
saving

face

(book)

BEING **MEDIA**  **SAFE** PARENTS
IN A DIGITAL AGE

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Published by

MEDIA  **SAFE**
 **WORKSHOPS**

(Media Safe Workshops and this book do not provide legal advice – it is recommended to consult a lawyer for specific concerns.)

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*The **Media Safe Workshop** presentation was both timely and effective. Students were made aware in an interactive way, and it challenged them to really think about what they do on social media and how it can impact their lives, not only in the moment, but into their future.*

**Dr. Tarmo Poldmaa, Vice Principal,
Michipicoten High School**

The Workshop helped parents to feel confident about setting boundaries while embracing the benefits of current media. We also gained a better understanding of each type of media and left feeling more empowered and supported.

**Pastor Brian & Lynn Danter,
Windsor Christian Fellowship**

*The format of the Workshop allows for attendees to ask questions and receive detailed answers. We highly recommend **Media Safe Workshops** be presented to students, parents, and teachers so that everyone can feel supported in the world of media and technology.*

**Danette Mathias, Director,
Victim Services of Wawa & Area**



***Dedicated to every parent who has ever
felt lost, trying to keep up with their
families and with technology.***

***Thank you to God,
my wonderful wife, my incredible kids,
parents, family, friends
(Facebook and otherwise),
pastors, teachers and mentors, and, of
course, to Tim Horton's and Zero 7, for
allowing me to write into the midnight
hour on more than one occasion.***



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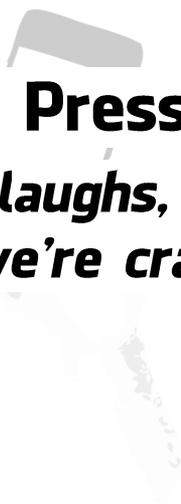
4. How We Can Get There



***“We are the first generation to have what we have and no one to guide us,” says Winnifred, a sassy tween.
“We are pioneers.”¹***

***“The only sure way to keep something private on Facebook is not to post it on Facebook.”
Farhad Manjoo,
Slate Magazine²***





Under Pressure
***Insanity laughs, under
pressure we're cracking.*** ³

I am starting to sound like my parents.

But before we go there, it is important to cover a few points.

First, this is the premier media book and resource for parents...with a Soundtrack. Each chapter has been named after a song, and you are encouraged to go to your favorite online music source and enjoy the corresponding song while you scan the chapter. Now, there is no obligation to follow this plan, but 4 out of 5 dentists recommend the 'Soundtrack Plan' as a way to enhance your reading experience.

They also recommend flossing daily.

Second, it helps to know that I appreciate the writing of Tom Peters, Ken Blanchard and Grover.

Yes, that Grover.

In fact, "*The Monster At The End Of This Book*" will change your life, if you let it. It changed mine, which you may notice as you

move toward the final pages. In this instance, I am going to talk about the “Monster” at the beginning of this book, work to make it less scary and then end with some practical ways to open up the discussion about it.

Carrying torches to the castle will not be necessary.

At several points in this book, you may notice the words: **Note To Self**. These refer to the times when I have actually paid attention to the signs around me and made a mental note to remember the lessons they taught. For me, these notes are similar to when the sky opened up and cast a light on Joliet Jake Blues⁴. I hope you find these “Notes” helpful.

Relatively few books address the topics that are covered by ***saving face (book)***, yet the ones that do are extremely wordy. They do not need to be.

Since my graduation from law school, and as a teacher at the college and university levels, I take great pleasure in pulling back the curtain to show that the Wizard of Oz is really just a regular schlub.

What do I mean by that, you ask?

In a nutshell, the Business of Law specializes in taking simple concepts and framing them in a way that make them difficult to understand. This requires you to...hire a lawyer. The lawyer then takes those simple concepts and explains them to you, but not so much that you no longer need the lawyer. In the business world, that's known as "job security".

In the end, that just was not me.

Instead of making things more difficult to understand, I am currently in the business of merging my legal, social media marketing and human resources training. The goal is to use these special skills in a way that helps families to understand how social media has, in a few short years, changed the way that we communicate.

saving face (book) is designed to take very simple concepts and keep them simple and relatable.

Do we have a deal? Does that work for you?

One of the leading books for parents strongly recommends that we need to be up to date on every device, website and app out there.

IMPOSSIBLE!

The result of this fear-based approach is that on the whole, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and educators feel...





**OVER-
WHELMED.**



And there is little that is more frustrating than the feeling of being overwhelmed. According to author Emily Bazelon:

“Some parents are (confused) by the technology. They friend their kids on Facebook without realizing they can’t see everything the teenagers post. For that you need your child’s password. They hear stories of children outwitting their parents and decide the monitoring is a lost cause.

It’s not.”⁵

When we started meeting with parents, students and teachers in our Media Safe Workshops, the sense of being overwhelmed was...well, overwhelming. At the beginning of every event, each individual tends to feel as if they are the only one in the room that feels lost in the constantly changing world of technology. The more we talk and the more questions that are asked, each person begins to realize a liberating truth:



**“I am not the
only one.”**



There is an incredible sense of relief that comes when we realize we are not the only one who feels OVERWHELMED by the challenges of parenting in the digital age. Sometimes, our post-workshop Question and Answer sessions last for hours as people begin to ask questions that they are afraid to ask anywhere else. What seems like a “dumb question” is often the question that everyone in the room wants to know, as well. They are just waiting for someone else to ask.

In the absence of a major life change or revelation brought about from reading this book, I hope that **saving face (book)** helps you to take that pressure off of yourself. You do not need to know it all, you just need to have some knowledge of the sites and apps that appeal to your kids and try to understand why they do.

saving face (book) is designed to help you pause... and step back from the madness that threatens to overwhelm our families. Although this book will draw attention to some specific sites that are massive in the life of kids, it is more important to encourage you to look at the bigger issues and establish some guidelines within your homes.

Warning:

The main goal is not necessarily to rid your house of Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat or the current flavour-of-the week. The goal is to

BE MEDIA SAFE

– to raise our families to take each of their digital lives seriously and act responsibly to help and not harm themselves and others. Please do not use this book as a weapon – take and use it as a tool to begin meaningful conversations within your household.

So why do we feel overwhelmed?

We want to make things better. That's a parental instinct.

However, the harsh truth is that we are not going to single-handedly change the media habits of our neighborhood and certainly not the habits of the entire world. At least not directly.

The good news is that we can set some boundaries ***within our own homes***. This is also the challenge.

As I said at the beginning, I am starting to sound like my parents. When I was a kid, my friends and I learned pretty quickly that hyper-violent movies that were not going to fly at the Richardson household. Music with offensive or suggestive lyrics better not cross the front door.

Why?

Simply, my parents understood that they had no control over the guidelines or standards of the whole world, but that they did have that authority within the four walls of their house. They also knew that communication had to be open, shock-proof and consistent, in order to stay in touch with their family.

And so can you.

Now that I've told you how this book has landed in your hands, I will tackle the next obvious question: Why Me?

- **I am a Parent:**

I am in the trenches with you. As a

father of teenagers, your issues are my issues. The benefit to you is that, as Liam Neeson once stated, “what I do have are a very particular set of skills; skills I have acquired over a very long career.”⁶

Namely:

- **I am a former Lawyer:**
The biggest benefit of my legal training is that it taught me how not to communicate the first thing that comes to mind. In the world of social media, applying this principle can help our families avoid potential pitfalls.
- **I have worked in Human Resources and Training:**
The rules of employment continue to adapt to keep up with the changing technology. As an employer, it is much easier to pre-qualify (and disqualify) an applicant through their online activity. Our kids may never know why they never get to the interview.
- **I am a Social Media Marketer:**
Social Media ads allow companies to

be very specific in targeting only the people they want to reach. More than ten years in marketing has provided a wealth of insight.

- **I am a Kid who needed guidance:**
When I was 15, a gentleman named Al Menconi⁷ traveled from California and spoke at my school, challenging us to carefully consider the media choices that we make on a daily basis. The principles he taught continue to stick with me, and this was long before America Online (remember them?) changed my world.

As I write this, our family is faced with the discovery of a social media profile that had been intentionally hidden. Fortunately for all of us, on careful review, we were relieved to find an absence of questionable material or a secret life, however, the issue brought up a series of questions and new household rules.

And presented a whole new dilemma for me.

As a person who speaks to people of all ages about being Media Safe, online and

offline, and about the responsible use of social and traditional media, do I want to share this story? Doesn't it undermine my credibility as the all-knowing, all-powerful King Of All Things Media?

Nope.

I don't claim to have all this stuff figured out. Nobody can claim that.

I worked extensively in the music business, negotiating record contracts (remember those?), and I always told clients to run from anyone who claimed that they knew it all. And there were a lot that claimed.

What I have been doing is studying this internet fad/phenomena for over twenty years and teaching and instructing for almost twenty-five. And just like my grandparents found out about rock and roll, Social Media is not a fad...and it is Not Going Away⁸.

This brings me back to the title, ***saving face (book)***. From an early age, I was exposed to a social environment where "saving face" was very important. Having the perfect

home, impeccable and enviable stellar life and all the material benefits that life included - all those things were believed to be evidence of “Success”.

Then time and life brought perspective.

The fact was that behind the doors of what looked like “Success”, often the reality was far from perfect.

The veneer was thin.

So I gave up on “saving face”. Life does not always wrap up nicely and the answers do not come easily. Often, they do not come without struggle and personal sacrifice.

Unfortunately, in so many ways, the worlds of social and traditional media are all about “saving face”:

- The models on magazine covers are Photoshopped. The practice that used to be appalling and deceptive is now standard and acceptable in the print magazine industry.

- Digital self-portraits, aka “Selfies”, are carefully planned and orchestrated. In many cases, they are wildly inappropriate and unnecessarily revealing. Apps such as Snapchat give a false sense of security that, once posted publicly, these images will permanently disappear into the wind in a matter of seconds.
- Twitter allows its users to “tweet” whatever is on their mind. Perhaps the best years to have this power may not be between the ages of 12 and 18.

Just a bit more background.

In spite of a wealth of information that is constantly developing, you will find very few statistics in **saving face (book)**.



What?
No Stats?



Well, some. But very few.
The fact is simply this:
the statistics are not great.

On the whole, we are spending more a lot
more time online than 5 or 10 years ago.

People continue to break the law by driving
and texting, with often disastrous results.

Many people create fake social media
profiles and actively lie online.

It is now a lot easier to bully and to be
bullied, both in the privacy of your home.

Smartphone access to pornography gets
easier every day.

Employees continue to lose their jobs due to
social media statements they have made.

Broadcasting vacation plans lets the world
know that our homes are empty, and there
are people who are happy to take advantage
of that information.

The sites that are hot today, may not be hot tomorrow. Although **saving face (book)** will make several references to some specific apps, sites and programs, the focus is not to dissect specific programs and warn you of their dangers.

Too often, as parents and educators, we wish we could push a 'Pause' button on the technology, just so we can have some time to catch up.

I want to encourage you to pause, step back and look at the bigger picture – with the overall goal of developing and encouraging habits within our families that value privacy and safety.

This is your chance to Pause.

Let's get started.

Footnotes and Credits

¹ Student, *Sexy Baby* (2012), Documentary.

² *Sticks And Stones: Defeating The Culture Of Bullying And Rediscovering The Power Of Character And Empathy* (2013), Emily Bazelon, p. 286.

³ David Bowie and Queen, "Under Pressure", (1981).

⁴ *The Blues Brothers* (1980), Universal Pictures.

⁵ *Sticks And Stones: Defeating The Culture Of Bullying And Rediscovering The Power Of Character And Empathy*, (2013), Emily Bazelon, p. 263.

⁶ *Taken* (2010), 20th Century Fox Films.

⁷ www.AIMenconi.com

⁸ www.NotGoingAway.com