

A Family Discussion About Technology

by Amanda Ingram and Carol Duerksen

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Invite families of students to this session.
- 2 Make copies of the response sheets—one for each participant, including family members
- 3 Prepare refreshments
- 4 Pens or pencils

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS

Welcome students and their families. Begin the session by asking parents what their favorite piece of technology was when they were a teen, and then ask teens for their favorite piece of technology. Talk about how fast technology is affecting and changing our world and our lives as families.

CONNECT WITH THE CONTENT

- 1 Hand out the response sheets and pens. Ask participants to read the questions on the sheet so they can listen for the answers as you read the story.
- 2 Read the story “Angie’s Family and Technology”
- 3 Answer the questions on the sheets

REFLECT

Break into groups of students together and parents together. Ask them to share their responses to the questions. Then break into family unit groups and share responses again.

RESPOND

Bring the whole group together for a discussion of what is happening in their families. Invite families to share what they are doing to keep technology from being a negative influence on their lives. Share the following mini-lecture:

Many people wonder why the Amish are so “backwards” and why they shun modern technology. A large part of the reason is how it affects their families. For example, a phone in the house controls family life when it rings. A car enables family members to drive farther than a buggy does, and that affects family life. One group of Amish in Missouri actually allow modern technology in their milking barns so that the fathers can stay on the farms and be with their family rather than take jobs in town. This group chose to use technology to benefit their family life.

Ask: Are there things you are willing to do—goals you are willing to set—to use technology to help your family life rather than hurt it?

Invite participants to set those goals as a family unit.

Enjoy refreshments together.

ANGIE’S FAMILY AND TECHNOLOGY

Angie’s mom gets home at 8:00 p.m., at the earliest. This isn’t just once a week, this is every day of the week, weekends included. Her mom works three jobs, so that they can have “the stuff that they need”. She wants to see her mother more, but her mother insists that she must work all those hours. After all, without those three jobs, they would have to turn off the cell phones, the wireless internet, and the cable. Angie’s father works only one job, but she does not get to see him much, either. When he is off work, he is normally watching his favorite shows on the television, messing on the internet, or talking on the phone. They only eat together at the table on holidays. When they do eat together, it is in front of the television. Angie is grateful for the cell phones, TV, and cable, but she feels lonely all the time. She talks to her friends, but there are some things she would rather discuss with her parents. When she tells her parents that they don’t spend enough time together, they say something like, “Well, how about we go see a movie?”. Her mother brings up the fact that they talk on the phone three or four times a week while she is driving home from work, a thirty minute conversation. This seems to justify the fact that they do not spend time with their daughter. Angie feels like her parents do not want to spend time with her, and does not know how to get their focus away from technology onto her.

RESPONSE TO ANGIE’S STORY

- 1 List the ways that your family is similar to Angie’s.
- 2 List the ways that your family is different from Angie’s.
- 3 Does your family spend as much time together as you would like?
- 4 Are you personally willing to do anything to spend more time together? If so, what are you willing to do?
- 5 Is technology affecting your family in positive or negative ways? Explain. (Include cell phones, internet, cable TV, game cubes, x-box, etc.)