

Life Talk® News 16

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 Gates

– Action today changes tomorrow –

Join the Life Talk Tug-of-War



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ACRONYMS WORTH KNOWING...

The <http://www.netlingo.com/top50/acronyms-for-parents.php> site lists some of the (sometimes hair-raising) MXit and Internet acronyms used by children when they communicate with their mates. Here's a sample:

ILU - I Love You

420 – Marijuana

F2F - Face-to-Face

HAK - Hugs And Kisses

KPC - Keeping Parents Clueless

MOS - Mom Over Shoulder

NMU - Not Much, You?

8 - Oral s..

PAW - Parents Are Watching

POS - Parent Over Shoulder -or- Piece Of Sh**

TDTM - Talk Dirty To Me

WYCM - Will You Call Me?

ZERG - To gang up on someone

182 - I hate you

CD9 - Code 9 - parents are around

GNOC - Get Naked On Cam

IWSN - I Want S.. Now

LMIRL - Let's Meet In Real Life

NIFOC - Nude In Front Of The Computer

P911 - Parent Alert

PAL - Parents Are Listening

PIR - Parent In Room

WUF - Where You From

WYRN - What's Your Real Name?

..... and dozens more

Hopefully not all our kids know all of them, but many do.

WHAT SHOULD WE AS PARENTS DO?

Our children are being exposed to more and more at ever younger ages. At Life Talk we've recently been inundated with so many heart-stopping stories and these again highlight how vital it is that we take some urgent action – as parents and as families, as communities and as society. Many of the issues have been addressed in our previous newsletters, but so many are accelerating at an even more alarming rate.

Risky and potentially life-threatening activities such as huffing, choking games and increasing experimentation with drugs are now being reported from nearly every school we deal with. Our Newsletter 15 covered some other hair-raising developments, and alcohol use by teens (and by tweens and younger) is growing – and by the time our kids get to university it spirals right out of control.

We've just had a spate of reports from campuses where there's a growing trend for students to throw all caution away in their quest for fun, acceptance by peers and achieving a high through any means possible. For many there's an almost 'predictable path' of binge-drinking, followed by dagga-smoking that leads to pill-popping and harder drugs that then take a firm grip. And so much of this behaviour can be prevented by a proactive approach during the tween and teen years.

We have to do something! But where do we start? Whose responsibility is it? “The government ought to do something asap” and “The schools are not doing enough” are refrains we hear daily. But is it really up to the schools and government – or do we have to take action ourselves?

Do we have time for finger-pointing and apportioning blame? What will it achieve? Right now we don't have time for deliberating. It's time to take action. And to do everything we possibly can to be proactive in our parenting.

BEING PROACTIVE IS EASIER THAN WE THINK

For many of us, when we don't know what to do, it can be tempting to do nothing – and to then hope like crazy that somehow the challenges won't affect us or our children. And when we're busy and stressed, doing nothing can seem even more attractive.

But in today's world the 'do nothing' approach is a bit like playing Russian Roulette with three rounds in the cylinder. How many of us would risk odds like that when it comes to our children's wellbeing or even their life? Probably not too many. So what are we waiting for?

THE POWER OF BEING INFORMED

Lack of information and knowledge can be one of our most paralyzing aspects. If we're unaware of the reality, how can we implement effective strategies? That's why, when it comes to parenting, knowledge truly is empowering. And the actions we take don't have to be complicated. So much is quite simple and logical. It just sometimes helps to remind each other about what's important.

Our Tug-of-War initiative has identified a number of steps that (according to our subscribers) can make a significant difference. We'll list some of them and you'll no doubt be able to add others that work for you.

1. **Awareness-building.** Forewarned is definitely forearmed, so it's worth knowing about the challenges and risky behaviour patterns that our children are being exposed to. Information is readily available from various sources. **Our newsletters** cover many of the pertinent issues, as do the **talks** that we give at schools. The book ***Life Talk for Parents - an essential guide to the issues faced by teens and parents*** is recommended as a 'must read' by schools. It covers the majority of challenges being faced by teens, and it has input from a number of psychologists and other experts. We strongly recommend that you read it as it gives plenty of insight and vital food for thought. **The Internet** is also a great source that can provide updates about challenges faced by teens.
2. **Communication.** Discussing the various challenges and situations with your children is invaluable. Talking about values, and defining your family's values together, is also key. An ongoing flow of communication helps you to understand what's going on in their lives and it's the glue that keeps relationships strong. It's also your best ally when the challenges inevitably come a-knocking.
3. **Family mealtimes.** Mealtimes away from the TV are an invaluable parenting tool. A number of studies show that, when compared to teens who have infrequent family dinners, those teens who have frequent family dinners: Are far less likely to abuse prescription drugs, use dagga, smoke cigarettes, get drunk and have sex. They're also likely to: do better at school, work harder, be more emotionally content, have healthier eating habits and be less prone to eating disorders. 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. See <http://lifetalk.co.za/web/table-tuesdays> for our “**Table Tuesdays**” page which provides a list of the benefits as well as tips and fun ideas for getting started.
4. **Discussion with fellow parents and community members.** It's hard to tackle all the challenges solo. Our children are strongly influenced by their peers (increasingly so as they get older) so the more people within your child's circle are all aware of the challenges and key areas to focus on, the easier it is for you.
5. **Parenting forums.** Once our children go to high school we tend to know fewer parents. They may go home with friends whom we don't know, to homes where we don't know anything about the values or boundaries. Establishing parenting forums provides a platform to meet the other parents, and to share information, and agree

on what's acceptable. Issues such as clubbing, curfew times, bullying, cell-phones policies, drinking, huffing, and cutting can all be addressed. Often just talking about something is enough to highlight helpful answers. Some groups call themselves PUPS (parents under pressure) and others opt for motivational acronyms. If you'd like tips on getting a Forum started we'll gladly email you some.

6. **Building awareness about the Tug-of-War initiative.** The more awareness you can raise and the more people you can galvanize into "pulling" where it counts, the greater the positive impact on your child's world. Do you know any influential people? A CEO, a celebrity, a church or other leader, a politician, someone in the media? Tell them about what's happening and get them to join in the awareness-building and solution-seeking.
7. **Become a fan on our Facebook "Life Talk Tug-of-War" page.** Recommend it to everyone you know, share your ideas and interact with other parents. It's an effective way to raise awareness and get discussions going.

PARENTS' GUIDE TO FACEBOOK

There's a great guide on <http://www.connectsafely.org/pdfs/fbparents.pdf>. It covers some key topics and we recommend that all parents have a look at the site. Topics covered include:

- What is Facebook?
- Why do young people use Facebook?
- What are the risks involved in social networking?
- How do we parent Facebook users?
- Ways to monitor your child's Facebook activities
- Safety, privacy and reputation protection in the digital age
- Your children's profiles are a reflection on them
- Why children should be honest about their age
- Choose friends wisely
- To limit what's on your child's profile
- See what your profile looks like to others
- Configuring who can see what you post
- Extra protections for minors
- Photos and tagging
- Reporting problems
- Preventing suicide and other self-harm

Other than those who are Facebook-savvy, the rest of us often find that our knowledge lags behind that of our children. And much as we might be inclined to "do the ostrich", understanding the world our children operate in is fast becoming essential.

PUBLISHER WANTED FOR NEW BOOK!

The SA editions of the Life Talk books were published by Oshun, a division of Struik, but this was closed recently. Izabella has just completed her latest book (which underpins all our awareness-building initiatives) so we are exploring the best options for the way forward for the new book and for the Life Talk series.

WANTED: A PASSIONATE PUBLISHING PARTNER - we are looking for a publisher who will share our vision & passion.

The new book takes a unique approach in identifying the issues, challenges and opportunities that face teens and parents. Illustrated by well-known cartoonist Tony Grogan, it is being greeted with much enthusiasm and is receiving great reviews from educators and organisations.

So if you know of a publisher who would like to be involved in the publishing of the new book, as well as taking over the Life Talk books in SA, we'd love to hear from you! Write to Sally@lifetalk.co.za

WATCH VIDEO CLIP ON www.lifetalk.co.za

One of our enthusiastic supporters produced a thought-provoking PSA video clip about some of the activities that teens are engaging in. Have a look at our website and email all your friends and contacts who might find it interesting. A big 'thank you' to Rapid Blue for helping with the awareness building. You can also watch it directly on:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bK8ZPzLkxjc>

THE LIFE TALK TEAM & INITIATIVES

We often get asked about Life Talk and our team so here's some background:

Life Talk Forum is a Section 21 non-profit organisation. Sally Thorp heads up the Gauteng initiatives, Suzie Linstrom runs the Cape and Izabella Gates (aka Izabella Little the author of the Life Talk books) is now based in Hillcrest KZN.

We rely on sponsorship and book sales for our funding. One sponsorship covers Suzie and Sally and others sponsor talks, books or special intervention programmes within disadvantaged communities. Some of our initiatives include:

SpeakUp! – a peer-education programme to reduce alcohol-related harm among teens. It is run in conjunction with Khulisa and SANCA and involves sessions with teens, parents and educators. The pilot ran in four under-privileged schools, its impact on behaviour change was closely monitored and it was found to be extremely successful, and the next phase is being rolled out in Gauteng and then nationally.

Tug-of-War – the awareness-building 'call to action' mentioned earlier.

Sponsored talks – corporates sponsor our Facilitators to give talks and hand out books at selected schools.

Grade 8-11 information gathering sessions – Sally recently conducted a number of information gathering sessions in Limpopo with learners from Grade 8–11 in an attempt to understand challenges confronting them individually, at school and within their communities, with a view to planning and implementing interventions that would benefit them directly. In these sessions feedback was gathered using questionnaires where the students either worked individually or in groups. The results have been highly relevant and further work is being undertaken.

NEWSLETTERS 1 – 15 COVERED: huffing; clubs; a drug dealer's alert to parents; cell phones; teen drinking; pocket money; hubbly bubbly; chewing tobacco; fake IDs; communication; discipline & boundaries; depression; Grade 8 hiccups; promiscuous activity; self-mutilation; eating disorders; self-esteem; bullying; abuse; ADHD; EMO; subject choices; MXit; divorce; ice-spiking with 'eye drops', head injuries; cults; chat-rooms; child-trafficking; cyberbullying, choking games and many others. (You can download them for free off: www.lifetalk.co.za)

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.
- 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/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 talks, posters, flyers, books, 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, SANCA, 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:

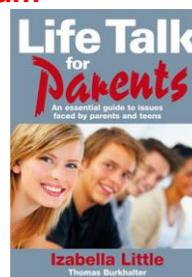
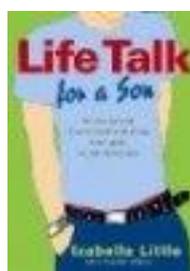
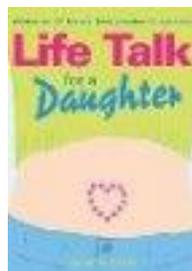
www.lifetalk.co.za

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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