

Life Talk® News 15

Please forward to everyone who might be interested

(If you can't see the Tug-of-War graphic below, please click on the small red cross) ©Izabella Little

- Action today changes tomorrow -

Join the
Life Talk Tug-of-War



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NEWSLETTERS 1 – 14 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; chat-rooms; child-trafficking; cyberbullying and choking games. (You can download them for free off: www.lifetalk.co.za)

“HUFFING”

Recent media reports have highlighted the increasingly popular (and highly dangerous) practice of inhaling a range of substances to achieve a “high”. The most recent incident ended in the tragic death of a teen so we need to alert teens to the very real dangers associated with this activity. Bags, straws and swabs are used and substances include household chemicals, drycleaning sprays, thinners and even aerosol cream.

Some of the stories shared with us include: "My girlfriend broke up with me and I didn't know how to cope and some of my mates suggested that sniffing a drycleaning aerosol would help take away the pain. So I did that and at first it made me feel kind of high but then it made me very sick. I don't even know what happened cos I passed out and my folks said I was in a coma for a few days and it's been horrible. I still get terrible headaches and I'm battling to concentrate at school." And "I'd never heard of huffing, but on a few occasions I've walked into my son's bedroom and caught him breathing something in a plastic packet. When I asked him about it he said he just liked the smell of a deodorant and it made him feel happy and relaxed. I wasn't suspicious, but then I found various aerosol cans in his room and now you've told us about huffing I'm wondering if this is what he's doing?"

Carte Blanche have just interviewed us (Sally Thorp) and will soon feature a programme on huffing so as soon as you see the announcement it would be worthwhile watching with the whole family.

FILM “EVERY MOTHER’S WORST FEAR”

With the growing number of stories about the dangers of chat rooms and the sinister people that our children meet in cyberspace, there's a film that effectively portrays some of these risks. Based on a true story, it's about a teenage girl who believes that she's chatting with a teen boy when in reality she's chatting with an internet predator involved in a cyber kidnapping ring. The events that unfold when he lures her to meet him are chillingly similar to stories we're increasingly hearing about in our own cities

and this film is now more relevant than ever. It's a "must see" for all parents and teens. It recently ran on SABC1 so hopefully you'll find a copy at your local DVD store and if not then maybe SABC could be persuaded to show it again.

"BLOW JOBS AIN'T SEX"

One of our talks for Grade 8's at one of SA's top schools proved to be somewhat hair-raising. Many of the girls tried hard to convince Sally Thorp that blow-jobs are not sex and that there's nothing wrong with giving them. Their comments included "If we don't start there how else do we experiment?" and "It's not sex, you can't catch an STD or fall pregnant". Many seem unconcerned about any risks, their reputation, the number of boys they do it with, or being seen by others. The fact that these arguments were being expressed by 13-year olds was the most startling part of the day.

STDs (SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES)

Whenever we speak about STDs during the many talks we give at schools our audience starts to squirm (especially when we show them pictures of what these things look like). The reaction before all the facts sink in is so often along the lines of "Eeee yuck... We can't speak to our kids about that! Let the schools deal with it...".

Well, the reality is such that we cannot afford not to speak about it. USA stats (and SA tends not to be markedly different) show that one in four young adults are carrying some kind of STD. We all know about HIV/AIDS, but it's scary how many people are unaware of how devastating others can be. According to experts, some of the diseases (eg Chlamydia) frequently do not present with noticeable symptoms – and if left untreated could well result in infertility. HPV, on the other hand, could kill if it leads to cervical cancer. And condoms don't prevent all of these diseases – in fact they can lead to a false sense of security. Some diseases only need contact with a hand and that's enough to transmit them when petting takes place. Oral sex too is unsafe.

"But if our children aren't sexually active why would they need to know this?" is another echoing groan. Because a surprising number of adolescents (and children) are experimenting sexually at ever-younger ages so you never know when the heat of the moment might take place. And if they don't know the possible consequences how can they make informed decisions? Surely it's better to engage in "uncomfortable" discussions than to deal with the devastating results when it's too late?

"Why can't we leave it up to the schools to inform our kids?" is another hopeful question. Because not all schools are equipped with the resources or skills to convey this vital information in an adequate manner. It's also important for children to receive such key information from their parents and not just from third parties. The more these messages get reinforced the greater the chances that they will be heard (and paid attention to). So we duck this one at our children's peril...

PARENTAL ALCOHOL ABUSE

We're hearing from more and more teens who are struggling to cope with their parents' drinking habits and problems. Some are as a result of stress, depression, unemployment, divorce – and others seem to escalate from a couple of drinks every evening to a serious problem. No income or social group is spared and one of the psychologists on our panel asked us to alert parents to the impact that their drinking is having on children.

Coming home from school to find a parent either rambling incoherently or lying prostrate on the floor can be extremely traumatic. Having to step over them to make dinner from the contents of an empty pantry is even harder. Even just having your mates witness an inebriated parent talking rubbish is often too much to bear – and the scars can become deep and long-lasting. If anyone you may know is subjected to any of this, please help them to make contact with Al-Anon (the support organisation for families of alcoholics). Their details can be found in the phone book or the Internet.

SEXTING

The increasingly popular past-time of teens taking suggestive/nude photos of themselves (or their friends) and sending them out on cell-phones (sexting) is reaching alarming proportions. Often done on the spur of the moment or when under the influence of alcohol, the consequences are often devastating. What might in some instances be meant as a private photo is often forwarded by the recipient to others throughout the school resulting in major embarrassment, horror if the child's parents also get to see the photos, and sometimes attempts at suicide. Once again, the consequences of such activities need to be discussed within the family and at schools. So often peer pressure and what sounds like "a good idea at the time" just needs a reality-check in terms of consequences.

LIFE TALK IN THE CAPE

We're excited to report that Suzie Linstrom is running Life Talk in the Western Cape. Suzie works with schools, parents, adolescents and corporates and focuses on raising awareness about the challenges faced by teens. So if your school would like Suzie to give one of our awareness-building talks do write to her on Suzie@lifetalk.co.za

"TABLE TUESDAYS" – ARE YOU IN?

Family mealtimes are a powerful, almost magical and yet often overlooked parenting tool. "Table Tuesdays" are about taking action whereby every family can start re-connecting again by having dinner together on a Tuesday (or other) evening.

- When was the last time you and your family sat down together, away from distractions, to eat a meal?
- How would it be if you could carve out an hour a week to participate in Table Tuesdays?

It all starts in the home, with family: communication, values, love, responsibility, discipline, security, thinking... – and mealtimes play a key role in the process. And yet so many families no longer eat meals together, around a table, away from the TV and cell phone. Life's pressures take precedence and we're fast losing our connection to each other. But time doesn't wait and suddenly years pass and precious moments and opportunities are lost, forever.

Many studies, including the comprehensive ones done by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, show that when compared to teens who have infrequent family dinners (two or fewer per week), those teens who have frequent family dinners (five or more):

- Are far less likely to abuse prescription drugs, use marijuana, smoke cigarettes, get drunk and have sex.
- Are likely to do better at school (and they tend to work harder).
- Tend to be more emotionally content.
- Are at a lower risk for thoughts of suicide.
- Have healthier eating habits and are less prone to eating disorders.
- Have more positive peer relationships.

Family mealtimes are a wonderful opportunity for communication and bonding, for learning about what's going on in each other's lives – and for conveying values. Children pick up language and vocabulary skills. There's debate and laughter, and sharing of feelings, fears, successes, hopes and dreams. Current challenges can be discussed and the best ways of dealing with aspects such as: alcohol, drugs, sex, bullying, peer pressure and safety can be explored. Family stories and anecdotes are passed on, self-esteem can be built and parental example provides role models on which our children can base their lives. The benefits are limitless and they act as a 'life-jacket' that helps children to cope with life's inevitable challenges.

Start today! See www.lifetalk.co.za for creative ideas and inspiration on getting started and making the most of your mealtimes.

LIFE TALK IN ARABIC

All three Life Talk books have just been launched in Arabic. They could be made available in South Africa if sufficient demand exists.

LIFE TALK FORUM & THE TUG-OF-WAR

The **LIFE TALK FORUM** provides parents and teens with information and the opportunity to discuss issues and challenges that affect teenagers' lives. Author of the *Life Talk* books, Izabella Gates (aka Izabella Little) co-ordinates the Forum. Sally Thorp runs Life Talk's Gauteng initiatives and Suzie Linstrom runs the Cape initiatives.

Our aim is to: create awareness, stimulate discussion, and highlight areas that can make a positive difference to the lives of adolescents and parents, helping to facilitate communication and to create happy, successful and fulfilled youth guided by sound values. Subscription is free.

Life Talk recently launched the "**TUG-OF-WAR**" – an initiative that tackles the challenges faced by our adolescents (alcohol, drugs, bullying, peer pressure etc) and explores proactive solutions. The aim is to galvanize all families, schools, corporates, the media and society to "pull" where it counts. It's about gearing ourselves to be informed and proactive, and to ensure that as a nation we win this crucial "tug-of-war".

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

Let's pit challenges against values, responsibility, wise choices and other positives. Let's all join in and "pull" so we can save our children from being dragged into some of the very tough (and avoidable) challenges and dangers that exist.

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.
- 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.**
- e. 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/results);
- 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!

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 & START DEBATING!

Look for "Life Talk Tug-of-War" and share your thoughts!

FUNDING FOR THE FORUM?

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 extra Facilitators can be sponsored to roll out the initiatives in other centres.

PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO EVERYONE.

ACTION TODAY CHANGES TOMORROW!

The FORUM email address is: forum@lifetalk.co.za

The Life Talk™ Forum is endorsed by:
FAMSA, the CIE, the ARA, Khulisa Social Solutions
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:

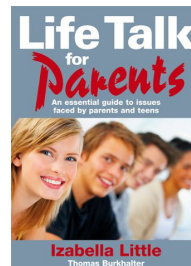
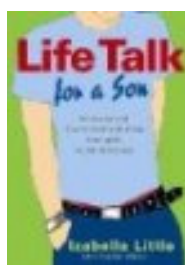
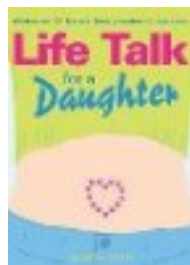
www.lifetalk.co.za

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 as well as in Arabic

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



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

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