

# Life Talk™ News 13

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(Suggestion: print for a complete record) ©Izabella Little

– Action today changes tomorrow –

## Join the Life Talk Tug-of-War



### CONTENTS:

#### - TUG-OF-WAR

-Chat rooms: fun or dangerous?

-“Kiddy Bubby”

-Reporting child porn

- Cyberbullying

-The ARA & teen alcohol

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To subscribe

Panel members

Life Talk website

Books

### FORUM BACKGROUND

The Life Talk Forum aims to: create awareness, highlight areas that can make a positive difference to the lives of adolescents and parents, help to facilitate communication, and create happy and fulfilled youth guided by sound values.

**NEWSLETTERS 1 – 12 COVERED:** clubs; a drug dealer's alert to parents; cell phones; teen drinking; pocket money; hubbly bubby; porn; chewing tobacco; fake IDs; communication; discipline & boundaries; depression; Grade 8 hiccups; sexual activity; self-mutilation; eating disorders; self-esteem; bullying; sexual abuse; ADHD; EMO; subject choices; MXit; divorce; ice-spiking with 'eye drops', head injuries; cults; 'rape me' games and helpful reading. (You can download them from [www.lifetalk.co.za](http://www.lifetalk.co.za))

### THE “TUG-OF-WAR” – LET’S ALL PULL HARD!

The challenges faced by our adolescents and parents have created a tug-of-war (above picture) where aspects such as alcohol, drugs, bullying and peer pressure are pitted against values, responsibility, wise choices and other positives. If we don't all join in and pull, too many of our children are being dragged into some of the very tough (and avoidable) challenges and dangers.

**Life Talk** recently launched the “Tug-of-War” – a countrywide awareness-building initiative that tackles the challenges and explores proactive solutions.

The aim is to galvanize all families, schools, corporates, the media and society into action. It's about gearing ourselves to be informed and proactive, and to ensure that as a nation we win this crucial “tug-of-war” that we are engaged in.

In addition to being a **Subscriber**, you can also be a **Supporter** or **Sponsor**:

**Supporter:** This entails: promoting the initiative within your school, company, community or church; putting a link to our website; displaying posters and stickers; hosting Life Talk talks; and other suitable ways.

**Sponsor:** This includes sponsoring specific costs of the Tug-of-War initiative, such as flyers, posters, talks, books, resources or other activities .

To succeed we need to get as many people as possible pulling on the right side.

**To join** simply go to [www.lifetalk.co.za](http://www.lifetalk.co.za) and enter your email details. We've also included more details at the bottom of this newsletter.

**-If we all pull together we'll have a hugely positive effect on our teens' world!**

### CHAT ROOMS: FUN OR DANGEROUS?

We're increasingly hearing of concerns about chat rooms, and as we work closely with Ivavar Chetty (Visionaries in Africa Foundation. and a leading international child-porn

expert) we're including an excerpt from his work:

### **What is a "chat room"?**

"A chat room provides a meeting place in the "virtual" world – cyberspace – to meet people from all parts of the world and to share interests, socialize and make new friends – but there is a dark side. Children, especially teens, are among the most consistent of visitors to chat rooms. And children, generally, are unaware of their vulnerability to abuse by the many irresponsible adults, paedophiles and child predators who haunt chat rooms seeking child victims for sexual abuse and exploitation.

"Some chat rooms have moderators who monitor discussions taking place within chat rooms to prevent abuse. However, not all chat rooms have moderators because "listening in" to conversations taking place within a chat room is considered an infringement of one's right to privacy.

"The question that springs to my mind is: why do parents allow their children to visit brothels and other places frequented by paedophiles and child predators? Probably all parents would respond, angrily no doubt, that they do not allow their children to visit such places. But that is precisely what parents allow when they equip their children with sophisticated computers and mobile cellular phones and unsupervised access to the Internet and chat rooms."

### **Why paedophiles love the Internet**

Iyavar explains: "The Internet allows paedophiles and child predators instant access to other like-minded perverts worldwide to indulge in open discussions about their sexual desires. The Internet allows them to share ideas about how to lure children and avoid falling foul of the law. By asking a few seemingly innocent questions, children may be identified and tracked down for offline sexual abuse. The three "As" – accessibility, anonymity and affordability – makes the Internet the ideal medium for "grooming" children and for identifying and tracking down potential child victims.

"It is almost impossible to know whether or not the person one is chatting with online is who or what that person claims to be – paedophiles and child predators will always pretend to be someone else in order to trap their victims into offline meetings.....



**Hi. You sound real cute!!  
How old are you and what  
do you like doing after school?**



**I am 14 and a bit of a fitness  
fanatic, I often go power lifting  
after school.**

### **Potential signs of cyber-danger:**

"A physical injury to a child will not go unnoticed, but the problem is that most parents, guardians and educators are oblivious to signs that will alert them to the fact that a child is in cyber-danger. For instance, there is need for concern that a child may be vulnerable to becoming another victim of an Internet child predator if a child:

- Spends many hours on the computer
- Shuts down the computer or closes or switches the computer screen when someone enters the computer room
- Is secretive about what he or she is doing on the Internet
- Is behaving differently to how he/she behaved before being able to access the

Internet.

- Uses the computer for school work but spends more time in chat rooms and is therefore behind with school work
- Receives many telephone calls, especially long-distance calls, from persons not known to anyone else in the family
- Does not reveal the identity of people he or she is talking to on the phone or in chat rooms
- Receives gifts from persons unknown to the family, and
- Has pictures of people, especially of the opposite sex, unknown to the family on the computer.

“Monitoring a child’s access to the Internet and social networking sites, through a computer or a mobile cellular phone is not an invasion of a child’s right to privacy or freedom of expression but a parental and constitutional obligation to protect children from harm.”

### **Tips to minimize cyber-dangers:**

lyavar says that “Simple tips to enhance a child’s online experience and minimise cyber-dangers include:”

1. A computer for a child’s use should be located in a common family room and never in a child’s bedroom.
2. Ensure that a computer for use by a child is fitted with all available safety and filtering software and that such software is regularly updated.
3. Bookmark sites that are child-safe to minimize a child’s “surfing” and mistyped URLs (a child searching for “lego” but mistypes “legs” instead will end up in hundreds of pornographic sites) and avoid sites that are not moderated to prevent such sites being used by child predators.
4. Children should be made to understand, for their own safety, exactly what online behaviour is acceptable, especially from children themselves and what online behaviour poses a danger to them.
5. A child should not have an e-mail address separate from that of the family or a parent.
6. Check telephone bills and credit card statements for unusual charges.
7. Be aware of Internet addiction – set firm time limits and rules for Internet use and enforce the time limits and rules.
8. Make sure children understand that if they should receive pictures or messages that make them feel uncomfortable or are “dirty”, they should report that immediately – and make sure such reports are forwarded to the appropriate authorities – and children be appropriately “rewarded” for contributing, in that way, to making the Internet safer for all children.
9. Children should be made to understand never to give personal information, or any information that might identify them or their location, to any one on the Internet and never to agree to meet offline any one they have met online.
10. Children should be made aware that sending pictures of themselves via the Internet or mobile cellular phones to anyone they meet online could result in more than increasing their vulnerability to child abusers lurking online – it could amount to the serious offence of creating and distributing child pornography.”

### **“KIDDY BUBBLY” & ALCOHOL LOOK-ALIKES**

When it comes to alcohol and its use by children and adolescents, we truly are in a frighteningly powerful tug-of-war. The devastating stories reported to the Life Talk Forum re-enforce how widespread and popular teen drinking and binge-drinking has become – and how many heartbreaking incidents take place. The reality is that if those teens (or younger) had not been drinking, those incidents would not have happened.

One might then assume that as a society we would be on high alert for any activities or products that might encourage young children and adolescents to pursue the drinking culture. One might also assume that bringing out a ‘cool’ alcoholic look-alike to serve to young children would be considered to be somewhat foolish.

And yet this is precisely what is now appearing in some supermarkets countrwvide.

Available overseas, and now here too, are “Kiddy Bubbly” bottles of a sparkling non-alcoholic drink that looks like Champagne, targeted at consumption by children.

It is our hope that sales of this product do not take-off, and that it will soon vanish off shelves, but in case it doesn't, we believe that urgent debate is called for.

Teen alcohol consumption is at crisis levels in many environments, and key to addressing this is the implementation of a proactive approach where young children and pre-teens are concerned. The examples they are set, by parents and by older children, and the messages they receive in the media and the stores – all these have a significant impact on their future behaviour.

We're keen to hear your thoughts about this, and any suggestions for tackling this issue, as well as the broader and critical issue of teen drinking, are greatly welcome!

## **ANTI-CHILD PORN SITE & REPORTING FACILITY**

[www.fpbprochild.org.za](http://www.fpbprochild.org.za) (drawn up by the Film and Publication Board and Iyavar Chetty) is a service that affords the members of the public with an opportunity to report, online and confidentially, any child pornography or sexual abuse images discovered accidentally on the internet. This may also include child grooming activities hosted in the chat rooms. The site also contains valuable tips on keeping children safe online, as well as covering child-related legislation and research.

## **CYBER-BULLYING**

So many reports of cyberbullying are flooding in, and far more children and adolescents are affected than many of us realize. Unlike the more traditional bullying that we might be familiar with, cyberbullying can be very subtle, is usually invisible to third-parties, and is often carried out by children who don't fit the typical profile of a bully.

The site [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org) (WiredKids Inc©) contains some excellent insights and tips and these include:

### **DIRECT ATTACKS AND HARRASSMENT:**

1. Text messaging:
  - a. Kids may send hateful or threatening messages to other kids, without realizing that while not said in real life, unkind or threatening messages are hurtful and very serious.
  - b. A teen may create a screenname that is similar to another kid's name and they may use this name to say inappropriate things to other users while posing as the other person.
  - c. Text wars are when kids gang up on the victim, sending thousands of text-messages to the victim's cell phone.
  - d. Kids send death threats and hate-mail.
2. Stealing passwords: A kid may steal another kid's password and begin to chat with other people, pretending to be the other kid.
3. Blogs are often used for posting nasty messages.
4. Pictures of the victim in compromising situations are sent by email and cell phones. (There have been a number of such cases in SA, some even resulting in suicide due to the humiliation.)
5. Internet polling by kids who run a poll in search of the “ugliest/fattest/dumbest kid”.
6. Sending porn and other obscene material.

### **WHY DO KIDS CYBERBULLY EACH OTHER?**

“Who knows why? When it comes to cyberbullying, kids are often motivated by anger, revenge or frustration. Sometimes they do it for entertainment or because they are bored and have too much time on their hands, and too many tech toys available to them. The power-hungry do it to torment others and for their ego. Revenge of the Nerd may start out defending themselves from traditional bullying only to find out that they enjoy being the tough guy or gal. Mean girls do it to help bolster or remind people of their social standing. And some think they are righting wrongs or standing up for others.”

“Because their motives differ, the solutions and responses to each type of cyberbullying incident have to differ too. Unfortunately there is no ‘one size fits all’ where cyberbullying is concerned. Even experts who understand schoolyard bullying often misunderstand cyberbullying, thinking it is just another method of bullying. But the motives and the nature of cybercommunications, as well as the demographic and profile of a cyberbully differ from their offline counterpart.”

### **TAKE A STAND AGAINST CYBERBULLYING**

“We need to recognize that few cyberbullying campaigns can succeed without the complacency and help of other kids. If we can help kids understand how much bullying hurts, how in many case words can hurt you, fewer may cooperate with the bullies. They will think twice before forwarding a hurtful email, or visiting a cyberbullying “vote for fat girls” site, or allowing others to take videos or cell phone pictures of personal moments or compromising poses of others.

“Martin Luther King Jr once said that ‘in the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends’. We need to teach our children not to stand silently by while others are being tormented. While it is crucial that we teach them not to take matters into their own hands (and perhaps become a ‘vengeful angel’ themselves) they need to come to us. And if we expect them to trust us, we need to be worthy of that trust.”

“We need to teach our children that silence, when others are being hurt, is not acceptable. If they don’t allow the cyberbullies to use them to embarrass or torment others, cyberbullying will quickly stop. We will have helped create a generation of good cybercitizens, controlling the technology instead of being controlled by it.”

### **WHAT’S THE PARENTS’ ROLE?**

[www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org) suggests that:

- “Parents need to be the one trusted place kids can go to when things go wrong online and offline.
- Parents need to be supportive during this time. You may be tempted to give the ‘sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you’ lecture, but words and cyber attacks can wound a child easily and have a lasting effect. These attacks follow them into your otherwise safe home and whenever they go online. And when 700 million accomplices can be recruited to help target or humiliate your child, the risk of emotional pain is very real, and very serious. Don’t brush it off.
- Let the school know so the guidance counsellor can keep an eye out for in-school bullying, and for how your child is handling things. You may want to notify your doctor, family counsellor or clergy for support if things progress. It is crucial that you are there to provide the necessary support and love. Children have committed suicide after being cyberbullied, and in Japan one young girl killed another after a cyberbullying incident. Take it seriously.
- Parents also need to understand that a child is just as likely to be a cyberbully as a victim of cyberbullying, and can often go back and forth between the two roles during one incident. They may not even realize that they are seen as a cyberbully.
- Your actions have to escalate as the threat and hurt to your child does.
- If there is any indication that personal contact information has been posted online, or any threats made to your child, you must run to your local law enforcement agency.”

For more information, or if you suspect that your child may be a victim or a bully, see [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org) .

### **THE ARA’S ALCOHOL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

The ARA (industry association for responsible alcohol use) is doing some great work in alerting parents and teens to the harmful consequences of alcohol use by teenagers. They recently launched an excellent booklet “Teenagers & Alcohol” and it is available for free from many schools, at Life Talk talks, and can also be downloaded off [www.ara.co.za/projects/teenagers-alcohol-brochure](http://www.ara.co.za/projects/teenagers-alcohol-brochure) .

The ARA have also been running a thought-provoking TV ad campaign that highlights the impact that parents' examples and behaviour have on their children. The ads show how parental drinking and subsequent behaviour impacts on children.

The ARA have generously sponsored Sally Thorp who now runs Life Talk's Joburg office, as well as Anna de Sousa who has joined the Life Talk team in KZN. This has greatly enabled the accelerated roll-out of the Tug-of-War initiative and key alcohol and other awareness-building activities.

## **THE TUG-OF-WAR – A VITAL INITIATIVE!**

As mentioned on page 1, we really are engaged in a tug-of-war with many of the crucial issues, threats and challenges – and we have to pull together if we're to have any influence on the world our children enter.

**EVEN OUR “STRONGEST” TEENS ARE OFTEN AT RISK.** The reality is that: teen binge-drinking is spreading, drug use is escalating, sexual activity starts at ever younger ages, school bullying and violence is increasing, depression and teen suicides are at worrying levels, divorce breaks families apart at an unprecedented rate, peer pressure is intense, crime is stressful, 8-year olds are viewing porn in school playgrounds, values often get sidelined, and the list goes on... Those of us pulling against these challenges, and for: values, wise choices, responsibility (and other key aspects) find ourselves in a daunting position.

**If you worry about what your children are exposed to, do you ever ask:**

- How do we prepare our children (and ourselves) for all these challenges?
- How can we help to create a world that's safer and more focused on: values, respect, self-discipline, communication, and sound choices and decisions?

The Tug-of-War initiative aims to do just that.

**If we all pull together, we can make a huge difference to our children's world.**

## **HOW DO YOU JOIN THE TUG-OF-WAR?**

- a. **If you're not already a Life Talk subscriber, sign-up now** (free) on [www.lifetalk.co.za](http://www.lifetalk.co.za).
- b. **Forward this email** to every parent, grandparent, educator and any potentially interested person you know – and encourage them to join. For the initiative to succeed we need as many people “pulling” as possible!
- c. **Invite any high-profile people you may know** (media, business, government, religious leaders, or others) to lend their support to the initiative.
- d. **See our website for other ways of being involved.**

## **HOW WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM JOINING?**

- Joining the initiative will help you to be proactive in preparing your children for the challenges of adolescence (and adulthood);
- You'll receive current information and advice at no cost;
- You'll unleash your power (replacing worry and helplessness with action and results); and
- You'll become part of building a society where values, positive attitudes and successful choices are part of our youth's future.

**TELL EVERYONE ABOUT IT – GET THEM TO JOIN!**  
**ACTION TODAY CHANGES TOMORROW!**

## **TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE FORUM (FOR FREE):**

Click on **TUG-OF-WAR** or **FORUM** on [www.lifetalk.co.za](http://www.lifetalk.co.za) and enter the **details**. If you'd like past newsletters, you can download them off the **FORUM** page.

## PANEL MEMBERS & CONTRIBUTORS

Our panel of contributors includes:

**Thomas Burkhalter.** A leading psychologist and co-author of *Life Talk for Parents*, Thomas has two practices, focuses on: children, adolescents, parents, adult psychotherapy and couples therapy, and is case conference consultant at the Parent and Child Counselling Centre(NGO).

**Sean Semple.** Therapist and counsellor specialising in marriage, family, depression and trauma issues.

**Sally Thorp.** Full-time on Life Talk issues, Sally gives talks and runs workshops and also focuses on the area of building healthy self-esteem and equipping children and teens with tools to face life with optimism & self-reliance.

**Izabella Little Gates.** Internationally published author of the best-selling *Life Talk* books. She runs the Forum, is a regular guest on radio and TV programmes about teens and parenting, gives talks, and continues to write.

**Liz Dooley.** Director and Counsellor at FAMSA (Family Life Centre) - 28 years experience as a social worker/counsellor specializing in family and marital relationships and parenting skills, youth and individual counselling.

**Anna de Sousa.** Social worker and counsellor, specialising in children and parenting issues, now full-time on Life Talk issues.

To utilise any of the panel member's services, email [forum@lifetalk.co.za](mailto:forum@lifetalk.co.za)

**PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO EVERYONE**

The FORUM email address is: [forum@lifetalk.co.za](mailto:forum@lifetalk.co.za)

The Life Talk™ Forum is endorsed by:  
FAMSA, the CIE, the ARA, KHULISA (crime prevention initiative)  
Retrouvaille, Johannesburg Parent and Child Counselling Centre and  
many schools and other organisations

For more about the Tug-of-War, the *Life Talk™* books, or the Forum visit:

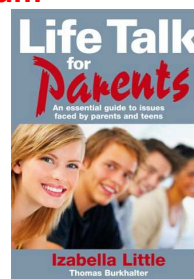
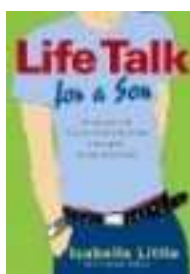
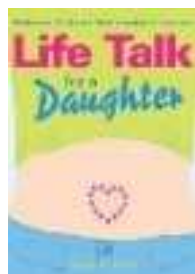
**[www.lifetalk.co.za](http://www.lifetalk.co.za)**

*Life Talk for a Daughter* and *Life Talk for a Son* are a toolkit of tips and guidelines for teens and young adults.

*Life Talk for Parents* is a guide to all the issues faced by parents and teens, and it explores solutions and key areas to focus on.

The books make a great gift and are available at most bookstores, on [www.kalahari.net](http://www.kalahari.net), and internationally in: UK, Portugal, Spain and China (and soon in Arabic)

**\*\*Proceeds fund the Forum\*\***



\* \* \* Bulk orders can be emailed to: [forum@lifetalk.co.za](mailto:forum@lifetalk.co.za) \* \* \*