

Here's a letter that beautifully articulates the concerns of many of the parents of today's children.

The computer technology virus is so deeply embedded in the cells and minds of our children at this point, and is spreading at such an alarming rate, that what the spiritual elders warned us of is directly upon us, which is: *that it's too late*. Can I please just say that I am heartbroken about this? I watch my step-children spend entire weekends doing nothing but downloading TV programs from the internet, e-mailing their friends, playing video games, completely absorbed in the computer software that is of current interest to them. Most of their friends do the same thing. They don't know whether it is warm or cold outside, whether it is cloudy or sunny, and for the most part, they don't care. They can barely take fifteen minutes to finish a meal before they race back over to the computer to resume what it is they were doing that's of such paramount importance to them. Sometimes after hours of staring at that damn screen, they get so disassociated from their bodies that they don't realize that they are hungry or thirsty or tired. Their skin is pale from lack of being outside in the sun, and I cringe as I notice their posture when sitting at the computer—it's the same kind of posture that leads adults straight into my office thirty years later to be treated for back and neck pain.

In order to "relate" to my step-daughters, I have sat with them for an entire evening while they watched some of these TV programs to get a sense of what it is that drives them to such a state where they are impervious to nature and all human life forms around them. And truthfully, I was horrified by what I saw. Across the board, these TV shows (as do the fashion magazines, which they also like to read) portray women as petty and superficial, vain, bitchy, competitive, devious, overly-skinny, upper-middle class and blond. This is what my step-daughters race to their room to watch every weekend when they come over and what they talk to their friends about during the week. To me, it's entertainment at the expense of human dignity. I've been making an effort to go along with the whole thing, be relaxed and good natured about this obsession with and addiction to computers, cell phones, and i-pods, but I cannot ignore the voice in the depths of my conscience that is screaming, "*Something is terribly wrong here!*" Little by little, these ravenous, insatiable and insidious viruses are squeezing and sucking and draining all the humanity and soul out of this planet.

It is plain to see that the cost we are paying and that our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be paying in the energetic spiritual and human domains for this grandiose, mind-boggling deification of the sleek, brazen technology god is exorbitant. Is this really an evolutionary process or is it a devolutionary one? Concomitant with this obsession with technology is the rise, to epidemic proportions, in the use of anti-depressants: 124 million people in this country on Prozac alone, and now they have come out with a "mint-flavored liquid form" for toddlers.

There has been an extreme disconnect from the rhythms of the natural world in our time. There is more loneliness, misery and isolation on the planet now than ever. We stand alone out of sync and out of touch with the intrinsic, graceful holiness of life itself. Revelation of the Sacred can be found, as indigenous people and visionaries have always known, through relationship with the simple magic and profound mystery of nature. The Heart of the Sacred is discovered through the cultivation of compassion for all life forms. But the eyes of the world are caked shut with the dust of deception, and we as a species have inexorably desecrated and banished the Sacred through this incessant worshipping of false gods and idols. We have lost the way, and it is too late. The veils of darkness have turned to heavy, molten lead.

“Time spent in nature puts distance between us and all the non-essentials in our lives.....it brings us closer to what really matters.”

The antidote to this state of affairs that we've had success with includes the following recommendation:

Propose (non-negotiable) that one hour be spent each weekend day outside creating art from nature or planting something or both. (Sometimes tying the art project to a piece they can decorate their rooms with works well.) And sometimes the hour stretches in to more when the child realizes that connecting to Reality is more essentially entertaining than escaping from it.

Project suggestions:

Plant a plant, take a digital photograph of it, print it using tiling features, tape this together and paint it while observing the actual plant. Install it in their room.

Sit in front of a tree or plant and observe, draw and paint it. Cut out sections and decoupage an old piece of furniture for their rooms.

Create a large-scale mural on pieced-together craft paper of an outdoor garden space and then install floor-to-ceiling with double-sided non-wall damaging tape.