

BeWell Connected

Winter 2018



Welcome Parents!

BeWell Health and Wellness provides health information to BridgeUP scholars and parents. This is our **Technology Health & Safety** edition of *BeWell Connected* – a newsletter for BridgeUP parents. This issue discusses social media and technology, and is designed to provide parents with information and resources that can assist them in providing guided support for their scholars. Social media and technology can be helpful or potentially disruptive. On the positive side, Internet places a world of information within a few keystrokes of eager learners, making it easier to find and retrieve information to complete homework assignments. Instagram and Snapchat allow friends to connect, and share life stories in photos. On the other hand,

over-involvement with the internet and social media apps can become a “time-sink,” taking away from face-to-face interactions, physical activity, school work and responsibilities at home. It’s also important to note that virtually anything that goes online should be considered public and permanent. College admissions offices and future employers can search anyone’s digital past. So, talking about how to make appropriate decisions about their online presence ahead of time can have a major impact on their future! **Parent Advisory Board member** Lourdes Diaz recommends that parents “minimize the time your son or daughter stays on the phone” and try to help them focus on friends, family and hobbies instead.

HEALTH GOALS TEXT MESSAGING

With the New Year comes new resolutions and a drive towards healthy life goals. This year, BeWell is encouraging BridgeUP scholars and their families to think about their own health goals and to do so using technology! BeWell has developed a text message program that will remind and encourage you to achieve your goals.

Why Health Goals? For BridgeUP scholars, goals can help to provide focus, direction, and help them learn to shape their own paths. Goals are also an important part of *BridgeUP Persistence Curriculum* (See Rudy’s article). As our scholars work towards their overall visions, developing and realizing short-term goals can help build their confidence. By having our scholars (and you!) add health goals for 2018, we are hoping to encourage a healthy lifestyle that can not only help scholars achieve their visions, but build and maintain lifelong healthy habits.

How does it work? Scholars and family members can text the keyword “goal setting” 30644. This will prompt an automated series of questions that ask for information like name, library, and what their goal is. (see box) Scholars (and you!) can then choose how often they would like reminders. These reminders will include motivational and inspirational quotes, images, memes, and videos. Scholars will also be able to request to talk to a BeWell Health Fellow through the text messaging program. The Health Fellow who is located at each den 1x a week, will then provide personalized health coaching for your scholar to achieve their goal!

Is it safe? Yes! BeWell uses a program called Mobile Commons to securely store the health goals and phone numbers. The program is *HIPAA compliant*, which means that it meets the same privacy standards that are required for hospitals and medical providers. In fact, New York Presbyterian Hospital uses Mobile Commons to remind patients about their appointments. This program is completely voluntary, and scholars (and you!) can stop receiving updates at any time by texting STOP to 30644. We will introduce the health goal to scholars in the libraries in mid-January. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Renee Cohall, LCSW, Co-Director of BeWell at (914) 382-1240.



ASK DR. C

Dear Dr. C.,



My daughter wants to be on her phone 24/7. I want her to be able to have fun without it, but I also don't want her to feel left out since all her friends are always on their phones too. What is a healthy limit to set

for teenagers using technology?

-Unsure

Dear Unsure,

Many parents find it challenging to set boundaries with their teens. Technology use is tricky to deal with because it's new, always changing, and many parents didn't grow up with the same kinds of technology available to teens today.

Take a deep breath, and spend a few minutes thinking about the real issues. If you're frustrated with your daughter using her phone when she's spending time with you, the limits you set might be different than if you're worried about what she's actually *doing* on her phone. No matter what the concern, it's a good idea to explain your feelings to your daughter. They are at an age when they want to be involved in making decisions for themselves, so letting them in on the boundary setting process can help lessen their resistance.

If the real concern is about how much time your daughter is spending on her phone, try making certain activities technology-free. For example, set a rule that during meal time, everyone puts their phones out of reach before the meal starts, and can get them back when done. If you're more concerned about the *kinds of things* your daughter uses her phone for, look at some of the other articles in this newsletter to get a better idea of how to set parental controls and how to stay involved. You may want to open your own Instagram account. Balance is key. If your daughter is spending so much time distracted by her phone than her homework, chores or afterschool activities suffer, then you may want to address how much time she uses it.

Be prepared for "push-back." That is a normal part of the "push and pull" struggle that teens engage in to try to assert their independence. However, while they will rarely admit it, teens appreciate (and benefit from) structure and boundaries. So, take your time to think; make your rules fair; and allow for flexibility as your teen matures. You won't be her "friend" on this matter, but usually when boundary setting takes place – it isn't easy. Your daughter may say you are the "*only one*" setting these limits and having these talks. Let her know that isn't true – and even if it is – these are *our family rules* and you want her to be safe.

-Dr. C

Dr. Cohall is board-certified in both Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. He is a professor of Public Health and Pediatrics at the Columbia University Medical Center. In addition to supervising health services at several clinics, he has a private practice in Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine at NY Presbyterian Hospital



By Rudy Garcia,
Associate Manager

BridgeUP kicked off the 2017-2018 academic year with a new twist. Usually, scholars and staff at all 5 of our sites begin the year with community-building activities. The aim of these activities is to welcome new and existing BridgeUP scholars and staff to the program. This year, however, we wanted to do something a bit different.

Over the summer, the **BridgeUP Culture Committee** created a new curriculum to get our scholars and staff grounded in our BridgeUP core values of accountability, mindfulness, curiosity, and care. Over a span of 4 weeks in September, scholars and staff engaged in a variety of activities focused on learning the meaning of these values as well as implementing them within their BridgeUP site. The goal of the curriculum was to equip our scholars and staff with the tools needed to create a positive culture within each BridgeUP community. The activities allowed scholars to engage with these values through improv, writing, and more.

Shortly after completing the Culture Curriculum, BridgeUP scholars and staff dove into the next unit of activities focused on the theme of persistence. In particular, scholars identified the meaning of persistence, as well as how to remain persistent in pursuing a personal or professional vision, or long-term goal. Ultimately, the scholars learned that to persist in the face of obstacles and challenges requires a commitment to one's vision, positive habits, and self-confidence. The unit finished in the creation of a 'vision box' that contains reminders of the lessons learned during the various activities.

UNDERSTANDING PRIVACY AND PARENTAL CONTROLS

When teens use technology, it can be scary for parents not to know what they're looking at or who they're talking to. Luckily, there are ways to guide your teen in the right direction. Many gadgets, websites, and apps have parental controls and privacy settings that can make them safer or more age-appropriate. However, nothing can replace the positive impact of open and honest conversation between parents and teens. Look below for some useful tips on how to set parental controls and how to have conversations with your scholars about responsible technology use.

Setting Parental Controls

Go into the settings menu and look for the key terms "Parental Controls," "Privacy Settings," and "Restrictions."

Once you are in the settings menu, you will be able to set restrictions on who can see profiles, which websites can be visited, and in-app purchases, etc. Some apps and devices even allow you to time limits for use.

Explain Why

Make sure they don't feel like you're violating their privacy. If they understand why you're changing privacy settings, they will be more likely to follow the rules.

Good opportunities for these conversations might be over a meal or when doing something fun together. It's a good idea to talk about your plans with your scholar before you actually set the controls so they can be prepared.

Do Your Research

Try to learn about the latest apps and websites kids are visiting, and bring them up in conversation.

Examples include: Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, and Kik, among many others!



TIPS FOR PARENTS

Conversational Tips

- Talk to scholars about the ways you use privacy settings to protect yourself
- Bring up current events related to technology if you see something on the news or read an interesting article
- Talk about mistakes you or people you know have made when using technology and explain what could have been done differently in an open-minded and non-judgmental way

Resources

- **CommonSenseMedia.org** empowers families to harness the power of media and technology as a positive force in kids' lives.
- **CyberWise.org** has a great "Learning Hubs" page that explains the most popular apps for teens, describes teen dating apps, and much more!
- **NetSmartz.org** is an interactive, educational program that provides age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer on- and offline.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

The New York Public Library's **TechConnect** program helps people of all ages develop confidence in their computer skills and grow more comfortable in today's digital world.



Visit <https://www.nypl.org/tech-connect> to find a class near you and to learn more about TechConnect.

Did you know you can check out a **mobile hotspot** from your local library?

If you have no internet at home and a child in NYC public school, you may be eligible for free at-home WiFi

Register online at nypl.org, in person at your local branch, or call 917-275-6975 for help registering.



CYBERBULLYING

In a world where teens can have instant and consistent access to each other - 24/7 - cyberbullying can be a real danger. It is estimated that over 15% of young people may be victims of cyberbullying (Center for Disease Control; Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, 2015). Cyberbullying can have a significant impact on a teen's life, and, in some cases can lead to severe consequences. There have been reports of young people who have committed suicide in response to cyberbullying. CNN's 2013 article, "N.Y. Police Probe Possible Cyberbullying After Girl Found Hanged," explores the connection between cyberbullying and teen suicide.



While it has become a common occurrence in many communities, cyberbullying can be hard for adults to recognize because it's not out in the open. So, what's a parent to do?

StopBullying.gov, a government website aimed at reducing the negative impacts of bullying, has some helpful tips for parents and caregivers:

Some of the warning signs that a teen may be victimized by cyberbullying include:

- Hiding their screen or device from others, and avoiding discussion about what they are doing.
- Avoiding social situations and activities, even those that they enjoyed in the past.
- Withdrawal or depression.

I think my teen is being cyberbullied -what can I do?

Talk -Ask questions to learn what is happening, how it started, and who is involved. It may be difficult for some teens to talk to their parents, so consider asking a trusted family member or friend to help. You can always turn to a BridgeUP Fellow or Tutor, or BeWell Health Fellow to get a sense of what's going on.

• Questions you might want to ask:

- "I've noticed you and [friend] haven't been hanging out as much. Did something happen?"
- "I've noticed you never want me to see your screen. Is there something that you would be embarrassed for me to see?"
- "You seem sad lately, I'd like to help you figure out whatever's bothering you. What's going on?"
- "I know you and [classmate] have had issues before. Does that have anything to do with why you're upset?"

Document -Keep a record of what is happening and where. Take screenshots of harmful posts or content if possible. Most laws and policies note that bullying is a repeated behavior, so records help to document it.

Report -Most social media platforms and schools have clear policies and reporting processes. If a classmate is cyberbullying, report it to the school. You can also contact app or social media platforms to report offensive content and have it removed. If your scholar has received physical threats, or if a potential crime or illegal behavior is occurring, report it to the police.

Support -In addition to providing emotional support to your scholar, additional professional support may be needed by a guidance counselor or mental health professional. You can always reach out to BridgeUP Fellows and Tutors, and BeWell Health Fellows to help find resources.

Raffle Winner Announcement

Thanks to everyone who returned their Parent Information Form from our last mailing! The winner of our raffle is....

SADIE BELL

Congratulations! Your \$20 gift card will be mailed to you.

Questions or Concerns?

Reach out to BeWell via email at bewellbu@gmail.com or via phone or text at 929-249-0925

Follow us on social media!

