

Life Talk™ News 14

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– Action today changes tomorrow –

Join the Life Talk Tug-of-War



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NEWSLETTERS 1 – 13 COVERED: clubs; a drug dealer's alert to parents; cell phones; teen drinking; pocket money; hubbly bubbly; 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; chat-rooms; cyberbullying. (You can download them for free off: www.lifetalk.co.za)

CHOKING GAMES: DANGER ALERT!

We're increasingly hearing stories about adolescents playing the "choking game". In reality this is not a game – it's an act of suffocating oneself or someone to achieve a "high" without the use of drugs or alcohol – and it can end in accidental death. Some of what we've heard includes:

- "As I drove up to fetch my son I saw a group of boys standing in pairs next to the wall and each pair involved one boy squeezing the other's throat until he passed out."

- "My friends used to play this at break until one girl passed out and the ambulance took her away, we're now so scared to carry on. It feels so cool just before you lose it."

- "Many children worldwide die every year from playing some kind of choking game. It's hard to track the statistics because often the cases are reported as suicides."

The growing popularity of this "game" is highly alarming. Some kids are doing it for the "high" and others join in to be "cool" and not to be left out. Most of them don't realize the very real danger they're engaging in – and many say "it won't happen to me".

Some teens strangle each other with bare hands, some strangle themselves with a belt, scarf or rope, and others push hard on their chest. When they release the pressure they report that as the blood floods back into the brain they feel warm and happy. This feeling, according to reports, is the death of thousands of brain cells.

A feature in Time magazine (January 2010) says that it is "known by various names around the world — including funky chicken, space monkey, sleeper hold and the blackout, choking or fainting game — the activity involves applying pressure to the neck to stop the blood flow to the brain and then releasing the pressure to create a temporary sense of euphoria.

"It isn't new: medical books mention the scarf game as early as the 18th century, and deaths in Britain, Canada and the U.S. have occasionally made the headlines over the years. What is new — and frightening — is that teenagers are now uploading instructional videos on the Internet that glamourize the potentially deadly practice. "This is disturbing, highly dangerous, very risky, and the practice should be avoided at all costs," says Dr. Steve Field, chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners in London. "You can have an epileptic fit, you can go into a coma and you can die."

THE “TUG-OF-WAR”: ARE YOU PULLING?

Thousands of parents and educators have joined in the **Tug-of-War** initiative and they're being proactive in tackling the challenges faced by adolescents and parents. Aspects such as alcohol, drugs, bullying and peer pressure are pitted against values, responsibility, wise choices and other positives. If we all join in and “pull”, we can save our children from being dragged into some of the very tough (and avoidable) challenges and dangers that exist.

The aim is to galvanize all families, schools, corporates, the media and society as a whole 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.

To join (for free) go to www.lifetalk.co.za and enter your details.

We also have a **Facebook** page so look for **Life Talk Tug-of-War** on Facebook and have your say.

RANDOM DRUG TESTS: THE BENEFITS

An increasing number of schools are implementing random drug testing, and the feedback that Life Talk is receiving is extremely positive. With the new and simple tests becoming available, some parents are also now making drug-testing a policy at home.

Feedback from quite a few of the teens that we've spoken to is also very positive, with many comments such as “It's great, it gives me the excuse I need not to try drugs”. The increasing pressure on our children to try drugs is so intense, and it results in many being tempted to try, and to end up using drugs.

Knowing that they might be tested at school, or at home after a night out, not only serves as a powerful deterrent, but it also helps children to save face by saying “My folks/school does random tests so I can't risk trying anything...”.

The unfortunate reality is that no child can ever be considered 100% safe from the temptation to try drugs, so every tool can make a potentially significant difference.

DRUG SURVEY: SHOCKING RESULTS

A survey of 500 teens in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, conducted by the Anti Drug Alliance (ADA), revealed some shocking results. The ADA's findings were:

- The average age of first drug users is 14-years.
- The average amount spent weekly on drugs by teens aged 13-18 is R480.
- The most popular drugs are: cat, dagga, heroin, ecstasy, cocaine and tik.
- 56.8% had experimented with drugs in the last 90 days.
- 75.2% had experimented with drugs in the last 6 months.
- 33.6% admitted being addicted to drugs
- 21.4% had never tried drugs.

ADA's details are on www.ada.za.org

Life Talk has recently heard that the reason for the amazingly “good deals”/low prices being charged for drugs in some areas is attributed to competing foreign drug cartels that are fighting for the market-share within targeted affluent areas.

RAINBOW PARTIES

Over the past few years we've often had emails from parents asking whether “rainbow parties” were a fact or a legend. For those who are unfamiliar with the concept, this involves many girls with different coloured lipsticks giving “blow-jobs” to boys who then brag about who has the biggest range of colours on display.

When we first researched this two years ago it seemed that there were isolated incidents, but it wasn't a common occurrence. Recently, it seems that trends have changed, and just in the last few weeks we've heard a number of reports of such activities, particularly at parties in the 15-17 age group. (One's mind boggles at what “trend” we might be reporting on in a couple of years' time!)

CELL PHONES & “MY MOBILE WATCHDOG”

Technology is here to stay and whilst the benefits are numerous, there are also a number of downsides that raise concerns for parents. Stories shared with the Life Talk Forum, articles and research indicate that: children are increasingly being exposed to and have access to inappropriate material (e.g. porn) via their cell phones; they may be the victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying; and sexting and online grooming are on the increase.

Although opportunities exist for parents to limit and monitor what their children access whilst viewing television and spending time on the computer, such an option has not existed for cell phones.

In the process of being launched, My Mobile Watchdog is a form of parental control for cell phones which will enable parents to protect their young children (up to about 10-12 years of age or older if required) from the dangers associated with cell phones. To find out more, visit their website – www.mymobilewatchdog.co.za

TALKS BY SALLY THORP

Life Talk’s awareness-building initiatives include talks given at schools, companies and universities, and highly enthusiastic feedback is flooding in following a spate of talks given by Izabella Little-Gates (author of the Life Talk books and founder of the Life Talk Forum) and Sally Thorp (head of Life Talk’s Gauteng operations).

The talks and workshops cover the issues and challenges faced by adolescents, parents and educators, and they explore solutions and important areas to focus on. The audiences comprise parents (of children from toddler to young adult) and educators, and the content facilitates developing a proactive parenting approach.

Corporates are enthusiastic about the talks because “most employees are parents too, so facilitating the parenting role results in greater productivity and job satisfaction”. And the awareness, focus on solutions, and subsequent positive behaviour change can have a hugely positive impact on society, and on the world our youth are entering.

If your school or company would like to book one of Sally’s talks, she can be contacted on Sally@lifetalk.co.za or Forum@lifetalk.co.za.

CHILD TRAFFICKING (KIDNAPPING & SLAVERY)

With the 2010 Soccer World Cup almost upon us, there is growing concern regarding the vulnerability of our children to child trafficking (kidnapping & slavery). Recently circulating emails recommend the following guidelines for parents:

- Know where your children are at all times;
- If in a shopping center or other public area, make sure that you keep your eyes peeled constantly;
- Alert them to ‘stranger danger’ and ensure they know who a ‘stranger’ is;
- Buddy Bears (an organization equipping parents with information they need if their child goes missing) suggest the following:-
 - Keep on record your child’s blood type, eye and hair colour, height and weight, any scars/birthmarks or any other identifying features;
 - Note any serious allergies and/or chronic illnesses;
 - Have a recent photograph of them at all times;
 - Fingerprint their left & right thumbs and index fingers;
 - Keep a lock of hair and ensure you have a DNA cheek swab. You gather the DNA by using an ear bud to swab the inside of the child’s cheek – put this inside a bank coin bag and seal it. The sample will last for years.

All of the above information will be vital in assisting the Police with an investigation.

FUNDING FOR THE FORUM – CAN YOU HELP?

For four years the Forum was funded purely from *Life Talk* books and talks, and recently the ARA (industry association for responsible alcohol use) have generously sponsored Sally Thorp who runs Life Talk's Gauteng office. This has greatly enabled the accelerated roll-out of the Tug-of-War initiative and other awareness-building activities.

If you or your organisation would like to sponsor any of the Forum or Tug-of-War activities, your help would be invaluable! Please contact us on Action@lifetalk.co.za.

Specific aspects can be sponsored (eg posters, flyers, books, talks, stickers) or funds can be donated to cover running expenses.

Contributions can be deposited into the Life Talk account at: NEDBANK, branch 193305, account 1933 206 446, name: LIFE TALK
(Please send us an email tying up to the deposit reference so that we can thank you!)

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?

- If you're not already a Life Talk subscriber, sign-up now (free) on www.lifetalk.co.za.**
- 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!
- Invite any high-profile people you may know** (media, business, government, religious leaders, or others) to lend their support to the initiative.
- See our website for other ways of being involved.**
- Join us on **Facebook Life Talk Tug-of-War**.

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 and enter the details. If you'd like past newsletters, you can download them off the **FORUM** page.

FIND US ON FACEBOOK:

We've recently joined Facebook so become a fan and share in the discussions about relevant issues. Encourage everyone you know to sign-up – that way we can all harness the involvement and efforts of all our friends, colleagues, communities, and ultimately our greater society. To tackle these issues effectively we need to enlist the efforts of the majority of people in our country.

LIFE TALK FORUM BACKGROUND

The Forum is a free, confidential platform established in response to requests from parents and counsellors. The objective is to provide parents of teens with information and the opportunity to discuss issues and challenges that affect teens' lives, as well as providing a mechanism to enhance communication between parents and adolescents.

Founded by Izabella Little Gates (author of the *Life Talk* books) the format is primarily by email and an electronic newsletter. Input comes from parents, teenagers, and a network of experts comprising counsellors, psychologists, principals, teachers, career guidance specialists, experts in drugs and alcohol, and any other expertise that may be required.

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.

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.

To utilise any of the panel member's services, email forum@lifetalk.co.za

PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO EVERYONE

The FORUM email address is: 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,
ISASA (Independent Schools Association) and many schools and other
organisations

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

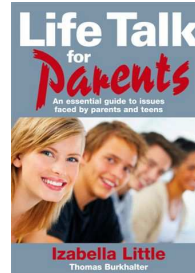
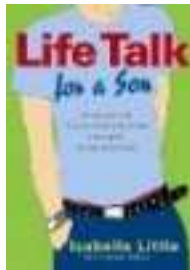
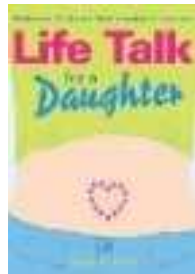
www.lifetalk.co.za

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, and internationally in: UK, Portugal, Spain and China (and soon in Arabic)

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



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Bulk orders can be emailed to: forum@lifetalk.co.za

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