



River Valley Current

March 10, 2015 No. 405

"Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in."
- Alan Alda

School Calendar

This Week

Monday, Mar. 9 – Friday, Mar. 13
3rd Grade Farm Trip

Looking Ahead

Saturday, Mar. 14
2nd grade workday

Wednesday, Mar. 18
School Tour 9:00 am

Thursday, Mar. 19
MS Musical, "The Sound of Music" 7:00 pm

Friday, Mar. 20
MS Musical, "The Sound of Music" 7:00 pm

Saturday, Mar. 21
MS Musical, "The Sound of Music" 2:00 pm

Thursday, Mar. 26
Early Dismissal -Parent Teacher Conf. 1:00 pm

Friday, Mar. 27
No School – Parent Teacher Conferences

How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org
lc@rivervalleyschool.org
bot@rivervalleyschool.org
pc@rivervalleyschool.org

Snow Day Make-up

Because of the time we missed for snow days this year, the following changes will need to be made to our calendar:

Thursday, March 26 – 1 pm dismissal
Thursday, June 11 – Full day of school
Friday, June 12 – Full day of school

No After-School Program Next Week

Mr. Laker will be away March 17, 18, & 19.

Save the Date Mayfaire – May 9th

On these cold winter days, remember, we'll be celebrating Mayfaire before you know it!

**The Auction is Coming Home.
Save the Date- Saturday, May 30th**
The Auction Committee is bringing the big event back to school and this year's Gala will be yet another fantastic night out!

Food Drive Donations Due at Drop-off Tomorrow

Once again this year we will be participating in the United Way Food Drive during which all of the schools in our area collect food for their local food banks.

Food will be picked up on the morning of Wednesday, March 11th.

Please bring your donations to school before then and put them in the boxes in the lobby.

Food Guide (Please check expiration date before donation):

Preschool: Canned Soup, Macaroni & Cheese

Kindergarten: Canned Vegetables, Cereal

1st Grade: Cereal, Nonperishable Milk Products

2nd Grade: Canned Fruit, Tomato Products

3rd Grade: Peanut Butter, Jelly, Canned Meat

4th Grade: Canned Fruit, Juice, Cereal

5th Grade: Spaghetti Sauce, Canned Tomatoes

6th Grade: Tuna, Canned Meat, Stew, Rice

7th Grade: Soup, Rice, Macaroni, Cereal

8th Grade: Canned Meat, Tuna, Pasta & Sauce

The Sound of Music

The hallways are alive with the sound of music and it's time to reserve tickets for this year's production. The 7th and 8th graders are working hard to make this a performance you and your children will remember for years to come.

**"The Sound of Music" will be performed on
Thursday, March 18th and Friday, March 19th at 7 pm and
Saturday, March 20th at 2 pm.**

Please fill out the order form attached to the Current and put it in the folder on the office door. Seating is limited so get your orders in soon to guarantee a spot for you and your family.



**Next Parent Council Meeting:
Wednesday March 18th at 2:00
at Homestead General Store.**

Summer Camp Registration Has Begun!
If you register before March 25th, you will receive a discount. A brochure with more details and registration forms are attached to this week's Current.

From Administration

AWSNA Invites you to Participate in the Conversation

The Human Encounter: Parent-Teacher Relationships in a Waldorf School Community. A Conversation with Torin M. Finsler, PhD. Join us for a webinar on Apr 21, 2015 at 2:00 PM EDT.

Register now! <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8854050843730207746>

A school is a community, and like all communities its health depends upon the quality of its relationships. Join us as Torin speaks to the parent-teacher relationship in all its dimensions offering both practical advice and deeper, spiritual insights. This webinar is co-sponsored by AWSNA and the Anthroposophical Society in America. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

New! 3-day Mixed-age Early Childhood class to begin April 15, 2015

It is so exciting to see this class filling up with a great mix of children from new Garden Gate graduates to kindergarten-ready young ones. What a rich class experience they will have! 12 children is the most we can accommodate, and right now only a few spots remain, so if you or someone you know is interested – now is the time. This class is also a nice way for children to get familiar with RVWS and with some other students before jumping in, in September.

Amanda Blanco will lead the class through a morning of interactive play, both indoors and out, as well as special activities such as crafts, watercolor painting, circle activities, singing and story time in the thoughtfully simple classroom environment. Large and small motor skills and receptive language skills, social awareness, love for the natural world, self-care are some of what is developed as the children play and work with one another under the respectful guidance of their teacher. Children must be at least 2 years, 9 months of age and reliably toilet-trained.

Class will meet Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:30am until 1:00pm. Children 3 and older may be able to extend their day until 3:15pm with our Afternoon Garden program (as space allows).

Please contact Cindy Schretlen with any questions, or to receive an application. 610-982-5606 x 203
admissions@rivervalley.school.org

Thank You

Thank you Kelly Pickering (mother of Storey Deerhake, Class of 2014) for hosting Louise deForest during her visit to RVWS. We are grateful for your hospitality and generosity.

A huge thank you to those who helped make the Open House last Saturday a success. To our wonderful presenters who provided valuable and intriguing information: Amanda Blanco, Kathy Bernhardt, Ken Friedman, Mary K Till and Laura Birdsall. Thank you to Melanie Niemczura for helping to coordinate the faculty planning process. A big thank you to Renée Goodyear for coming in early on Saturday morning to get food prepped, coffee brewing and generally making the front lobby look spiffy! Thank you to everyone who brought the delicious food. It's always so wonderful to have homemade dishes and tasty treats to offer our guests. Thank you to Carol Diven and her crew of workers for coming in a little bit later to start your work on the set so we could use the APR to start things off and also to the 7th & 8th graders and their willing siblings for helping us move desks afterwards. To Karen Atkinson, Rebecca West and Kathy Bernhardt for allowing us to use your welcoming rooms for the morning. Thank you to all the teachers for providing us with wonderful examples of your student's work – the displays were beautiful and impressive! To Cyndi Shain and Hannah Blanco for keeping the children so engaged so that their visiting parents were able to enjoy the program. We couldn't do it without you all! -- Cindy, Hilary & Brian

From the Faculty

WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING?

First Grade: Language Arts

Second Grade: Arithmetic

Third Grade: Farm Trip

Fourth Grade: Language Arts/Science/Study of Animals

Fifth Grade: North American History and Geography

Sixth Grade: History/Rome/Middle Ages

Seventh Grade: Drama

Eighth Grade: Drama

Circus Club is Going on the Road

For the next 2 Saturdays (3/14, & 3/21), the RVWS Circus Club will meet in Hopewell, NJ from 10:30 am-12 pm. The middle school play has taken over the All-Purpose Room so we are temporarily re-locating. All skill levels are welcome. Fee: by donation. Call Mr. Friedman (610-847-8749) for more details.

From the Leadership Council

What LC is Working On

Input from community on the grade school movement curriculum

Teacher evaluations with TDC

Faculty hiring for next year with the faculty

Program development with EC

Remember, we have open hours every Friday from 3:30-4. Please stop by if you have any questions or concerns.

Class Fundraisers

RVWS Seasonal Cookbook and Local Directory

As a fundraiser for their farm trip, the rising 3rd grade plans to publish a cookbook. In addition to recipes, it will also have seasonal games, crafts, and activities, as well as an area directory. Recipes have been submitted from faculty, alumnae and the rising 3rd grade, and we would love for every family to be represented to make this book truly inclusive of our whole, wonderful school. Please consider submitting your child's/family's favorite recipe. If your children would enjoy submitting an accompanying illustration, we hope to include those as well on their recipe page.

This book will also feature an area directory of recommended summer camps, museums, seasonal outdoor destinations, craft stores, health practitioners, etc. We hope that this will make our book a useful resource to families, especially those new to RVWS.

See attachment for more details, and please respond by Friday March 13th. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Jean Tuma or Tracy Fly. Thank you for your consideration!

8th Grade Class Fundraiser

8th Grade is so very grateful for all the support you've lent to our class trip -- from buying sweatshirts (contact Miss Hummel if you haven't purchased yours yet!) to eating heartily at Winter Fair. We thank you also for ordering samosas every week and for stocking up on them on the first Monday of each month. (If you haven't tried them yet, we urge you to do so--it's not too late to email Renell with a bulk order and have an easy meal at the ready!)

As we approach our fundraising goal, we are continuing our snack (and coffee!) sales in the lobby every Monday and Wednesday. Isn't it nice to know that you can send your child in with a couple of bucks to pick up a healthy snack to drop in their lunch box on their way into school? Our popular morning snack offerings currently include:

- Organic Popcorn with butter and salt \$1.50 (quart bag)
- Cheese Cubes \$1.50
- Organic non-GMO Corn Chips & Salsa \$1.75
- Homemade Beef Jerky \$2.00

In the afternoons we offer sweet breads, warm, ready-to-eat baby burritos, hot dogs kebabs (intriguing, no?), and other inspired, nutritious creations by Grandy.

Alumni News

At Palisades High School

River Valley isn't the only school in our area performing "The Sound of Music." At Palisades HS, Tobey Riffle (Class of 2011), will be portraying Captain Von Trapp! Performances are on March 13, 14 at 7 p.m. and March 15 @ 2 p.m.

From Parent Council

Parent Teacher Conferences--Thursday and Friday March 26th and 27th

This is a very busy time for teachers and parents help out by providing some meals for them.

We will do as we did in November and make food for our own teachers. Ask your teacher what he or she likes to eat, about any allergies and see if they need food for both days or just one etc.

We will also include the specialty teachers this time. Look for an email from your Classroom Coordinator in order to organize this. The faculty truly appreciates this wonderful service!

From the Community

KIRA WILLEY & FRIENDS CHILDREN'S BENEFIT CONCERT

Join Kira and her full band for a blowout CD Release party! This can't-be-missed family event includes backup singers Maggie Arnold, Alexis Goedel, Callie Miles, Sawyer Wesp, Gabe Freeman, and Tristan Willey; as well as our own Alison Gillespie, joining Kira on fiddle to back up a troupe of Irish stepdancers!

The show is a benefit for Donegan Elementary on Bethlehem's South Side, which has lost state funding for its incredibly valuable after-hours programs for kids who really, really need them. Key Wilde opens! Video premiere! Kids' choral performances! Plus yummy snacks, raffles for great prizes, and crafts for sale.

Saturday, March 14, 3 PM, Zoellner Arts Center, Bethlehem. Tickets: \$10/child, \$15/adult. Group discount: \$8 per ticket for five or more. Going fast at zoellnerartscenter.org!

Renee is coming to Brick House

Dr. Renee Sexton, Network Chiropractor, is coming to Brick House! She will be seeing clients on Monday, March 16, 2015, 5 PM- 7:30 PM

Maple Syrup from Tap to Bottle

Saturday, March 21 - 11 am

The Sugar Shack, Headquarters Road

By popular demand, Craig Schneiderwind will be back to demonstrate the maple syrup making process. Tasting and hands-on opportunities for the kids! Email Bill Cahill cahill@ptd.net for directions and to sign up.

Sponsored by the Tincum Conservancy

Seeking Childcare

RVWS family is looking for a creative and caring soul to watch our 23 month old daughter, Valentina on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, from 8:30am to 2:30pm. Driving would be ideal. If you need to bring your child that may work out. Valentina is a funny, chatty and very friendly little girl. We live in Plumstead Twp, near the Gardenville Hotel @ 413. Please reach us at 917-670-9976 (Tom) or 917-297-2733 (Dayana). Thank you!

Every Child Moves Forward: Strengthening Academic Capacities through Movement

Waldorf School of Princeton welcomes educator Jeff Tunkey on Monday, March 16, at 7 p.m., to discuss the importance of movement in children's overall development, and how Waldorf schools integrate movement with academics on a daily basis, from the earliest years onward.

Both a growing body of modern research and the foundations of Waldorf Education point to the fact that a balanced, school-wide movement program will help all students reach their full potential. Experience has shown that classes of students, from early childhood through high school, who receive these activities are able to move ahead more solidly. Benefits of these exercises - if done regularly and with the indicated rhythm - include:

Foundations for literacy - developmental capacities for all aspects of language.

Foundations for numeracy - the math/logical and spatial intelligences

Readiness for desk-work - enhancing focus and attention.

Setting the stage for harmonious receptivity to new material.

Bodily/kinesthetic and spatial integration.

Strengthening the will.

This talk is free and open to the public.

Jeff Tunkey teaches both Physical Education and Extra Lesson at Aurora Waldorf School, near Buffalo, NY, and is the school's Educational Support Team Coordinator. He has also taught teacher groups through the Association for a Healing Education, the HEART Program in Toronto, and at other schools. For more information on Jeff, and on healthy movement for children, please visit www.movementforchildhood.com.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Take Center, LLC

Outpatient Rehabilitation Services and Equine Therapy Program in Kintnersville, PA

Are you looking for an opportunity to learn more about horses and work with people with a disability? Take Center Outpatient Rehabilitative Services provides physical therapy with the use of a horse. Hippotherapy, as it is called, is used to treat people with various disabilities including physical and cognitive challenges. By putting the patient on the horse, the horse's movement is transferred to the patient, which helps improve strength, posture, balance and gait. There are many ways to help!

- Working as a leader or a side aide in the riding ring
 - Grooming the horses
 - Cleaning tack
 - Tacking up the horses for riders
 - Leading horses to and from the riding ring
 - Feeding the horses and making sure they have fresh water
 - Cleaning the stalls and barn
 - Riding ring maintenance
 - Making light repairs
- ...and more

We are looking for volunteers of all ages to help. Prior experience working with horses is not required – training is offered. Minimum age to assist in the riding ring is 13. We do ask that youth under the age of 10 are accompanied by an adult.

Our comprehensive volunteer training sessions will begin in mid-March and go through April. Please visit us at www.takecenter.com for more details.

Without you, we cannot provide the quality services we strive to achieve. By volunteering at Take Center, you are sure to walk away with unforgettable, valuable experiences from your connections with amazing people – and horses, too! Please contact us with any questions or interest. We'd love to hear from you!

Terri K. Long, MPT ph: 610-346-9446 e: tklong63@verizon.net

web: www.takecenter.com 1300 Woodcock Lane, Kintnersville, PA 18930

Yoga Loka

SHAKE IT OFF! WITH T.R.E

Learn how to release your trauma, drama and stress

TRE® (Tension, Stress & Trauma Release Exercise) is an innovative series of exercises that assist the body in releasing deep muscular patterns of stress, tension and trauma. Created by Dr. David Berceci, PhD, TRE® safely activates a natural reflex mechanism of shaking or vibrating that releases muscular tension and calms down the nervous system. When this muscular shaking/vibrating mechanism is activated in a safe and controlled environment, the body is able to return to a state of balance. After doing TRE®, many people report feelings of peace and well-being. This is a self-regulating process- the tremors can be immediately stopped by simply straightening the legs or rolling onto their side if one becomes uncomfortable. Amarjyothi will assist you in this process. When you are comfortable doing so, you can practice it at home on your own, without having to rely on a therapist to continue your healing process. However, working in a group is a very powerful experience, so come to as many sessions as you can!

No previous experience in anything necessary!

Wednesday, 3/18- 11:00-12:00

\$15. Space is limited

Back Care series

2 sessions, beginning 3/15, 3/22

Family Yoga

3/20 - All ages welcome

Visit the website to register and for more information - www.Yoga-Loka.com

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

Welcome All Adults to an ongoing weekly gathering of artists who would like to individually pursue their craft in the company of other creative people in a friendly, supportive, and relaxing atmosphere. These are not lessons. You will be working independently within the group for your own enjoyment. We will meet in the main floor Community Meeting Room of the Riegelsville Borough Hall every Thursday morning from 10 – 12 am, except the first Thursday of the month. All mediums are welcome. Please bring a sheet of plastic to cover the table and please leave your workspace clean. Any questions? Call Karen on 973.876.0401.

Alternative High School Opportunity

Bucks Learning Cooperative is holding an information session for families interested in knowing more about BLC's innovative approach to learning. BLC helps high school-age teens live and learn without school by creating a personalized education based on their interests, goals and abilities. All are welcome to meet and chat with mentors and parents about using BLC to provide an alternative to high school.

When: Thursday, March 5th, 7pm

Location: Middletown Friends Meeting House, 453 W. Maple Ave. Langhorne, PA 19047

Help us support the youth of our community!

Bridgeton Athletic Association's Beef & Beer Benefit DJ, Dancing, Raffles, Silent Auctions, Fun & Fellowship for a great cause!

Saturday March 28th from 7-12pm, Bridgeton AA Banquet Hall, 1340 Bridgeton Hill Rd Upper Black Eddy, PA 18972 Adults 21 or older Only! Tickets: \$25 each/Door or \$40 couple. Call Ahead to Reserve Tickets & Tables.

Please Contact: Kerri Scheetz @

bridgetonaa@gmail.com or 484.325.1816

Ready to activate your brain/body connection?

Dayana Henwood, GCFP, (mom of Sofia, Moon Room) is inviting you to discover the benefits of the Feldenkrais Method® at her new space in Pipersville (shared with Golden Cabinet acupuncture).

The Feldenkrais Method® is a remarkable approach to human movement, learning, and change, recognized for its strategies to improve posture, flexibility, coordination, athletic, and artistic ability, and to help those with chronic pain, restricted movement, and tension. Neurobiologists are making new discoveries about "neuroplasticity," or how our brain changes as it learns. As featured by bestselling author Norman Doidge, M.D. in his new book *The Brain's Way of Healing*, the Feldenkrais Method® is a low stress, safe and effective way to apply neuroplasticity and provide new hope for a wide range of people, from those suffering from autism, stroke, Parkinson's disease, balance problems, or scoliosis, to those looking to improve their yoga and exercise or find more comfort while typing, driving or sitting. Experience a cutting-edge approach to health and wellness in a private and safe environment.

Please mention RVWS when booking your first appointment to receive a complimentary \$20 off.

More information at www.dayanahenwood.com or 917-297-2733

Upcoming Opportunities from Saharra White-Wolf

Saharra White-Wolf invites you on March 13th to a Shamanic Drum Journey at Wellness Rock, 28 Center Street, Clinton, NJ at 7:30 pm. Reiki level 1 and level 2 class March 14-15 at 5 Cynthia Court, Annandale, NJ. Call Saharra at 973-902-5737 or email saharrawhitewolf@gmail.com.

Learn to Create Harmony Within Yourself

LEI program, based on indigenous ways, 1 year course begins March 21st. For more information contact Saharra.

The Partnership Course

This is a breakthrough personal development course that explores the nature of reality through partnerships. It is designed to provide you with success in the areas of life that matter the most: Health, Wealth, Attainment, Communication & Relationships. Ask yourself, "What if I had the power of partnerships available in my life?"

WHAT: A TEN-WEEK COURSE THAT MEETS 7PM, WEDNESDAY

WHERE: 110 Harrison St, 2nd Floor, Frenchtown, New Jersey 08825

WHEN: 7PM - 9:00PM COST: \$200.00

INSTRUCTOR: DR. SETH A. GROSSMAN EMAIL: CPSGROSSMAN@AOL.COM

PLEASE ASK FOR COURSE BROCHURE & SCHEDULE THE COURSE WILL BEGIN IN MARCH 2015

Items for Sale

The Divens are moving and downsizing and have some lovely furniture for sale including a Twin Captain's Bed with Firm Mattress, 2 sets of sheets, and Rolling Drawers; several bookshelves; a stereo cabinet; a stereo system with speakers; armoires; a rocking chair; a papasan chair; and a stand alone freezer. If any of this sounds of interest please contact Mrs. Diven in the music room or at (530) 209-2711.

We are Digitally Obese

By Amy Wright Glenn

Unlike our ancestors whose eyes took in the natural light of the sun, moon and stars, we are collectively and continually awash in the light of electronic technology.

Two Mothers

It's January 1973. An infant girl rests in her mother's arms. She falls asleep breastfeeding and her tiny face reflects the transcendent, soft peace of newborn slumber. Time slows to a reverent pace. The mother alternates between admiring her daughter's delicate features and witnessing the quiet hush of winter.

In an hour, her husband will return from a late-night shift at a local restaurant. She decides to wait up for him. There are many updates to share. Her breasts are no longer so sore. Their daughter soiled four diapers. His sister called to check in. Then, there were the hours of wonder -- the simple, peaceful wonder -- of staring into their daughter's new face. How to put that into words?

She reaches for a novel borrowed from the library. As an avid reader, she knows what it's like to lose herself in a book. But now she intermittently diverts her attention from reading to watch her sleeping daughter. What does life have in store for her? Who will she grow up to be? She turns the pages of her novel. Her daughter sleeps. She reads. Snow falls.

Now, fast-forward 41 years.

Today, the daughter is a new mother. Like her mother, she finds herself breastfeeding a newborn during cold winter months. Like her mother, she loves to read. Yet no singularly crafted story sparks thoughtful reverie or captures her attention. Rather, a sleek, metal device rests in her left hand. The new mother can access millions of novels in a matter of seconds. However, it takes willpower to stay the course with a chosen book. Why? At any point and with a delicate sweep of the tip of her finger, she can transport her attention to her bank account, Twitter feed, posts from various breastfeeding support groups, personal email, work email, social media newsfeeds and an endless array of information selected from the day's tsunami-sized volume of news, blogs and feature articles.

She checks the status of her recent Facebook posts. Seventy-four people commented on the last photo of her baby. Ninety-six people liked her latest profile update. Steady, small bursts of dopamine create a positive feedback loop linking neural pathways to crave this affirmation again and again. She swipes, posts, visits and revisits the site dozens of times a day.

Snow falls on pine trees. A beautiful infant boy sleeps. But no one notices. No one soaks this in. The mother's eyes are glued to the light emitted from an index-card sized screen in her hand. Suddenly, a green bar appears at the top of her iPhone. Her mother is calling. She lets it go to voicemail. Fifteen minutes later, after scanning through a collection of winter soup recipes, she touches a little red icon and listens to the message.

"Just thinking of you," her mother's voice fills with emotion. "I remember breastfeeding you that first winter. Those were some of the most beautiful experiences of my life. Now, you hold your own son. Treasure this time. I know you are."

Digitally Obese

In her article entitled "Technology" -- published by Juno, the hip magazine of choice for nature-minded moms of Great Britain -- UK-based author Abbe Opher describes herself as "digitally obese."

Opher and her husband, Eyal, rely on smartphones to operate an online retail business and "respond immediately and communicate effortlessly" to clients. While they remotely garner the income needed to sustain their household, the "constant interruption" is very challenging.

"And then there's the children," Opher laments.

When she considers allowing her children unfettered Internet access, her heart skips a beat. She fears they will be preyed upon, experience a shattering of innocence and become addicted to visual stimulation. Will they lose the ability to entertain themselves by consistently "side stepping boredom"? As Opher describes the strict limitations set to monitor her children's screen time, she confesses to "gorging" herself on "emails, texts, posts, shares, clips, blogs and tweets" when her children are at school.

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"I am a walking talking parenting contradiction," she says.

When it comes to our culture, however, there is no contradiction. Whether we turn on the television for background noise or surf Pinterest, porn or Pandora, we collectively, wholeheartedly, and with clear abandon embrace our addiction to screens.

Simply walk into any restaurant and rest assured that televisions stationed in every corner will provide entertainment should your dinner company prove insufficiently interesting. From dental offices to gas stations, from grocery stores to airplanes, it's rare to experience a public space that doesn't offer up a steady stream of commercially motivated visual stimulation. Unlike our ancestors whose eyes took in the natural light of the sun, moon and stars, we are collectively and continually awash in the light of electronic technology.

In fact, during most of our waking hours, we are staring at screens. In their August 2013 analysis of media use, eMarketer.com estimates the average American spends 12 of every 24 hours in front of a screen. Yes, 12 hours in a single day. How? In any given 24-hour period, the average American watches five hours of television, spends two hours on the phone engaged with "non-voice mobile activities," and spends an additional five hours online. We are digitally obese.

My husband and I don't watch television. In fact, we don't own one. We don't use television to soothe, distract or entertain our nearly 3-year-old son. In particular, I oppose exposing our toddler to the vapid commercials or violent, action movie trailers that fund mainstream television broadcasting. This makes going out to dinner as a family challenging. So, we frequent television-free establishments or pack a picnic to head to a local park. We enjoy time outdoors, and connect through games, conversation and song. We prefer the company of each other. But we struggle. Like millions of Americans, we struggle with the fact that nearly all of our work-related tasks are instantly accessible on the phones we choose to carry practically everywhere.

Limbic Dissonance

"I have my phone near me all day, sadly. This topic distresses me."

"My daughter whines at me when she can tell that my attention is so clearly not on her, but on a tiny device."

"I know I check it a lot, like every few minutes throughout the day."

Unique to mammals, the limbic areas of the brain constitute the seat of our emotional lives. Through the affective bonds nurtured in responsive and compassionate parenting (biologically expressed through breastfeeding and mother-child attachment), babies learn how to regulate and differentiate feelings, read non-verbal cues, internalize a sense of security, and cultivate the capacity to love.

Babies and children need plentiful time to engage in face-to-face and empathetic interaction with their primary caregivers. In their book, "A General Theory of Love," University of California San Francisco professors Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon write: "A steady limbic connection with a resonant parent lays down emotional expertise." Without such connection, the development of a healthy limbic system capable of empathizing with others is stunted, limbic dissonance results. The neural pathways that form a child's basic attachment system primarily develop in utero through the toddler years. If we value the expression of human empathy and kindness, safeguarding the limbic well-being of the earliest years of human development is crucial. Yet we live in a country that does little to nurture the foundational development of its citizens.

Distinct from every other industrialized nation, the United States does not offer new mothers federally supported paid maternity leave. Hence, our breastfeeding rates are markedly lower than our peers. American babies are routinely placed in institutionalized day cares of various qualities, often at the tender age of 6 weeks. Despite multiple studies revealing the danger of ignoring a baby's cries, too many American parents embrace a misguided "cry-it-out" approach to the challenges of nighttime parenting. Add to this unhealthy cocktail the fact that our children are being raised in a dissonant and addictive electronic haze and concerns about the limbic health of our nation are well founded. What do our children see when they turn to us for limbic regulation? Are we present? If not, chances are we are looking at a screen. What do we look like then? In his famous "Still Face" experiments, University of Massachusetts Boston professor Edward Tronick recorded the expressions of mothers engaged in screen time. Stoic, stale and bereft of affect, little ones see their parents emotionally disappear into a hypnotic-like trance.

Last year, researchers at Princeton University reported that 40 percent of American infants have insecure attachment bonds with their parents. The negative life-long consequences of this are well documented. Living without a stable emotional center, orients people toward anxiety, depression, aggression and addiction.

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Lewis, Amini and Lannon write: "If the attachment fabric of a civilization frays, if people cannot get from their relationships the emotional regulation that these bonds were designed to furnish, they will commandeer whatever means of limbic modulation they can lay their hands on."

Given the increasing rarity of human-to-human limbic regulation, is it any wonder that we've collectively turned to screens, and the products they sell, in order to assuage our emotional hunger? Although it certainly benefits the shareholders of today's media conglomerates, such behavior only fuels our dysfunction. As we lose ourselves in screen time, we damage our capacity to read human cues, connect to real-time human faces, and accurately respond with empathy to emotion. Even the health of the most meaningful of all our non-verbal expressions, human eye contact, is at significant risk.

Recently, researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles analyzed how two groups of sixth-graders were able to identify human emotion. Both groups were shown 50 images of human faces and asked to name the emotions present. The control group consisted of teens who had regular access to computers, phones and televisions. It was "life as usual," as Juana Summers reported in her NPR piece entitled "Kids and Screen Time: What does The Research Say?" The other group participated in a five-day technology-free retreat and "were significantly better at reading human emotions" after having no access to screen time for five days.

If we want what is best for our children, we must summon the strength to limit our own screen time. For nothing predicts a child's use of screen time than the frequency of a parent's use.

Patricia Greenfield, the main author of the study notes, "Our species evolved in an environment where there was only face-to-face interaction. ... If we reduce face-to-face interaction drastically, it's not surprising that the social skills would also get reduced." On our crowded, increasingly connected, globalized, and environmentally challenged planet, these are skills we can't afford to lose.

My Zen Master

"Mama, play!" my nearly 3-year-old son calls out to me. Like a relentlessly demanding Zen master, he tugs on my attention urging me to join him in the present moment.

"Mama, play!" he calls out again.

Usually, my son's invitation elicits joy. I love how he reaches out for my attention calling me to celebrate, for the umpteenth time, how his monster truck "crashes" an assembled line of boxcars. My son repeats words, actions and games over and over. This is how he learns. He soaks in the world with interest. Upon waking up, he looks out the bedroom window and declares, "Beautiful day!" His joyful enthusiasm evokes astonishingly deep reservoirs of maternal love and protection.

Due to qualities cultivated from 20 years of yoga practice, I often succeed at providing the quality of mind needed in sustaining limbic resonance, but not always. I am acutely aware of how difficult this task becomes when I engage screen technology. During such times, I feel overwhelmed by the intensity of his desire for me to join him in the present moment. Having taught courses on Buddhism for years, a particular scene from a documentary chronicling life in a Japanese Rinzai Zen monastery comes to mind. Meditating students sit silently erect in their dark monastic robes. The teacher walks slowly by each one. In his hand is a *kyosaku*, a long, thin, flat wooden stick. Skillfully and swiftly the teacher administers a sharp blow to each shoulder of every student. The intention is not to harm, rather the practice is meant to shock and rapidly summon the presence of a deeply awake mind.

A deeply awake and present mind isn't nurtured through an addiction to screens. If we want what is best for our children, we must summon the strength to limit our own screen time. For nothing predicts a child's use of screen time than the frequency of a parent's use. According to a 2013 study headed by Dr. Amy Bleakley, senior research scientist in the Health Communication group at Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, the amount of time parents spend watching television is the singular most important factor when predicting their children's use. As we turn to screens for limbic regulation, so will our children.

When my son's call for my attention strikes through my screen-time distractions with the force of a *kyosaku*, I take a deep breath and remind myself that I have a choice.

Mindfulness

Within the span of 40 years, our culture and our neurobiology have transformed. While our gluttonous use of screens present clear challenges, the benefits of rapid-fire, instant connection are multiple. The publishing, educational and retail industries have been altered fundamentally due to screen technology, unleashing a great deal of human creativity and potential. If we can consume this information mindfully and moderately, there is much to celebrate. Mindful and moderate consumption isn't only a present day challenge.

(Continued on next page)

Certainly, limbic dissonance, addiction and mental distraction existed before 1947, when Motorola manufactured the first cost-effective television set making screen technology available to millions of Americans. "My mother didn't need an iPhone to be distracted," a friend sadly reflects upon listening to me describe the research required for this piece.

Ancient Indian scriptures liken the quality of the everyday mind to that of a drunken monkey bitten by a scorpion. Struggling with distraction isn't a modern world problem; it's a human one. As far as we know, we stand distinct from other animals in our ability to physically occupy one space and mentally project our attention into another. I may be washing dinner dishes, but my mind is ruminating over an argument I had with my husband two days prior. The teachings of mindfulness boil down to cultivating the capacity to remain attentive to the unfolding present moment with patience and compassion. Mindfulness teachings are found in wisdom traditions worldwide. Whether we cultivate mindfulness through seated meditation practice, everyday breath awareness, or prayerful petitions to respond to life's vicissitudes with grace and strength, we draw upon proven techniques of positively transforming our mindset and brain structure.

Such mindful transformation is fundamental if we hope to preserve both public and private spaces that nurture our human need to connect, face to face, in real time. In order to break a 12-hour-a-day screen time addiction and re-establish the bonds of healthy attachment and limbic regulation, we must mindfully and significantly, reduce our exposure to screens. Inspired by the emphasis placed on nurturing meaningful connections as we begin this new year, may we dedicate daily hours to purposeful screen-free time and spend quality face-to-face time with those we cherish. May we turn off the television, put the cellphone away, close the laptop and notice the present beauty surrounding us.

"Treasure this time," the wise grandmother in the opening scene reminds us. Upon these mindful actions, our collective well-being depends.

Sound of Music Reservations

- Thursday, March 19th, 7pm # adults ____ # kids ____
- Friday, March 20th, 7pm # adults ____ # kids ____
- Saturday, March 21st, 2pm # adults ____ # kids ____

Ticket prices \$5 child, \$10 adult or \$30 per immediate family.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

We can only take prepaid reservations.
Make check payable to River Valley Waldorf School.
Bring form & check to office.

Submission Form – Rising 3rd Grade Fundraiser

Name: _____

Kindly respond by Friday March 13th via email (tumas@rcn.com) or return form to folder on table outside Mrs. Atkinson's classroom. If there are any questions, please get in touch with Tracy Fly or Jean Tuma.

I. Please consider sharing a favorite seasonal recipe in any of the following categories: breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, deserts, beverages (e.g. smoothies, teas). Feel free to include gluten-free, vegan, dairy-free, raw, quick and easy dishes, potluck favorites, etc.

* Recipes in electronic format (e.g. word document, url/web address) would be greatly preferred, but if it's easier to bring a bookmarked cookbook or magazine to school, we can make a photocopy and return the publication to you. Please make sure your name is clearly marked.

* If your child/children would be interested in creating an illustration to accompany their recipe, we will try to have it printed on their recipe page.

II. Recommendations for area directory (within 1 hour drive from the school, share as many as you can). Please include town/city. Add additional sheets if necessary.

Favorite activity for each season or general (e.g. parks, bike rentals, where to go tubing in summer, pumpkin picking or hiking in fall, berry farms, museums, local sites, etc): _____

Recommended summer camps: _____

Favorite arts/crafts/fabric/yarn store: _____

Farmers' markets (what makes your favorite stand out?): _____

Coffee/tea shops: _____

Healthy restaurants: _____

Health food stores (include town): _____

Instrument rentals: _____

Clothing stores (eg resale, specialty, etc): _____

Health providers (dentist, doctor, acupuncture, chiropractor, nutritionist, etc): _____

Online resources (clothes, gear, arts and crafts, etc): _____
