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## Wired on Technology

By Jennifer Wake

Advances in technology have changed the face of our world and how we live in it. With information accessible at the click of a button and wireless networks popping up everywhere, how we work and how we interact has changed.

Because of his job, Moraga resident Mark Edelstone says he is always accessible. As the Head of Global Semiconductor Investment Banking for JP Morgan Securities, Inc., Edelstone needs to be available to respond immediately to market changes, but he likes it that way.

"I am completely 24/7 always accessible with the exception of five to six hours of sleep each night (and even that can get interrupted)," he said. "I just believe in instant reply and I have that expectation of others."

Since Edelstone receives approximately 150 e-mails a day, he says instant access makes him far more productive. "I don't like being disconnected. I'm comfortable being reachable and I rarely go anywhere without my cell phone or RIMM."

Both of his children, Steven, 17, and Emily, 14, as well as his wife, Lori, have their own cell phones with texting capability. "Lori prefers e-mail, but Steven and Emily seldom use e-mail, and rely on instant messaging instead. They text more than talk on the phone," he said.

When Campolindo took on Acalanes at the recent NCS semi-final boys basketball game last week, neither Steven nor Emily could attend because of their own conflicting events, yet they did not miss the action. "Each of them had friends at the game giving them a steady stream of what was happening," Edelstone said.

But can use of this technology go too far? When does it shift from a great form of communication to a source of addiction?

According to Lafayette marriage and family therapist (MFT) Dominic D'Ambrosio, some indicators that there might be a problem are if the person has a preoccupation about gaming, texting or using the Internet.

"If on the way home from Tahoe, you can't wait to get home to play a video game, or other areas of your life are being neglected, like you're not in sports with friends or school is suffering, there might be a problem," D'Ambrosio said.

A recent letter to parents from Joaquin Moraga Intermediate principal Bruce Burns said that although the school has a strict policy against using cell phones on campus, students are "often thinking about and waiting for their next text message instead of attending to their school work."

Burns suggested parents check their monthly phone bill to see how many text messages a child is sending or has received.

D'Ambrosio and colleague Steven Freemire, MFT, held a conference for parents on Feb. 21 entitled "Living in the World of iPhone, Wii, and My Space: Tools of Addiction or Means of Communication" to address these concerns. Although there are benefits to these new technologies, such as building relationships and a sense of community with friends, and getting news of social gatherings, D'Ambrosio and Freemire explained that users can fall victim to cyber bullying, can have private or hurtful information disseminated to hundreds of people with a click, or can become vulnerable to predators.

"I suggest parents talk to other parents to see how long their kids spend on the Internet or gaming," D'Ambrosio said. "Get a frame of reference, limit access to types of things kids have access to, or get professional help."

The main reason D'Ambrosio believes some kids (and adults) get into trouble is an inability to deal with boredom. "Boredom means discomfort with yourself," he said. "Play board games, cards, or learn to daydream. Help our children learn how to deal with down time. The world is making it very hard for us – kids will always be around computers, cell phones."

New technological advances, however, are not a bad thing. For many, like Edelstone, the world is a better place thanks to wireless technologies.

"About eight years ago, I went on a cruise (and that was before cruise ships had Internet access)," he said. "The cruise was great, but I came back to 1,000 e-mails. It took all the fun out of the cruise. All the good feelings were gone."

Now, the world is open to him. While sitting in the bleachers watching a Cal game last week, Edelstone sent me an e-mail update: "Cal is losing 21-15 to Washington State, with seven minutes remaining in the first half."