Outside family activity gathering the family together

I used to have a real friend in China. A few years ago when he was a senior, he was addicted to a game called DOTA, he made a lot of friends and achieved many accomplishments in the game. However, as he became more addicted to the gaming world, his relationship with his family deteriorated. First, he started by skipping school to play the game. After his teacher reported this situation to his parents, his parents took him back to home and did not allow him play any video games. Then as his parents were very busy during the day and they slept early, he started to sneak out at midnight and play DOTA at internet bar all night long. He would come back home before his parents woke up and went to school without any sleep. As time went on, it was time for him to take the University Entrance Examination. But the night before his exam he spent all night playing the game, so during the exam he fell asleep. Obviously, he failed in the exam, his parents were so angry and disappointed about their child. He could not take the scolding from his parents any longer so as a result, he left his home, closed his phone and ran away for 1 month. Sometime he would sleep in the internet bar, and sometimes he would sleep in his friends’ home, such as mine. Finally, with the assistance of police, his parents found him in the internet bar when he was sleeping on a chair and sent him join the army a few weeks later.
Recently, he was discharged from the military. He video called me, then he talked about his army life and recalled the happiness that he once had with me. Additionally he never stopped emphasizing how much he regretted what happened senior year. Actually my friend’s story is a great example of how today’s technology changes family life. Even though he made a lot of friends online, it may seem that technology brings people closer. However, the technology actually elongate the emotional distance between family members, which corrupted the relationship between my friend and his family. Therefore, as there is less technology outside and more opportunities to talk with people, to solve this problem, more outside family activities can help parents to shorten the emotional distance with their children.

Allow me to explain here how to narrow it down and shows why this is the best way.

After talking with my friend, I decided to do some researches to find what type of method can help parents mitigate the effect of teenagers’ excessive use of technology and thus, shorten the emotional distance with their kids. On this point, Katherine Lee has her own opinion in the journal “How to Keep Screen Time in Check for Kids’ Health and Development”. In this journal Lee says that technology is a double-edged sword for the children, it has its own advantages and disadvantages (How). She is mainly talking about the disadvantages of technology for children, like it may interfere with sleep and cut family time (Lee). She says when we are using technology, we actually are not gathering interaction (Lee). Therefore, Lee agrees with limiting children’s use of technology and gives us some suggestions to limit technology such as limiting children’s screen time and not having a TV in the children’s room (How). So Lee’s main idea is limiting the
technology using of children, but her suggestion might be useless when they are used on the teenagers who are similar to my friend. For instance, if he’s parent’s limit his screen time or put the TV away from his room, he will absolutely sneak out to play the video game.

Therefore, maybe parents should do some emotional ways to shift children’s attention from the computer to the real life. At this moment, Dr. Jeremy Jewell has a better point of view in his journal “Improve Your Relationship with Your Child”. He makes some suggestion for the parents to improve the relationship with their kids (Jewell). According to the age of children, Jewell gives us two categories, one for the young kids and one for the teenagers (Improve). Jewell mentions some similar tips for parents in both categories, which is spending more time with their children (Improve). When they are child, Jewell emphasizes that “have a date” and play with children can improve the relationship (Improve). When they become teenagers, Jewell suggests that keeping communication with them is a good way to build a better relationship (Improve). Therefore, this journal is really about spending time with children, which will shorten the emotional distance between children and their parents. However, there might come out a question, why spending time with children is better than limiting children’s screen time?

Compare with Jewell’s idea, Lee’s idea which is limiting children’s screen time becomes weaker for shortening the emotional distance between parents and their children. As limiting is just limiting, it’s just a physical method to avoid teenagers’ addicted to technology. For some rebellious teenagers who are similar to my friend, this method is useless for shifting teenagers’ attention from the virtual world to the real world. However, spending time with children is to put more focus on the emotion. Time
is like money, it is also the limit resource. Children who like to play the video game because they cannot feel the love from their parents, but if parents try to spend their limited time on their children and not their work, children will feel the love of their parents and they will think that they are valuable to their parents. Thus, parents can shorten the emotional distance by spending more time with children because spending time involves emotion. Therefore, spending more time with children seems stronger than limiting children’s technology usage when it comes to shortening the emotion distance among family members.

However, there are tons and tons method for parents to spend time with children, like playing video game together, go shopping with family. So what is the best way to shortening the emotional distance? In this image, which shows a family gather in the front of TV, everyone has a controller and be concentrate on the game. It seems that parents spend time with their children and their relationship are great. However, the unobvious part in this image is more important, everyone on the image is only focus on the TV and care about winning or losing but barely talking to each other. The reason why the talking is so important is shown in the article “The Flight from Conversation” by Sherry Turkle, which argues that people are more and more rely on technology but ignore the face-to-face communication with each other (334-337). As the technology connection is not the real communication, Turkle states that technology cannot be the substitution of face-to-face communication (335). So Turkle’s concept is talking is important because as
she says, face-to-face communication can teach people to be patient, and also, it can teach people how to talk with themselves and the skill of self-reflection (Turkle 336), in her opinion, communication technology isolates people from others by its lack of emotion comparing to that of face-to-face communication (Turkle 337). Therefore, because they are barely talking to each other in the image, they actually are gathering physically but not emotionally. To be more specific here, the emotional distance still cannot be closer by inside family activity such as playing video game together.

Therefore, for finding the best way to shorten the emotional distance between family members, Ramon B. Zariskie and Bryan P. McCormick have a better point of view in their academic journal “The influences Of Family Leisure Patterns on Perceptions of Family Functioning”. In this academic journal, Zabriskie states that family members spend time with each other can make the “emotional bonding” within the family be better (281). He says spending time in everyday family leisure activities, such as playing board games and playing in the yard, all these kinds of low-cost activities can shorten the distance between parents and children (Zariskie 283). In this journal, Zabriskie thought outdoor family activity is the best choice for closing the emotional distance within family members, because with its changing environment, it provide opportunities for interaction among members (282). In other words, by changing the environment from inside to the outside, there will be less opportunities to touch the technological things. As more interactions happen, there will be more communications among members when they doing the outdoor family activity. What’s more, because the qualities of outdoor activity include “perceived freedom, intrinsic reward, happiness, pleasure, humor, and playfulness”, it not only reinforce attachments of family members,
but also keep provide the new sources for increased “family cohesion and bonding” (Zariskie 282). To be more specific here, members will be gathered emotionally by the outside family activity. The meaning of being gathered emotionally is because outside have so many views that inside don’t have, such as lakes and mountains, and those amazing views will inspire people to share the emotion with others. Therefore, from the analysis of the image, if the inside family activity cannot shorten the emotional distance among family members, then outside family activities will changes family relationship to a better way and finally, the emotional distance will become shortened by the influence of outside family activities.

After the video call, I recalled how busy his parents were. For making my friend and his little sister have a better life, his parents usually go out early and come back to sleep immediately by the busyness of working, even in the weekends. So he was barely talking with his parents, which caused him to indulge in the virtual world, the virtual world gave him the communication that he did not have with his parents. If his parents spent more time on him, I think he would not be deeply influenced by video games. If his parents organized many kinds of outside family activities like go shopping or hiking, he would not only pay attention on the video game but pay more attention on the emotion between him and his parents. To go even further, he would not have fallen asleep during his exam and would not have gone to military school. Therefore, a question appears here, what would we figure out the best outside activity?
Citation

Image. http://thekindtips.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/6a00d83451e32769e2015392e51c1d970b-800wi.jpg


