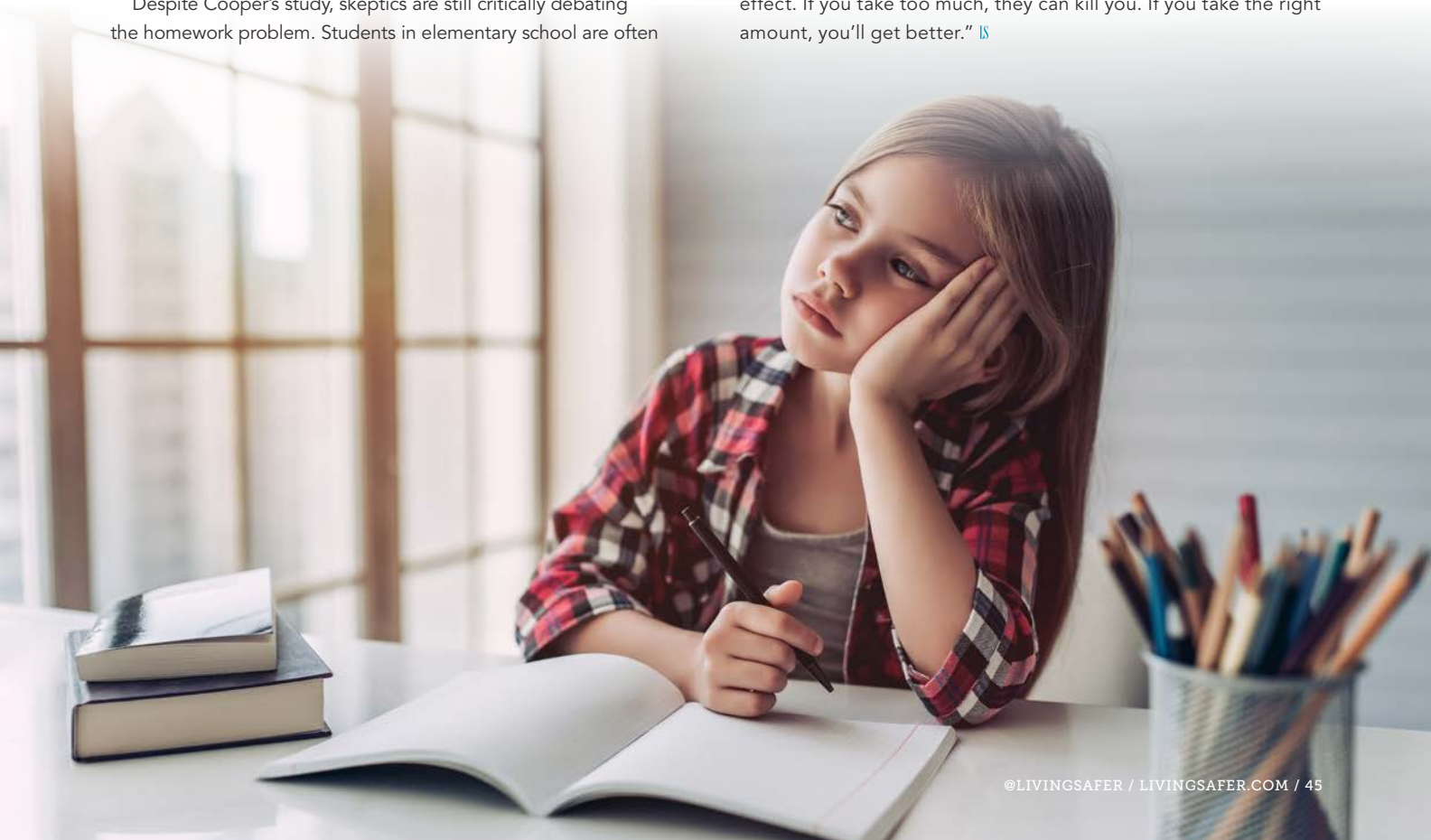
Homework is also thought to improve study habits, attitudes toward school, independent problem solving, self-discipline, and spark a creative inquisitiveness—beginning with young children. Forming good study habits early with younger children can often be a hassle, however, a small amount of homework is useful for all students. Without doing homework, children may not be prepared for the course load of later courses through high school and higher education.

Despite Cooper's study, skeptics are still critically debating the homework problem. Students in elementary school are often

unpredictable, and the burning question is: “does homework cause high achievement, or do high achievers do more homework?” In fact, a *TIME Magazine* cover in 1999 read, “Too much homework! How it's hurting our kids, and what parents should do about it.” The article went on to point out that the push for homework in the U.S. began in 1957 when the space race pushed our country to pursue academic competitiveness on a global scale.

Internationally, the United States stands in the middle of the pack on science, math, and reading scores, and this is somewhat caused by the shorter school days and shortened academic years. United States schools often are eight hours per day and 180 days per year. In order for the United States to remain competitive on a global scale, homework allows teachers to use their time in class efficiently. Homework is used by teachers to assess students' prior knowledge and current learning—if a concept is too difficult, as reflected by students' homework, teachers are then able to take more time to slow down the lesson for the group. On the contrary, if students seem to be excelling at a skill, which is exemplified in their homework, teachers can then move on to other skills.

This is all to say that parents do have a right to be concerned about the amount of homework that their children are given per night, but a good way for parents to think about homework, according to TIME.com, is “the way you think about medications or dietary supplements: If you take too little, they'll have no effect. If you take too much, they can kill you. If you take the right amount, you'll get better.” [1](#)



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Are You Prepared for a Hurricane?

by Tammie McKay

If we learned anything in 2017, it's that you can never be too prepared for a hurricane. Residents of Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico will be reclaiming their lives for some time. As of press time, Puerto Rico is still in dire straits.

Another hurricane season is now upon us, and peak times (mid-August and late October) will be here before we know it. Most don't think a hurricane can affect them, and certainly don't think about preparing they're scrambling to do so days before impact. The time to prepare is now; it only takes one storm to change a life or a community.

Here are a few safety precautions you can take:

Evacuation Plan – Develop, discuss and practice an emergency plan with your family. If you own a pet, be sure to include a plan for them. If you are in an evacuation zone, be certain you know where you'll go and how to get there.

Supplies – Assemble an emergency supply kit. All kits should include non-perishable food, water, batteries, weather radio, medications, first-aid kit, hygiene items, change of clothes, candles, lighter/matches, flashlight and back up chargers. Turn refrigerator and freezer dials to the coldest settings, and avoid opening the doors to help preserve food. Be sure to keep cash on hand for gas, if power is out, gas stations may only accept cash payments.

Insurance Checkup – Check with your insurance company on what your current homeowners/renters policy provides. Remember, flood insurance must be obtained separately and in advance. Keep a copy

of your insurance documents with you. Having video or photos is an easy and quick way to document your home's condition and personal belongings.

Prepare Your Home – There are several ways to strengthen your home against strong winds and rising water. Before the threat, trim back trees, cover all windows, bring outdoor items inside or make sure they are secure. Unplug all appliances not being used. Most communities will offer sandbags, be sure to put them in front of all doors, including the garage door.

Protect Important Documents – Many people have safety deposit boxes for their important documents and personal items, if you do not, don't worry. A dishwasher is a great airtight alternative to protect your items.

Help Your Neighbor – Once you have secured your home and family, check in on your neighbors, as you may have an elderly couple or a single parent in need of assistance. Discuss supplies and evacuation plans. Check in after the storm passes. Working together makes a community stronger.

A hurricane can cause devastation during and long after it occurs. The ability to recover requires everyone to focus on preparedness, planning, and knowing what to do and where to go in the event of a hurricane.

Before, during and after a hurricane, remember to stay safe and make smart decisions. Do not walk on beaches, riverbanks, or in flood waters. If caught in rising water, move to higher ground. Do not hesitate to evacuate—possessions can be replaced, but lives cannot. [IS](#)



Is Your Deck Safe?

by Lara Vitiello

Over the years, a backyard deck plays host to countless summer barbecues, dinner parties, celebrations and the like. No one thinks this idyllic setting could pose a safety hazard. But the reality is home decks can collapse causing serious injury or death.

According to the North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA), deck failures have increased at an alarming rate. Between 2000 and 2008, there were at least 30 reported deaths from deck failures. Additionally, NADRA estimates that over 40,000 decks currently in use are more than 20 years old—making the existing deck inventory increasingly unsafe.

After several years of tracking deck collapse data, researchers at Virginia Tech noted the primary cause of deck collapses (upwards of 90 percent) was the connection of the deck ledger to the house made with nails only. The standard deck building guidelines have been updated in recent years to require bolts—not just nails or screws—to secure the deck ledger to the house. However, older decks may not comply with these new standards, thus posing a major safety hazard.

Over time, weathering, corrosion, moisture and the weight of occupants puts stress on the nails used to attach the deck to the house. When a deck collapses, the weight of occupants standing on top of the deck causes it to literally pull away from the house, in turn the deck flips and pins people under the collapsed decking material. Serious injuries such as broken bones, neck and spinal cord injuries, head trauma, paralysis and even death have been reported.

Before hosting your next backyard bash, have your home's deck inspected to ensure the safety of your family and friends. The NADRA suggests inspecting these 5 main areas of your deck:

Split or Decaying Wood

Using a pointed tool like an ice pick or screwdriver, probe several areas of your deck. These should include the ledger board (where the deck attaches to the house), support posts, decking boards, and railings. NADRA's rule of thumb is that if your probe easily penetrates the wood a quarter- to a half-inch without splintering the wood, decay may be present.

Flashing

Deck flashing is most critical at the point where the deck attaches to the house. At this location, you should see a continuous piece of metal between the deck and house. This connection of the deck to the house is the most common area of deck failure. The purpose of the flashing is to divert moisture and debris away from this connection. If your deck is not flashed at its attachment

to the house, consider having flashing installed by a qualified general contractor.

Loose or Corroded Fasteners

Fasteners on decks include nails, screws, bolts, or anchors. In your inspection, ensure that all screws and bolts are tight and any nail heads that have popped up should be nailed back into place. Again, the most important area is the connection of the deck's ledger board to the house. You should verify that this connection is secured with bolts, not just nails or screws.

Railings and Banisters

Three components ensure a safe railing: stability, the space between the rail components, and rail height. To check your railings, keep these code parameters in mind. The rail should be able to withstand a 200-pound force at any point along its top; the spaces in the deck railings should not allow the passage of a 4-inch ball (i.e., less than 4 inches); and the deck rail should be a minimum of 36 inches high.

Stairs

As with the deck rail, make sure the deck stair rail is stable. Check the connection of the deck stair to the deck. Look for loose wood on the steps or risers that may create a trip hazard. If the step riser (vertical part of step) is open, the opening should be less than 4 inches. As you climb the steps, move your weight from side to side to ensure that the stairs are stable. Finally, make sure the stairs are clear of planters, toys or any other objects that could be a trip hazard.

In conclusion, it's important to note that deck building codes vary greatly by state. Each state, city and municipality will have its own set of rules, guidelines and codes for existing and new decks. Always consult with your city's code enforcement officer before building a new deck or making repairs to an existing deck.

The NADRA website also offers additional deck safety tips and maintenance advice for consumers, including a detailed 10-point inspection checklist. If you aren't comfortable performing a deck inspection yourself, the NADRA website has a state-by-state directory of home inspectors who are also NADRA inspection/evaluation certified.

If you are in the market to purchase a house with a deck, make sure your home inspector performs a thorough inspection of the existing deck. And finally, if you are thinking about installing a new deck or making repairs to an existing deck, check the NADRA site for guidelines and a link to find professional deck installers in your state. [IS](#)

Easy as 1, 2, 3: How to Start A Flower Garden

by Florence J. Murray

Now that summer has arrived, exploring outside activities is a necessity. A simple way to get outside in these warmer months is by starting a flower garden. A flower garden can become a stress relief hobby, while also bringing in new colorful surroundings. It is something that can start off small and grow into something much greater. Getting started can be as easy as counting out 1, 2, 3.

No matter where the gardener chooses to build the flower bed, it is important to keep in mind that the key major factors to a garden are sunlight and water. A garden can not thrive without these two elements. Pick an area around the home that will be in the sun a majority of the day. If creating a larger garden, easy access to a watering hose is also important. This is not necessary if the gardener is able to use a watering can.

After choosing the location, it is important to prepare the bed for flowers. All weeds, grass, and any flowers previously planted there should be removed. Then make a trip to the local gardening store to purchase nutrient-rich soil. This will aid in helping the flowers have a good foundation to continue growing once they are planted.

The next step after the bed is prepared is choosing the flowers that will be planted. It is important to choose flowers that will thrive in the local region. The local gardening store will be able to assist in finding flowers that are perfect for the region. Picking

out a wide variety of types and colors of flowers will help the garden to stand out.

Once the flowers are purchased and brought home, it is time to get them planted in the garden. Start by digging holes where each plant will go. Remember to keep some distance between every plant, so their roots will have room to spread. Small plants need 6- to 12-inch deep holes. It is recommended to create all the holes first, so it will be easier to organize the flowers first and avoid digging them up if the gardener is unhappy with the order of the flower placement. Once they are all planted, begin filling in the soil around the flower. Avoid covering any leaves of the flowers, as this could prevent growth.

Care of the flowers once they are planted is very important. The garden should be watered every day unless it rains. If the area gets hit with heavy rain, it may be able to go an additional day or two without watering. This daily task not only helps the garden, but also gets the gardener out into the fresh air. While watering the garden, use this time to scan for weeds that may pop up. Removing early weeds and placing them in the trash or compost prevents weeds from continuing to grow elsewhere.

Following those simple guidelines will help get any garden started and be successful. Most importantly have fun and enjoy the time outdoors. **IS**





Clearing Up Clutter at Home and Work

by Florence J. Murray

Clutter can feel like an endless cycle in your life, both at work and in the home. Unorganized houses and work spaces fill our minds with a sense of uneasiness that can lead to stress and anxiety. It can be overwhelming and can make one feel as if the work is never done. Fortunately, overcoming that “too-much-stuff” feeling can be accomplished by doing little things, over time, to help slowly erase the clutter from your life and form good habits to break the cycle for good.

In nature, they say everything trends toward entropy—you know, chaos. Unfortunately, the same is true at home and work: Whether you simply can’t decide what stays and what goes, or you’ve assigned sentimental value to too many useless trinkets, clutter happens. Starting off slow is key to eliminating or keeping the clutter out. Start with small goals. Focus on one room at a time take an inventory of what is wanted and what serves no purpose. If you are in doubt, get rid of it.

Once you have consolidated, make sure everything has a place. When you first walk in the door, have a spot for your shoes, coats,

and backpacks. This will prevent things from becoming scattered around the house (as an added benefit, it will prevent those frantic mornings of not being able to find something). A spot for mail will also be very helpful in preventing important papers from covering your desk, or worse, getting lost.

Similar tips can be applied to work as in the home. Emails can be the biggest thing that can overwhelm us. Taking five to ten minutes at the end of each week to review unread emails can be very helpful. Delete anything that is no longer relevant and organize more important messages into folders. On your desk, create a spot for new or incoming work and a spot for completed work. This will prevent clutter in the work space and streamline your work so that you can maximize your efficiency.

Keep at it! There is never one perfect time to declutter. But doing those small things over time will create good habits and help prevent the clutter from building back up again. We can’t eliminate all the stress in our lives, and messes happen. But if we organize and stick to it, we can make our lives just a little bit easier! [IS](#)



Dos and Don'ts Cyberbullying Victims

Important instructions parents can tell their kids to follow if they are being cyberbullied:

by Brittany Monbarren

DO



Talk to an adult



Save the evidence



Block and/or report the bully



Be an ally



Report to the social platform



Protect all social accounts



Respond to the bully



Think it will go away



Bully someone else



Be ashamed



Share personal information



Retaliate

Apps to Prevent Distracted Driving in Teens

by Thomas J. Curcio

Teenagers can make mistakes, but mistakes while driving can hurt themselves and others. Here are some apps to prevent teen distracted driving. We explain the pros and cons of each.

TrueMotion/Mojo

True Motion and Mojo are apps created to help families and individuals with their driving habits. It is an app that puts the onus of one's actions while driving on themselves. TrueMotion works well with families as much like a Fitbit, it tracks your actions while driving and has you compete against your family members. This means that old saying, "Do as I say, not as I do" goes out the window. Mojo is an individual app that works with participating stores to give you incentives to drive better. The more miles you drive safely, the more points you receive to redeem in participating stores. It works the same as TrueMotion, tracking your phone activity while driving, as well as your speed. Both apps are free to download and use.

Drive Safe Mode

This app allows parents complete control over a phone through an online login and the app. It must be downloaded onto the recipient's phone and synced with the online account. The app notifies parents when the teen is driving, disabling the app, and when they have arrived. The parent can set parameters and block notifications while the teen is driving. It is completely free and efficient on battery usage.

CellControl

CellControl is a two part system comprising of an installed console behind the rear view mirror and the driver's cellphone. It is a unique program that is designed to disable only the driver's phone, leaving other passengers free to use their phones normally. It allows the user to customize what apps are blocked and it monitors and tracks your driving habits. The app and console come with a monthly subscription fee of \$7.95 or \$9.95/month.

TextLimit

A subscription based app that allows the user to set the speed at which the phone disables. Once the phone is back under the predetermined speed, the app restores all features once more. It does not distinguish between drivers and passengers and does not allow an emergency disable code. It also will not work without an Internet connection. It is \$25 a year per phone.

When it comes to your child's safety, anything is worth it. We suggest sitting down with your teen and having a conversation about their driving habits and figuring out which apps would work well within your family. Teens are the highest at risk for dying while driving distracted, and sometimes invasive maneuvers are needed to ensure their safety. ■

About the Firm

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"Through our experience, hard work, and compassion, we at Curcio Law are committed to advocating for and representing people who have been injured through no fault of their own in a genuine and professional manner while helping them rebuild their lives and making the world a safer place."

Our mission statement sets the standard you can expect from us. We pledge to treat everyone with respect and to advise to the best of our ability. Whether a contracted client or curious caller we will treat you with kindness and do everything we can to help. We will provide honest representation and will be efficient and relentless in getting you the compensation your circumstances allow. We will be diligent in understanding your needs while keeping you abreast of your situation and through our work helping you, we will hold wrongdoers accountable, adding to the common good.

With over 30 years of experience behind him, Thomas Curcio has represented the most seriously injured victims of accidents caused by negligence, including:

- Personal Injury
- Car Crashes
- Truck Crashes
- Motorcycle Crashes
- Premises Liability
- Product Liability
- Traumatic Brain Injuries

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NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

City of Alexandria
703-746-4444
www.alexandria.gov/police

Alexandria Fire and Rescue
703-746-5200
www.alexandria.gov/fire

Alexandria Animal Control
703-746-4747
703-746-4444

Fairfax County Police
703-691-2131
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue
703-691-2131
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire

Fairfax County Animal Control
703-691-2131

National Poison Control
800-222-1222

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives (ATF)**
800-800-3855

National Runaway Switchboard
800-RUNAWAY
Handicapped Helpline (24 hours)
888-820-HELP

Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273-8255

Veteran's Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)