

West County Psychological Associates

The WCPA News

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Online Relationships: The Danger of Fulfilling Our Need for Intimacy and Connection Online Tony Tramelli, M.A.

Online or virtual relationships are quickly becoming the norm for young people. We are living in a world where, for a number of reasons, children are choosing to connect with one another online rather than develop real flesh-and-blood relationships with one another. And it is not only our youth who are drawn to these types of relationships. We see this trend occurring in all age groups. We would rather text than call, we would rather get an email than a voicemail. We want our communication with others to be brief and impersonal. If we truly desired it, we have the capability of going the rest of our lives without ever communicating face to face with another person. How do we explain this phenomenon? Why are we so attracted to these types of relationships? How do these types of relationships affect our children's and our own abilities to develop real and meaningful relationships with others?

Online relationships have many of the qualities found in real relationships, for example, they can include connectedness, communication, and sharing. However, these relationships are missing many important elements that make them quite different from real physical relationships, such as facial expressions, voice inflection, clear emotional messages, body language, and physical contact. Online relationships are almost always based on limited information, and because of this limited information they are incomplete. People can get to know one another online, but only so far. When we communicate through technology, whether it is texting, social media, email, or online gaming, we only get bits and pieces of each other, words on a screen, images, or videos. We can never get to know someone completely and intimately when communicating through technology.

Social media is probably the most popular way to develop online relationships. Users of social media tend to present themselves in ways that are, at a minimum, slightly more positive impressions of their true selves, and at a maximum, entirely distorted and exaggerated self-representations. This is an extreme form of impression management. We all use impression management in some way, especially when we are first getting to know someone. Take a job interview, for example. In a job interview, we only provide pertinent information about ourselves. It would not be necessary or appropriate to divulge more than that. The more we get to know someone, the easier it is for us to let down our guard; to be honest and open. Only when there is a real and deep emotional connection do we allow ourselves to be completely open and genuine.

Young people use impression management just like adults. Impression management is an essential motivator among children to meet their needs for self-esteem and acceptance. It is a common practice both on and offline. But the ability for children to shape how others view them is much greater online because there is no way for others to assess the truth behind the online impressions that children present. There are a number of problems with this common practice. First, it prevents children from accepting that they are imperfect. Nor can they learn that, despite their flaws, they are still good people worthy of being valued and liked. It is also dishonest, intentionally or otherwise, and not generally a lesson we want our children to learn.

The brevity of online communication also makes it difficult to form real and meaningful relationships with others, as most forms of online communication, including Facebook, Twitter, texting, etc., involve short, stunted, and frequent communication. This type of communication does not allow for the rich sharing of thoughts and emotions, which is needed in the development of real relationships. It also allows for us to construct and edit what we want to say. This takes some of the meaning and emotion out of our dialogue, making it designed and contrived. Online communication also has the potential to be taken out of context. We can intend to send a text or post one way, and have it received completely the opposite way. Our language is incredibly limited without voice inflection or body language.

In addition to all of these concerns, the fact is that time spent communicating online and in online relationships is time spent not being in real-life relationships. This lack of experience in engaging in these kinds of relationships can hurt children's ability to develop healthy relationships in the future. Real relationships develop through experience and require certain skills, for example reading facial expressions, interpreting voice inflection, and feeling empathy. If children are missing out on face-to-face relationships because they are spending so much time online, then they are missing out on opportunities to learn about and practice those skills that enable healthy relationships to develop. There has been a dramatic rise in narcissism and a decline in empathy over the past number of years. It is no coincidence that this has occurred alongside the rise in online communication and relationships.

While our youth do, of course, engage in a number of real relationships at school, with friends, and in sports and other activities, they are spending an increasing amount of time online. Recent studies show that children spend about seven and half hours per day interacting with non-education related technology. This is time not being spent interacting with others face-to-face. Children have less time to practice relationship building skills, and with less practice they are going to be less skilled. They will also be less inclined to desire real emotional relationships. Children can fulfill many of their needs for connection through online relationships, however unhealthy and limited that route may be. In doing so, they may come to believe that their needs for friendship and intimacy can be met online without all the risks and messiness of real-world relationships. Children who hold this belief will miss out on the deep benefits that come from real and emotional connections that can only exist offline.

Children may feel a sense of safety in online relationships that does not and cannot exist in the real world. They can manage how others perceive them, they can choose who they want to communicate with, they can sign off whenever they desire, and most importantly they can limit the potential of being hurt or rejected. Children who live in this bubble of safety are increasingly ill-prepared for the real world. We see adults who not only accept this for children and youth, but tend to encourage it. This behavior is heavily influenced by the fear perpetuated in our society. Some parents and other adults may think, "Well, at least I know this child is safe in his room. He is not getting in trouble, and he is in no danger of physical harm." This way of thinking is understandable, but is harmful to children's emotional well-being. Parents and teachers need to encourage our youth to sometimes disconnect from their devices. To find connection and affirmation through real relationships, even though – or perhaps because – real relationships can be messy, risky and deep.

Tony Tramelli, M.A. provides therapy to children and adolescents from Kindergarten through high school on a number of issues including depression, anxiety, bullying, grief, behavioral issues, academic problems and issues surrounding divorce. Tony takes a systems approach to the counseling of children and adolescents and works closely with parents and educators to effectively treat his clients. Tony also regularly provides presentations to parents, teachers, and students on safe and responsible social media and technology use.



**Psychological and Psychoeducational Testing
Available Year-Round for All Ages**

West County Psychological Associates offers high-quality, private psychological and psychoeducational testing at our therapy offices. Wait times are usually brief and reports are available soon following the test date(s). When a minor is tested, parents can choose whether or not to give permission for our evaluator to send a copy of the report to the school or the child's doctor or counselor. Many families in our community choose to utilize high-quality, private testing services. If you would like to learn more about this option, please feel free to contact our office, (314) 275-8599.

From the Director: The Antidote to “Virtual Conversations”

I would like to offer a response to Tony Tramelli’s lead article, *Online Relationships*. I am also concerned about the impact of online relationships in regard to the emotional well-being of our children. My fear is that in a few years many of our children will not know what it is to experience long conversations with a good friend, or be able to be honest and genuine with others, with all of our gifts and flaws, or not be fearful about being vulnerable and open in close relationships. I don’t understand how we can spend our days in what I will call these ‘virtual conversations’ and then go on to have emotionally close relationships with our children and spouses.

We are wired for connectedness. We are wired to be able to share who we are with others that we care about. We also know that when we are unable to connect with others we are subject to depression and anxiety. Connectedness implies sharing on an emotional level. And sometimes this is hard work. Some of us have a difficult time knowing what we feel. Many of us don’t enjoy the vulnerability of sharing because we are putting ourselves in the position of being exposed and then, possibly, rejected. The “virtual conversation” is an escape from having to do this messy, difficult work. However, I have always believed that in the end we pay the price. The more we stay in the virtual world, the greater the possibility of separating from others – becoming disconnected. I am reminded of the line from *Eleanor Rigby* – “All the lonely people, where do they all come from?”

So what is the antidote? What is the cure? I believe that we, as the adults, have to make it our cause and our goal to overcome a societal tsunami where technology has the potential to have a devastating effect on our children’s well-being as well as our own. Realistically speaking, there are many positives to online communication. It would be foolhardy to say that we eliminate this part of our life. However, we can put in place a pattern of living that incorporates behaviors that will strengthen our ability to emotionally connect with others and, hopefully, will become a part of our children’s everyday lives. What we know is that having a meaningful relationship with others is much more satisfying emotionally than the short-term highs that we may receive through video-gaming. Given the opportunity, children will opt to engage in a relationship where they feel listened to and valued even if the relationship is with an adult rather than another child. The reason for this is because we are made for relationships. Not to be in community runs counter to who we are as humans. I would therefore suggest the following:

- In order to enhance your own emotionally intimate relationship, fathers/mothers, husbands/wives, plan for 15 to 30 minutes a day having a conversation about the feelings that you experienced that day either at work or home. Don’t use this time to complain about the failings of the other person.
- Never allow phones or games during mealtime. Attempt to have as many family meals as you can each week. Have each person talk about what was important in his/her life that day and then how they felt about it. Remember mealtime is not a time for lectures. If necessary, use conversation cards that you can buy online as conversation starters where one person asks a question, such as, “What movie did you most enjoy this year?” and “Why did you enjoy it?” Each person takes turns answering the question.
- Each parent spends time alone with each child at least once every two weeks. It would be best to do this in a neutral place, for example at McDonald’s or taking a walk. Then encourage and allow your child to talk about her or himself and what is going on in his/her world. This is a time to listen not lecture. However, it is also very meaningful when adults appropriately share some of the experiences going on in their lives with their children.
- Allow for unstructured play time in your children’s lives where, again, there is no technology. This time can result in family members playing ball or games together. Or it may be allowing your children to have others over to play. We need to remember that our children need downtime that isn’t filled with online time.

What I have found in my own life is that children respond enthusiastically to conversations where they are made to feel important because someone is asking about who they are and how they feel. They feel valued. This sense of self-worth leads to higher self-esteem. Studies have even shown that these behaviors can even increase a child’s cognitive ability. Most importantly, as our children are learning how to connect with us, they take these meaningful behaviors and begin to incorporate them into their own lives. This is an antidote well worth trying.

-Mary



**Mary Fitzgibbons, Ph.D.
Director**

Eating and Exercise in Young Athletes: When Does Training become Disordered?

Today's young athletes, particularly those of high school age, are unlike the competitors of younger generations. These millennials have been raised in competitive sports environments (many of them beginning in pre-school) throughout their childhood and pre-teen years. Parents are often under the dangerous and false assumption that competitive sports foster high self-esteem and strong work ethic. While this may be true under the right conditions, all too often adolescents develop high anxiety and disordered relationships with their bodies within the world of competitive sports. What are the signs of eating disorders and exercise addiction in young athletes, and how can parents, coaches, and physicians provide appropriate and attuned intervention?

Signs of eating disorders are more difficult to identify in an athlete, precisely because their relationship with food and exercise relates to their ability to perform at their best. They are likely educated on balanced nutrition, exercise, and rest to enhance their physical and mental acuity for their particular sport. However, a perfectionistic or highly competitive individual may begin to obsessively research meal plans, macro-nutrients, exercise routines, and training schedules. It's important to make note of increased preoccupation with training, especially if it begins to replace other activities or relationships the athlete once found enjoyable. Anxiety around meal time is another troublesome sign. Individuals struggling with disordered eating will develop increased rigidity around the amount and types of foods they eat, along with when and how they consume these identified "safe" foods.

Physicians in particular can be on the lookout for repeat and/or untreated injuries. A frequent aspect of the eating disorder is a positive association with physical pain. Individuals may seek this "pain as pleasure" through extreme restriction, bingeing and purging, self-harm, partner abuse, or exercising through injuries, including broken bones. These associations develop for a variety of reasons. One reason an athlete may struggle with this relates back to the competition and rigor of childhood sports. Children and adolescents are reinforced for their "toughness;" well-meaning parents and coaches celebrate bruises in an effort to prevent their child from becoming intimidated on the field. Parents can also unwittingly model perfectionistic and self-critical behavior. Eating disorders, exercise compulsion, and self-harm all have deep layers, which is why therapy with an experienced and qualified eating disorder therapist is so valuable to re-direct and hopefully prevent a long-term battle.

How can one approach an athlete if they notice these signs? First, approach the conversation from a place of genuine curiosity and concern. Provide space for them to discuss any pressure they feel to be perfect or out-perform their peers. Try not to become discouraged by defensiveness; remember, the athlete is highly protective of their achievements and could easily feel threatened by implication they have taken their dieting or exercise to an unhealthy level. Coaches and physicians in particular can emphasize that getting treatment does not mean giving up their beloved sport. However, the longer they maintain restricted diet and over-exercise, the more likely their performance will begin to suffer, including long-term damage to muscle tissue, bones, organs, and fertility.

In addition to seeking therapy, parents and family members can communicate with their loved one about their relationship with shame and perfectionism. They may want to explore whether they've unconsciously reinforced their perfectionism or provided a message about hard work and achievement that has been misconstrued. Dismantling problematic core beliefs is one critical part of the therapy process. Finally, and most importantly, they can emphasize that their admiration and love is in no way tied to athletic performance. With proper treatment, young athletes can re-discover a balance to life that allows for a true love of the sport again.

Marijuana's Effects on Learning and the Brain

Kristen Carothers, MSW, LCSW

Marijuana is the most common illicit drug used in the United States, and it is the most frequently identified drug seized in the St. Louis Metro area. The growing belief that marijuana is a safe drug may be the result of public discussions about medical marijuana and the public debate over the drug's legal status. Some naively assume marijuana cannot be harmful because it is "natural," but not all natural plants are good for you—take tobacco, for example.

Today's young people are less likely to disapprove of regular marijuana use, which indicates warnings regarding the risks associated with teen cannabis use have fallen on teens' deaf ears. In fact, in the past 10 years, the number of high schoolers who think regular marijuana use is risky has dropped dramatically, according to Centers for Disease Control's Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey. The change in attitudes is reflected by increasing rates of use among high schoolers. From 2008 to 2013, past-month use of marijuana increased from 13% to 18% among 10th graders and from 19% to 22% among 12th graders.

Contrary to popular belief, marijuana use does not come consequence-free. Marijuana use can impair learning, memory, perception and judgment and can lead to dulled emotions and lack of enthusiasm. Because cannabis use contributes to difficulty speaking, listening effectively, retaining knowledge, problem solving and forming new concepts, it is especially risky for use by students, who are trying to succeed academically. Use over time has consistently shown to have a negative impact on IQ.

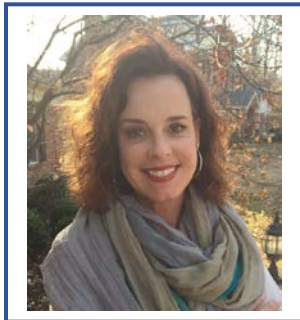
Research has shown that marijuana's negative effects on attention, memory, and learning can last for days or weeks after the acute effects of the drug wear off. Consequently, someone who smokes marijuana daily may be functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all of the time. Not surprisingly, evidence suggests that, compared with their nonsmoking peers, students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school. A meta-analysis of 48 relevant studies—one of the most thorough performed to date—found cannabis use to be associated consistently with reduced educational attainment (e.g., grades and chances of graduating). That said, marijuana users themselves report poor outcomes on a variety of life satisfaction and achievement measures.

The naked truth is that teens using marijuana expose themselves to changes in brain chemistry, which can result in learning, memory problems and IQ loss. Contrary to common belief, marijuana can be addictive. In fact, marijuana addiction results in the withdrawal and craving symptoms that are at the root of addictive disorders. But here's the kicker: The addiction rate jumps to about 1 in 6 among people who start using marijuana as teenagers, and up to half of daily users!

How can parents and teachers recognize a student who may be using marijuana? Several signs of abuse include:

- red, blurry, bloodshot eyes
- constant, mucus-filled cough
- hunger, often referred to as munchies, and dry mouth
- anxiety, paranoia, or fear
- poor memory and declining grades
- poor motor coordination and slow reaction time

Though the move toward marijuana legalization for adults is gaining steam across the country, parents and teachers who care about the health, safety, and academic attainment of our youth should not be led into a false security about marijuana's safety. When a student is found to be using marijuana, responsible adults respond immediately and seriously. The most recommended response is to insist that the student receive a thorough, professional substance use evaluation. When parents and schools, together, recognize that marijuana use comes with serious consequences and is unacceptable for our youth, all our children benefit.



Kristen received her Master's degree in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis. She brings twenty years of experience specializing in aiding and guiding children, adolescents and adults. Her areas of focus center on substance abuse, addiction and recovery, codependency, trauma, depression and anxiety, and other issues that impact families. She is known for her direct, open, and compassionate communication style. Kristin works with each client to gain a productive yet empathetic relationship structured for therapeutic success.

*West County
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Families in Transition Program
Directed by Jennifer Van Luven, MSW, LCSW, DM

West County Psychological Associates offers many services through our Families in Transition Program. These services assist all family members in reaching a peaceful resolution when struggling with challenging family transitions.

Divorce Mediation: A certified mediator can assist couples in reaching a peaceful and amicable divorce resolution. This process allows mediators to act as a neutral third party, assisting in the division of property, parenting plans, child support and any other relevant issues in the divorce. Financially, it is better to mediate than litigate.

Family Therapy: Families can be torn apart by divorce and re-marriage. New family structure means new roles for everyone in the family. Therapists can assist families in coming together, co-parenting successfully and in welcoming new roles and relationships into the family.

Co-Parent Counseling: Parents are often overwhelmed by the amount of decisions they are now making to ensure their child's healthy adjustment during this trying time. Co-parent counseling is a confidential therapeutic service that addresses the co-parenting relationship and children's issues associated with divorce and family separation. Learn how children experience family separation as well as communication and negotiation skills to improve your skills in being a co-parent.

Parent Coordination: Dispute resolution for high conflict parents. This service assists parents in high conflict situations to establish and maintain a healthier relationship by reducing the amount of parental conflict and the risk factors that influence a child's post divorce/ separation adjustment.

Child Custody Mediation: Mediation is a confidential process designed to offer parents the ability to design a workable and age-appropriate parenting plan for children. Ideal for parents who want to have professional direction to create a plan that works for their family without the "typical" visitation schedule.

Parent Child Reunification: A parent can sometimes lose touch with a child for a variety of reasons. In a safe setting, a child can be reintroduced to a relationship with their parent. The child and parent can effectively explore and begin to develop a healthy relationship, repair attachment issues, and enhance their overall relationship.

Divorce Coaching: Divorce is an emotional process and having a coach can make a tremendous difference in surviving the process. Coaching can assist individuals in understanding the process and assist with their grief or resistance to negotiations. The goal is to provide support to the individual while also helping to prepare them for a future as a single adult. This process may continue after the divorce proceedings have ended, assisting adults in settling into their new roles.

*If you or someone you care about is struggling with relationship issues or transitions,
please call Jennifer Van Luven at the West County Psychological Associates' office at (314) 275-8599.*

ARE YOU RELATIONSHIP READY?

Cari McKnight, MSW, LCSW

Many of us have experienced frustration in our pursuit of happy relationships. We often find ourselves in one unfulfilling relationship after another and wonder what we are doing wrong. We can't understand why we keep choosing the wrong guy, or why the girl of our dreams ended up not being who we thought. We start to think that there are "no good ones left." While there are no simple answers or easy formulas for finding happiness in a relationship, oftentimes people are surprised to learn that the first place to look for a good relationship is within ourselves.

It helps to begin by taking an honest look at ourselves and asking some questions, some of which may not be easy to answer. For example, "Do I know how to make myself happy?" is a question that sounds so simple at first, but can be a tough one for many of us to answer. In a new relationship, we all feel a temporary rush of happiness; we feel joyful and giddy. These emotions are caused by bursts of the neurotransmitter Dopamine in our brains during the beginning stages of a relationship. These feelings are normal and predictable. But unfortunately, this phase is temporary in all relationships. We need to know how to make our own selves happy – with or without a partner - or when this giddy phase inevitably comes to an end, we feel empty and resentful. We wonder why we no longer feel as we did in the beginning of the relationship, and speculate it might mean that we are with the wrong partner. Ultimately, no matter how hard anyone tries, no one can make us happy but ourselves.

As we begin to take responsibility for our own happiness, we need to ask ourselves questions like, "What makes me feel alive?" "What are my passions and hobbies?" "Am I happy with my career?" "Am I fulfilled spiritually?" and "Do I have my own friends and social network?" If we can answer these questions and start putting these pieces in place in our lives, we will not only be more likely to attract a like-minded, positive partner, but we will be able to dig into our own well of joy and happiness to fill up the normal voids we feel at different points in any long-term relationship. Otherwise, we may again become resentful at our partner for failing to fulfill our expectations. We blame them for that have built a life and happy and then we can choose a partner who is him/herself happy

The poet Robert Browning said it best –
"Success in a marriage is more than
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right person."

may feel unhappy and discontent. Once we a self that we are comfortable with, to share that life with capable of making as well.

We also need to ask ourselves if we are truly ok with being alone. All too many of us end up staying with a partner simply because we are too fearful of what it might look like or feel like if we were alone. If we are not comfortable with the concept of being alone, we might try to "lose ourselves" in another person, we may stay with someone even when we are not getting what we need from the relationship, or we may even tolerate mental, verbal, or physical abuse. If you are happy with yourself and accept yourself, (flaws and all,) you will be more likely to truly *choose* a partner who complements your life, as opposed to clinging to someone for fear of being alone. This desperation and neediness creates a "smothering" dynamic that is quite unhealthy, and eventually sucks the joy and happiness out of any relationship.

Finally, we need to make peace with our past. Whether we struggle with childhood issues or have unresolved baggage from prior relationships, we all have things that we need to work through before we can be fully emotionally available in a new relationship. Regrets, hurts, and walls that we have put up can all interfere with our ability to succeed with a new partner. When we have not resolved these barriers, we find ourselves in rebound relationships, looking for someone else to heal our wounds, and we wind up disappointed. (Again.) If we are at peace with ourselves and our pasts, we are free, clear and really able to give to another, and will likely attract a happy, secure, and emotionally available partner as well.

The poet Robert Browning said it best – "Success in a marriage is more than finding the right person, it is being the right person." This holds true for any long-term relationship. It is worth doing the self-work so that we are ready to successfully share a rewarding partnership. These pieces are not necessarily easy to put in place, but they are essential if we want to have a truly satisfying, fulfilling partnership. Sometimes, people need professional help to work through their issues. If needed, a good therapist can often help address these questions and concerns, so you will be poised not only to find and maintain a healthy, happy relationship, but you yourself will be all the happier and healthier for it, whether you are alone or with a partner.



Cari McKnight
received her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Iowa and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She specializes in private therapy for individuals, couples, and families dealing with relationship/interpersonal difficulties, and is passionate about helping others create balance and happiness in their lives.

Family Coping and Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease

Amy Neu, MSW, LCSW

When many of us picture someone with Alzheimer's disease, we envision an elderly person who had the chance to raise a family, fulfill a career, and have some time to enjoy retirement. This past year Hollywood has shed a fresh light on the topic of Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease through the award-winning film "Still Alice," which has given many Americans a new awareness of the disease and has led us to question our assumptions of those affected by the illness. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that currently 200,000 individuals under the age of 65 have Early-Onset Alzheimer's and that many of these people are in their 40's and 50's. Early-Onset Alzheimer's has a multi-generational impact for countless families, leaving parents, spouses, children, and grandchildren struggling to cope.

For many individuals diagnosed with Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease, receiving an accurate diagnosis can be a long and frustrating process. Doctors may overlook an Alzheimer's diagnosis due to age or may attribute symptoms to stress, anxiety, depression, thyroid issues, or menopause. Once diagnosed, many people feel shocked and scared. They wonder how they can continue their normal life activities including maintaining a career, raising children, caregiving for parents, and participating in community events. For those who have a spouse or children, they may also feel guilty for the impending burden to come on their family. While it is difficult, it is essential for those diagnosed to learn more about the disease. This knowledge empowers those diagnosed to understand their possible needs and options for the future. It is critical for those diagnosed to remain socially engaged and to seek support through family and friends.

Spouses of a loved one with Early-Onset Alzheimer's experience grief and bewilderment over their partner's diagnosis. They often feel increased financial pressure to earn money due to future costs for their loved one's care and the possibility of becoming the sole breadwinner for the family. They may also feel the strain to be more readily available to family at home as they face an increasing variety of demanding roles. In the early stages of the disease, spouses often find it helpful to seek more information about the disease with their partner and plan together for the future. Meeting together with professionals such as financial planners, attorneys, doctors, or therapists can help alleviate stress and anxiety about decisions regarding future care. The early stage of the illness is also a good time for spouses to listen to their loved one's preferences for the future and to talk together about their relationship and changes in domestic roles. Additionally, continuing to do activities as a couple can strengthen the relationship and offer comfort and consistency to both spouses. In the later stages of the illness, reminiscing and continued use of touch may also help a couple maintain a sense of closeness.

An Early-Onset Alzheimer's diagnosis also has a vast impact on the individual's children and grandchildren. The ages of the children make a difference in how they can be affected by the diagnosis. Younger children may need reassurance that the disease is not their fault and that they are loved. The book "Flowers for Grandpa Dan" by Connie McIntyre can help young children understand Alzheimer's disease and give them an opportunity to talk about their feelings and experiences. Teenagers may feel an expectation to help out at home, which may lead to feelings of resentment, anger, or guilt. Young adults often feel torn between caregiving for their parent and moving ahead with their future. Overall, children of any age will benefit from an open, supportive family unit. Allowing children to ask questions and talk about their feelings lets them know that it is okay to express their needs and emotions. If they are having trouble expressing their feelings at home, it is beneficial for parents to seek out counseling or a support group as a healthy outlet. Continuing to do family activities and celebrate traditions also helps children feel safe and secure.

Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease is an illness that crosses generational divides and truly affects the whole family. It is essential for all family members to maintain their social supports in order to alleviate stress and anxiety and to cope with the struggles accompanying the illness. Continuing to participate in activities with family and friends, seeking out information about the illness, planning for the future, and talking with a therapist are important methods of coping. Developing and maintaining coping skills enables families to maintain strong connections between members and gives them strength to carry into the future.

This article is part of a series of monthly articles from WCPA for seniors, their family members and caregivers. If you would like more information about our services, feel free to contact our office at (314) 275-8599.

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A unique evening of self-discovery, relationship-building, and FUN!



The Mother/Daughter Dressing Debate: *A mother/daughter session on navigating this difficult issue*

**Mothers and daughters leave
EMPOWERED and ENLIGHTENED!**

Moms, isn't this what we face? A daughter comes down the stairs in an outfit we know we are not letting her leave the house in... We say, "No way!" and all chaos breaks loose! Or, we say nothing at all and regret allowing her to dress that way, wishing we knew the right words to use. We are not alone! This is a HOT topic that many families struggle with today. In this session, mothers and daughters learn ways to help navigate this difficult time with break out groups led by Paula Collins from Your Closet's Best Friend and Tina Murphy, M.A., LPC, therapist at West County Psychological Associates. Join us for an evening of fashion, fun and facts.

Paula will help guide the youth in making the best fashion choices that fit their own personal style through:

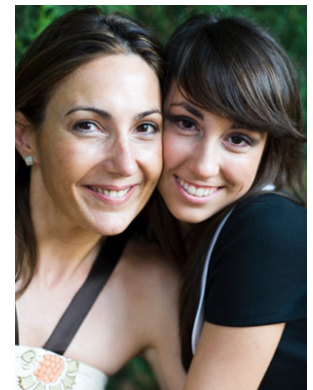
- Group brainstorm on struggles, thoughts and pressure on how you're expected to look.
- Tips and techniques for dressing with focus on good choices for your body and image.
- Smart basics to have in your wardrobe, fun pieces to play with while respecting your values, body, budget and lifestyle.

Tina will discuss with the moms the science behind "why" teens want to dress the way they do:

- Common developmental issues, fashion and the brain at this age.
- Typical pushbacks and power struggles that happen while dressing.
- What to say and how to discuss the issue without taking things personally.
- Leave with real solutions!

Presenters:

Paula Collins, the stylist from Your Closet's Best Friend has over 26 years in the fashion industry. Paula has monthly featured style segments on KMOV Great Day St. Louis, a fashion blog, and does many speaking engagements. Her honest and effective approach has helped countless women and girls have wardrobes that not only reflect their best self, it respects their budget, lifestyle, and body type.



Tina Murphy, MA, LPC is a professional and school counselor with over 15 years' experience of working with children, adolescents and families in the metro area. Tina specializes in helping children, adolescents and their parents through developmental milestones, social skill issues, building self-confidence and strengthening family and peer relationships. She consults with many area schools and has given numerous parent presentations in the area on relevant issues pertaining to our youth today.