Connections First
Joshua McGraw

In the era of technology – (tablets, phones, computers, and gaming systems) children and adults are becoming more and more disconnected. We sit in the same room as others; yet, we are miles apart zooming through social media, checking in on our to-do list or making sure the hottest new celebrity hasn’t done something that’s gone viral and we missed it. We get sucked into the social media world and forget about the world right in our own homes. We do this to the extent of missing out on the happenings in our living rooms with our family and friends. We mentally check out as our children attempt to bring us into their world, the world of imagination and creativity.

Conscious Discipline shows us in order to truly connect we need four simple things – **eye contact, touch, presence** and **playfulness**. It is impossible to get these four, critical elements through a device. When children have one on one time, with an adult or other child, cut short because of a tweet or text we cut short the connecting opportunity and deepen the disconnected society. Our brain rewires telling us “I'm not as important as the ding from a cell phone.” This disconnect continues generation after generation simply because the first generation was not taught how to connect with others in the first place. We are not capable of forming bonds with others when we have not seen what true connection looks and feels like.

One would think with the ease of texting we easily connect with others. But is a simple text “hey” enough? Do we create a more connected universe by sending those three letters? Our community is growing further and further apart when all the technological advances should be bringing the outside world in. So what is missing? Why are we disconnected starting at such a young age? The four critical elements of connection are missing from the technological world we live in. Touch, eye contact, presence and playfulness allows for Oxytocin to be released into our bodies giving a sense of joy and happiness as we begin to feel a deeper connection with those we love.

We are at a critical point in our world where we must learn how to connect, empathize and show we care to people around us. It is time to put down our cell phones, put down devices and learn how to connect with our children so they become reconnected to their peers and community. It starts with the adults and continues with the children. What kids see from adults is what they will do when they are adults. I challenge you no matter how quiet, easy or glorious it is when a child is plugged into a video game; choose to play a game together, discuss the things they (the children) want to discuss and show genuine interest in the things that excite our next generation of leaders.

The children in our community are building connections with each other and adults in school through the structures of Conscious Discipline. Our children are learning how to turn off devices and truly connect with each other. Kids are noticing when their friends are in upset, they recognize when a simple wish well can change the path, of upset, for their peer. These kids have the ability to empower themselves and each other so that their focus and attention is on regulating themselves to be helpful members in a family. Allow our new generation of world changers to teach us about connection so our world can be a world of love, peace and kindness. We are in it together and we got this! Our kids learn from us, show them the light and be the change we want to see, so that our world is a world of peace.
I encourage you to have your child show you a few of the connecting activities we do in our schools. Help refresh their brains from summer by asking to see how to do the butterfly, salmon, or milking the cow.

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