Episode 3: Tech Talk: What To Do When It Gets In The Way
A Conversation With Jeremy Edge, LPC, Owner & Founder of escapingthe.com

Liz Higgins (00:02):
Hey, y'all! Liz Higgins here, and welcome to the Millennial Life Podcast, where my main goal is to share conversations that will inspire you and drive you toward the life and relationship you desire. I'm here to share what I've learned as a licensed therapist and relationship coach specializing in millennial relationships and wellness, as well as transformative conversations with other professionals. Thanks for listening, and enjoy today's episode!

Liz Higgins (00:35):
Welcome to the podcast today! I am so excited to bring you this conversation with today's guest, who is Jeremy Edge, LPC and owner of escapingthe.com. This conversation today is going to be so relevant, I think, for all of you because technology is inundated in our lives. And, you know, I think unless you're living under a rock, you are engaging in screen time. You probably have had conversations in your relationship about how much screen time you have, the effects of social media, and how it's impacting your relationship. Um, even things like binge-watching TV shows. I know for me and my husband, like, that has come up from time to time. We just get caught up spending too much of our downtime, (thinking that we're decompressing) just scrolling on our phones or bingeing another show. This is our world, you guys! So I'm pumped to bring you this talk because I think that all of us can benefit from it, honestly, and it's great information to have going forward.

Liz Higgins (01:44):
So whether you are a parent of young children or you're just in a dating relationship, or maybe even, married in a marriage where technology and screen time is becoming a problem - then you want to listen to this conversation. Jeremy has a lot to say, and a lot of really great advice, feedback, even statistics on how technology and social media are impacting us. He also specializes in gaming disorders, which is actually becoming more and more prevalent in the therapeutic world in terms of being able to diagnose these issues and really help people define when a problem is a problem. Now, as a therapist, I have seen that really show up as an issue for couples, especially because - let's face it millennials - we do not want to be helicopter partners, but that's where the issue starts to go. It goes to this place where a partner doesn't know what to do about their partners screen use, or game obsession.

Liz Higgins (02:54):
They feel like it's a problem because a lot of time is being spent on these things, but they don't know how to define the problem. And they don't know what to do about it because they don't know when to become the parent. They don't want to be the naggy, whiny partner, but they know that it's leading to disconnect. It's leading to problems and, and, you know, it can be an issue that both women and men experience. But looking at just a stereotypical heterosexual

partnership, I see the complaint come a lot of times from the female about the male. And I certainly think that in some ways we do see gendered patterns in terms of how differently men and women use technology platforms. You know, I think very generally speaking, it might be more likely to see a guy engage in an 8 to 10-hour WOW party or some online gaming forum.

Liz Higgins (03:55):
But then you look over at females who tend to be more prone to go outward for like connective activities and stuff. And I see the way that female clients, for example, participate in social media and just how extreme, like obsessively comparing themselves to others on social media can be and how that can quickly become just a big time-suck for them. So there's overlaps, there's differences. And I think the greatest thing that we're faced with in this whole issue is to turn towards each other and to look at the habits that we're starting to establish as individuals, and to be able to walk together towards a healthier balance of engaging in these things. Because again, it's not about trying to remove them from your life, but to have healthier relationship with them. And so I'm very excited to have Jeremy share these insights and pointers with you.

Liz Higgins (04:58):
I think you're really going to gain something from this. So without further ado, let's jump right in! Super excited to chat with our guest today. I have Jeremy Edge, LPC, who is the owner of escapingthe.com. And you can actually type that into your web browser, escapingthe.com. and he is a LPC (licensed professional counselor) in Dallas that does counseling for problematic screen use. So whether that is gaming addiction, internet addiction, or screen related problems - Jeremy is the guy to work with that can help you. And I just think this is such an important topic for our generation and both for individuals and couples. Y'all know that I'm really interested in relationships and what helps us have the most epic and fulfilling relationships possible. And we cannot for a minute deny the fact that technology has impacted our generation just hugely. So I am pumped to have Jeremy here. Thanks so much for being here, Jeremy!

Jeremy Edge (06:10):
Thank you for having me, Liz. I appreciate it.

Liz Higgins (06:13):
Yeah! And I kinda just want to dive in and I would love if you could talk a little bit about you and really what got you into this whole niche, because again, it's just so relevant and I think it, it really does take some special understanding of this issue that is so rampant and I, yeah, I'd love to hear just from the start, what got you into it?

Jeremy Edge (06:36):
Sure. So it kind of was a combination of the practice I was working at at the time, and then my personal life. And so I was working at a group practice at the time, um, about two years ago or so, and I was seeing more and more teenagers and young adults with technology issues. Either pornography, um, was a problem in their relationship, or it was a teenager who's struggling with, you know, gaming and having distracted thoughts about that. Um, and not doing their schoolwork, and their assignments, and just having problems because of it. And so I saw kind of a lot of that with my teenagers I was working with, but I was also seeing personally in my own life, that gaming was a pretty big problem. And so I saw that the more that I dug into this topic, um, the one I dug in with these clients and exploring kind of what was going on, technology challenges and kind of, um, problems were a really big piece of it.

Jeremy Edge (07:28):
And so I looked around and didn't see too much of that being addressed in the Dallas area than in Texas. There are some in Houston and other parts of the country, but I saw this was a really big need that wasn't really being filled - as in the DSM kind of in the back of the DSM. So needing some further research, but it's still kind of down the pipe, as far as internet gaming disorder, then the world health organization, identifying gaming disorder as a diagnosis and will be diagnosable in the next couple of years. So all that kind of stuff helped. Yeah. It helped me really kind of identify: this is something that is needing to be addressed and it's just, it's kind of a new field I'd like to kind of get in front of,

Liz Higgins (08:07):
Oh my gosh, yeah, totally. And I just think back even to college years, you know, I met my husband in college and we'd go over next door. We were neighbors. It was kind of funny how it all worked out. But my roommates and I would go next door and he had some roommates, they'd be playing games, and this and that. And I remember some weekends, it was like, you know, we were all going out doing the normal things, but some of them would just stay like cooped up, like all weekend, playing these games. And it's like, it was just, it wasn't really something I thought twice about at the time. But I think now, kind of being a therapist as you are, and seeing things for what they can be, for some people, in very problematic ways, like how probably a lot of that was really addictive behavior and relationship to the whole "game thing".

Jeremy Edge (08:59):
Yeah. Yeah. It is something that is a, it's a whole world. Gaming, in particular, out of the technology use is a whole world. And there's a lot of good with it. There's, there's a lot of good - there's about like 2.5 billion gamers in the world. And 90% are able to really play in a recreational kind of a good hobby, healthy, healthy experience. But there are some - like one to 10% or so - can struggle with problematic or even disordered gaming. So for a lot of us, it can be a huge positive, um, it's growing in popularity as well. And so it's, it's interesting.

Liz Higgins (09:32):
Well, that's so true. It's gaining in popularity. I mean the gaming realm, and I know we'll talk about like social media and tech use as well, but it's certainly not going anywhere if anything, it's growing. And, obviously, we have to learn to grow and adapt with it and maintain healthy relationship.

Liz Higgins (09:57):
I have so many questions, but I guess to start, like... How can a person really know when enough is enough? Like when does it shift into that realm of problematic from normal use?

Jeremy Edge (10:10):
Yeah. I think the big piece with that is to see if it's interfering with your overall life and happiness and wellbeing. Is it interfering? Is social media or is technology interfering with your relationships, with your career, with your job, or even with other hobbies? It can be, technology use is a good supplement, or it can be a good kind of way as an extension for relationships, right? Like we were able to talk to some good friends, maybe through, uh, Facebook, for example, right? But to really have deep connection, we need to have in-person relationships and Facebook should never kinda take place of that. But it can be a good way to keep up, touch

base, and kind of communicate. And so we can see it when it's enough is enough, if it is interfering with those things, um, it is interfering with those areas.

Jeremy Edge (10:57):
If you can also kind of look at kind of looking at symptoms of, of, uh, like kinda looking for the symptoms for addiction. If it's, if you're having kind of withdrawal symptoms or if you feel like you are, um, wanting to spend more and more time on the, on the device, or... When I say withdrawal symptoms, I mean, like you can't, if you don't have access to your phone, for example, you get really irritated or really angry or frustrated or depressed or sad. Um, that can be a little, a little bit of a reminder of, "Oh! Maybe I should just kind of assess where my tech use is."

Liz Higgins (11:30):
That makes so much sense. That's, that's actually helpful to hear too, because I, I, I wonder if a lot of people listening are actually wondering how, how do I know those signs essentially that I'm using it too much or getting on Facebook or X, Y, Z thing too often. And what you just said is, Ooh, that sounds important that irritability, or just antsiness in not having, I just think of... It's like your phone, it's like that Phantom, what do they call it? Phantom Limb Experience. If I don't have it around me, I kind of have these moments where I notice "where's my phone!?" Um, and it seems like that would maybe be harder to decipher with social media and stuff that's accessible on your phone versus gaming, where it's like, you know, there's actual setup involved, or you're sitting down to a TV playing the game and a little easier to determine like, okay, I just did that for four hours. That's probably enough. But with the phone stuff, I think just about millennials in general, that we grew up with technology really blossoming into what it is today and... I feel like for us, it could be a little trickier to determine when it's getting out of hand.

Jeremy Edge (12:47):
Right? Yeah, no, it really can be because for one, there's no, like, diagnosis you'll find in any, any, any, any official diagnosis for technology addiction, but there are some symptoms of how it... and there's some research coming down. There's some research out there saying that there was a lot of issues that can come from technology overuse and just kind of how we use, how we use our phones. And in particular, I mean the kind of with social media, if it can be a big issue, if, if it just kind of, kind of overarches, kind of gets, gets in the way of our time with others. It gets in the way of time with, with other people. Um, and so, a way to perhaps really kind of see where you are with that is every iPhone comes with the Screen Time App. And so it's a really, really easy way to kind of just touch base and say, okay, I'm spending such and such time on Social Media, on Productivity, on Entertainment, um, whatever it may be.

Jeremy Edge (13:42):
And so it can really help you see kind of what you're devoting your time to on your phone for and think of, kind of make adjustments, right? Like screen time in general can be broken up, I think, in like three big categories: Productivity, Entertainment, and Social. Um, some of those can overlap a little bit, but you're able to see kind of where your time is being devoted. And if you need to make some changes, then you can make changes. But yeah, that's kind of just a practical tool that I use a lot helping kind of see what's where, where is my time going online and, and, you know, do I need to maybe make some changes?

Liz Higgins (14:13):
Oh yeah. I love that. I think that in and of itself could be so helpful for people that are wondering "What kind of time should I spend on that and what is it actually giving me?" Because you're

right. It's not so much that social media in itself is the big, bad thing we need to avoid, but it's just, it's our relationship to it. And it's the way we interact with it. That makes all the difference. Do you find that people try to justify or really have issues detaching from social media, because it is a form of connection? I mean, you've talked about the importance of having the intrapersonal relationships, real relationships, but social media is a version of that, right?

Jeremy Edge (14:57):
Yeah. I think it's a hard time to disconnect from, for a couple reasons. One for the social feedback we get and we get validation and we get some, you know, people we'd like to talk with can talk with us and our friends and people that, you know, we respect can talk with us. And so it can be hard to disconnect from those relationships. But the way that Facebook (in particular) kind of interacts with people, with the user, is really, um, encouraging people to come back for more. And it hasn't anything to do is nothing to do with the relationship. It just has to do with the pleasure center in our brain, with dopamine being released. How, you know, if we look on a post, for example, um, click on a post, for example, from a friend, they kind of read the posts and maybe comment on it.

Jeremy Edge (15:41):
Then next time we go on Facebook, we will see more posts related to that post we just clicked on, or relate to that friend. Or if we go and kind of go into a comment in a group that we are a part of, then we'll get more notifications from that group. Um, and so there are algorithms created in Facebook, in particular for us to, to spend more and more time on it. And so it's harder to detach, because we're conditioned to want to feel that rush of excitement when we get five new notifications from the people that we know and like a lot. And so, yes, it's harder to detach because of the relationships, but really because of this feedback loop that we're getting from Facebook, from social media.

Liz Higgins (16:22):
Oh man. So really the platforms have evolved to kind of make us become addicted, if we allow it. I mean, I'm just reflecting too. When Facebook, I guess, made that feature where, you know, the hearts like pop up across the screen when you post something... I remember like the first time that happened, I was like, "Oh my God, that's kind of exciting. I like that." Yeah.

Jeremy Edge (16:48):
And the like button, too, is something where like, we, we, you know, we feel really good when we get like a bunch of likes, you know. We try to really strive for that rather than really trying to maybe take some good pictures with our family, just to share with our friends. We're really trying to take the best picture of ourselves and our kiddo and our spouse or whatever, in order to be able to get a whole bunch of likes and comments and validation from others, you know, maybe for the relationship, but really for that dopamine hit of, gosh, I get, I'm getting so many, so much attention here. Um, and so that's...

Liz Higgins (17:23):
So really, yeah, really the interaction we have with Facebook, for example, it's so different than a real person-to-person relationship that you could ever have. There's so many things playing out that are unique to this technological relationship that we have. And I'm wondering, like specifically with adults, because I think that's most of our listeners' age range, how do you see things like social media affect people's self esteem? Just the more they use it? What, like, how can it have a negative impact on self esteem?

Jeremy Edge (17:59):
We can really start to compare ourselves, I think, to other people. And we can compare ourselves to the ideal of what the perfect family looks like, or the perfect vacation, or the perfect job. And when, and Facebook is just a, is honestly as a misrepresentation social media, it can be a misrepresentation of the actual truth of an experience or of, of a situation. And so I think it can really eat at our self esteem because, you know, we see our friends and, their family like, Oh, they look so great or are they so happy on their vacation and think about ourselves and compare like, well, I don't have that. I don't think my family is that good, or we're not having that much fun on vacation - we're not even going on vacation. Right? Like there's so many things that we can, we can look at in our own life and compare it and say, well, I am less than because of what is being seen and portrayed on, on Facebook, on social media. Um, and so, yeah, I think anxiety can increase whenever we feel like we're not having enough or even FOMO - fear of missing out - on an experience or on an opportunity. So that can even play into it as well.

Liz Higgins (19:02):
Right. Yeah, I feel like my husband and I have had some pretty deep heart-to-heart conversations as we've grown together and had children. Now we have little kids and it's like, ok... you see everyone around you posting pictures of their babies and little children, things like that. We started to get to this place of like "Why are we doing that?" Like yes, of course, this is a way to stay connected to other family members out there, but, I think I had to go inward too and recognize "What's the point?" Especially the types of pictures people post, and this and that... maybe coming off a really hard day and posting some sweet, cute thing and that wasn't your day today! We just need to get honest about what you're putting out there and realizing what you see may not be what's happening on the other end. And having a more conscious relationship with social media, because I personally can fall into that trap sometimes! And being a young mom and a mom of young, young children, there's a whole mom-shaming culture out there where you can just obsessively compare and start to just really feed that "not good enough-ness" feeling. And you have to find ways to balance that and to detach. Because it can really take you down.

Jeremy Edge (20:26):
That's a good point. It really is. Yeah. Um, it's just, the culture, it's the culture of Facebook, it seems like to, to post the nicest, the most pleasant, you know, and... But I think also it can be the, the other extreme can be there as well of catastrophizing maybe something to try to get as much attention as possible. Um, there are some legitimate looking for some support, but it seems like sometimes if we're really catastrophizing or really trying to make something really turnt, you know, display it as the worst case scenario in the world, I wonder, you know, is, is that really for legitimate support or for attention or for attention seeking. And so I think can go, it can go either way.

Liz Higgins (21:17):
I was curious to ask you, what does it typically look like for clients that might work with you or suggestions that you might make around people that maybe aren't at that super intense level of like, addictive connection to social media, but maybe need just some adjustment. I know you talked about, like, looking at the timestamp on your phone of how much a screen time you've had in a week, or kind of measuring those things to adjust, to make sure it's something you're

good with. But do you have other suggestions for people that maybe just need to look at how often they're doing it or why they're doing it? Where do you suggest people start?

Jeremy Edge (21:57):
Yeah. I mean, the best place for your phone is, is to, to utilize the Screen Time App if you're on an Apple device, but if you're on the Samsung, Visual Wellness. Um, but I think also, it can just be good to be conscious or be, to be mindful of what you're doing throughout your day, uh, and what tabs you have open or what your, you're kind of you're spending your time on, in, in there are different tools out there that can be used. There's, there's a, uh, so I mean, there's a couple of things that are a little bit different, but there's an, um, website called freedom.to (T O) and instead of freedom.com is freedom just dot T O. And this program can, is a, basically a, a blocker for websites or apps that you don't want. And so it's a little bit, kind of different than I think the question you're asking Liz, but it can be a really great way to help, like navigate it productivity. And if you feel like you are wandering, or you're looking at YouTube a lot more than you want to, then you can set a certain time on your computer, on your phone, where you're going to be trying to be focused and productive. And then the program will block that site or block the program that you don't want to engage with. And you won't be able to change the setting until after the time.

Liz Higgins (23:17):
So there's no going back and tricking yourself out of it. You have to really commit. That's awesome. I have never heard of that one.

Jeremy Edge (23:25):
Yeah. And there's a free version. There's a paid version. It's like $2.40 I believe, per month. So it's a really good deal and it can really, I've heard really good things about it. And, and I, and so it's a really great way to practically help yourself as an adult, or even if you have young kids who are in school or just, you know, wanting to, to manage your, your tech use. That's a really great way to do that, but that can help you be more aware of, "Gosh, if I have this block up, if I have this up and by, I guess I am spending a lot of time on Netflix or on YouTube or whatever." Right? And so that can be just more insightful of where you are spending your time, if you have something like that up.

Liz Higgins (24:03):
That sounds like a real practical way of helping yourself, honestly, like have better boundaries with the social media use. I just think about people that go cold turkey, or they're like, "I'm putting up a post cause I'm getting off of social media for a month." And it's like, I just think to myself, "How can they do that?" I tried to, uh, I think not do Facebook wants for lent and woof, I lasted, I dunno, maybe three days. It was just, it was not a great idea, but I think it brings it back to this point that it's not about totally removing it from your life. It's having boundaries and just having limits and... right? Just a more balanced way of implementing that into your life.

Jeremy Edge (24:50):
Yeah. Yeah. Technology is a great thing. Can be healthy and just be, can help, you know, that is a one way, a tool to help it be healthy.

Liz Higgins (24:57):
Right. So are there specific social media platforms right now that are just the most popular? I, I'm always kind of more-so specifically interested in millennials. I don't know if you know details

about our specific use of the platforms. I know Instagram is really popular, but what are you kinda seeing in terms of the research or just your own practice experience for what platforms people use the most?

Jeremy Edge (25:25):
From the research I have found, um, a lot of people use YouTube and we don't think of maybe YouTube as a social media platform, maybe. But it's a huge area where a lot of people are at young, you know, 18 to 24 year olds, as well as 30 and up, um, 25 and up. Facebook is a pretty dominant player. So around, um, some figures say like around 84% of 25 to 30 year olds use Facebook.

Liz Higgins (25:57):
I thought Facebook was kind of becoming more and more outdated, but so it's still really popular with millennials it sounds.

Jeremy Edge (26:03):
Yes. It does seem like Facebook, from research I've found, is very popular with millennials. Yes. Instagram is pretty popular as well. Um, Snapchat, not so much. Um, it's really popular with the younger generation, um, 18 to 24 or so, and, and younger. And TikTok is, is I have not found much information on the percentage of the tech talk, but that's a pretty popular social media platform for teenagers as well.

Liz Higgins (26:25):
Yeah. I've heard so much about TikTok, and I honestly don't keep up a ton with the news on all these platforms, but is this true that I heard something about TikTok might be going away?

Jeremy Edge (26:38):
Yes. Uh, yeah. I was actually interviewed by WFA a couple weeks ago and yeah, man, it's, it's crazy. Um, there is some legislation going out potentially for trying to get it banned. Uh, President Trump has tried to discuss banning it, maybe. So there's some real concerns. There are some real concerns about it, but as of yet, I believe there's no like formal information or formal findings about China stealing our information, which is the, um, country that, you know, owns the TikTok company. There's, uh, servers in the US, in Virginia. And there's a CEO of, of TikTok who, they live in the US and they are, um... So there are some concerns, but it doesn't seem to be yet found to be true.

Liz Higgins (27:26):
Right. Well, and that's another one of the like, love/hate things about social media. These types of issues can be publicized on social media. And then before, you know, it it's like wildfire. Everybody's talking about it! I mean, we could probably talk the whole rest of this time, just about the current pandemic and how social media and other online platforms have influenced the way people have experienced this and responded to it. And what they know and what we don't know and fake news and real news. It's just amazing to see how technology does so much for us, but then also puts us into a back corner and really makes it hard for us to know. Have you seen, or is there research there just about the increased use of technology since COVID began? I'm just thinking about that. And obviously people have started working from home and there's all that happening, but as far as like social media use, that sort of stuff, gaming use, is there anything that's showing an increased since COVID started?

Jeremy Edge (28:29):

There's definitely an increase. And the only hard number I have is related to gaming. And there's about a 75% increase in gaming from the research I've seen. There is an increase, I believe in social media and, and in gambling and just online platforms in general. And I don't have any statistics for any of that information in particular, but, um, I know for the gaming, there is definitely an increase for sure. And there's, there's been, um, this data from the gaming companies publicizing their profits and it's exponentially higher than it has been prior to COVID I believe Nintendo, um, posted their earnings and it was about like a 428% increase since COVID. If I remember my numbers correctly, yeah. So it's really high. Gaming is increasing and social media, I'm sure, is increasing as well.

Liz Higgins (29:24):
Yeah. Undeniably, I mean, I just sort of bring things back to my own life experience and I can definitely say that when all this started, I had a much higher use of just getting on my phone and scrolling. I mean, the days were so hard, so long. I didn't know what was happening. We were all kind of waiting it out to see when this would end and, you know. Laughs on us because here we are, but it was tough. And so it's been long enough that I've been able to kind of restructure my relationship to social media now, but it's hard. So I wanted to ask you about relationship stuff, because a lot of this podcast, I want to help encourage people to feel like they're doing relationships well, and handling things in a healthy way, and setting themselves up for success for longterm, healthy relationships. So I'm wondering with your specialty, because a lot of millennials are in relationships right now, dating or married or whatever... So can you speak to the issue of how you've seen excessive or unhealthy social media use or gaming use affect a couple?

Jeremy Edge (30:33):
Yeah. Technologies can really enhance or it can really kind of get some, have some issues with the relationship. And so there's a term that's pretty new in regards to that, it's called phubbing and it's where people are kind of using their phones and engaging with their phones rather than the interpersonal relationships around them. And so, around 56% of people say others have done that to them and they, and people don't like it. It feels, they're really kind of hurtful. Conversations feel less meaningful when there's less eye contact. There's even like, just like, emotional pains kind of associated with that because there's no attention. You know, there's no attention given to the other person, especially in a partner relationship, which is kind of one-on-one interaction. Um, it's, it's a really hurtful experience. And so, uh, you know, engaging in any type of technology can be, can really cause a rift in the relationship.

Jeremy Edge (31:30):
And cause you know, social media particularly, can cause jealousy. If there is one partner kind of on social media, looking at, you know, a picture of an attractive person and there can be some jealousy from the other side. If there is communication or even just looking at the post of an ex, of an ex partner, there can be jealousy with that, too. And so there is a lot of issues that could happen within the social media platform. Um, with gaming in particular, it can be, it looks kinda look a little different where the one partner may want to play games or kind of be on a gaming device. Um, and not just give the time for the other, not have, not give the time for the partner. And so it can be a big issue, but it can also be a way to bring people together too.

Liz Higgins (32:15):
Like to bring a couple together with each other?

Jeremy Edge (32:19):
Yeah. And so, like, gaming can be an activity that if they both enjoy it can be an activity that brings them together instead of it being a, a rift of, "Hey, I just want to just chill out after a long day and play some games." It could be like, well, "Hey, let's, let's play this together. Let's do Animal Crossing together. Let's build something in Minecraft together" or, you know, whatever it may be. And so it could be a fun experience where they can go online and, and, and instead of maybe going out on a typical date on a, to a movie or, you know, restaurant, you know, with COVID, it could be a fun time to go online and to, you know, to do something online in a game. So that could be a fun experience that could bring them together.

Liz Higgins (32:58):
Yeah, no, I love hearing that! I feel like with couples that I work with the, the healthy ones and the ones that seem to just be on a better path, honestly, are the ones that can remain curious about each other's interests and can push themselves or stretch themselves to try those things out for the sake of the relationship. And so if gaming isn't your thing, maybe you can kind of suck that up for an evening just to join your partner in something that is meaningful for them. I love that idea, because I tend to see that a lot of people that come in for working, for work with me, they're stuck in that problematic place of, "I'm not interested in that and they want to do that all day on Saturday and I have no desire to sit there and watch them do this", but it makes sense to maybe, maybe encourage them to try joining in that. Yeah. But what would you say to somebody who really resists that, who like has no interest in it? They're just not into gaming and their partner wants to do it again, like all day, or all weekend, with friends.

Jeremy Edge (34:11):
I think it be as, as a hard conversation to have, it can be, but I would really, really encourage us to have an open dialogue with the partner and say, "Look, I, uh, it seems like our relationship is not at a good place". You don't have to specifically say the gaming is, is what's the problem. Um, but I think being able to speak on a broad term of "Look, I miss our time together, if it was maybe different or, you know, it seems like we're not spending as much time together on the weekends or, you know, I'm, I'm feeling stressed. I'm feeling distant from you. Can we talk about how to get that to a better place or to a different place?" And just kind of try to come at it from a problem solving, um, place rather than kind of the problem focus place of like, "Hey, this is, this is an issue I see. And I want to point it out." Later on in the conversation that can happen. "Hey, okay. So maybe on Saturdays we could go out a little bit and then come back and relax" and there could be a compromise as well. And so I think a couple of those things could be good to help and kind of addressing that, but kind of looking at it from a broad, broad place rather than a kind of specific, could be a good place to start.

Liz Higgins (35:17):
Yeah, I think that's great. And when I talk to clients, oftentimes I hear people talk about how they don't want to have to parent their partner. I think that's a very millennial thing too, is we want to have these like fiercely independent people coming together to somehow create this perfect relationship. And that's hard! Because we really are independent and we don't want to have to parent or manage another person. And certainly we don't like to feel controlled. Um, so I don't know. I mean, I'm, I'm curious to hear a little more about what a partner could do at the very beginning. If they're, if they're feeling like their partner has a true problem. And I dunno, maybe we need to define what 'true problem' is, but it's kind of going back to the beginning of this whole conversation where maybe the partner sees that it's affecting the gamer or social media excess person's quality of life, or their ability to sit still and, like, have a dinner with them, and

stuff like that. Where could somebody start if they're feeling helpless and don't want to become a parent and... But don't know what to do to address the problem?

Jeremy Edge (36:28):
I think the first part of it is to be able to focus on their relationship and try just to have an open, nonjudgmental dialogue. Um, come at it with some open questions, you know, try to bridge, to bridge the gap and to bridge the relationship is as much as possible in that conversation. You know, "Hey honey, it seems like this is, um, it seems like we're disconnected, or it seems like there some stuff going on that is just a struggle for us to connect. Can we talk about it? I mean, I love you. I love us. And I want us to get to a better place or a different place. Can we just talk about it?" And to see kind of where they go with that. Um, if there is complete resistance on all fronts, then it could be good to kind of talk about, well, just, you know, blatantly this, this is an issue and this, this, we need to have some things to change.

Jeremy Edge (37:16):
Um, and you know, this is just, this is a problem. I, I believe because you know, nothing else, like the point of us not being able to work through this as an issue, as a problem. Maybe not the activity, but then that, it sounds like it's obviously the problem, but the ability not to build a problem solve through this is the, is the issue. And so at that point it could be, I would encourage the person who is, um, wanting to work toward the partner is wanting to work towards change, to maybe see a counselor, to talk to someone that they trust, about what's going on, encourage themselves to, to try to compromise when possible, maybe like, "Okay, so you want to be on social media a lot. Okay. Let's be on social media and then, Hey, can we maybe go do something else?" And, um, try to bridge, you know, compromise as much as possible on that too, but it is tough. It's really hard whenever your partner is in that place of wanting to just, you know, just be online and have that activity take precedent over the relationship.

Liz Higgins (38:17):
Oh yeah. I mean, it's almost making me think about alcohol and drug addiction. How in the beginning of trying to confront something like that, if it's truly a problem, most likely you're met with some pretty strong defensiveness and it's like, you're trying to get through a brick wall. But if I'm hearing you, it sounds like first you just start with a transparent conversation about what's concerning you from a nonjudgmental place, trying to be curious. And that, I'm sure, can feel like a challenge in and of itself for the partner that's trying to get on a path towards health. But if that doesn't work really, it might be time to reach out for help. Do you get people that reach out to you for your services that are often the partner of the person?

Jeremy Edge (39:14):
It's usually from my, from my practice right now, it's usually a parent. Like, it's the parent of a child or a teenager who's struggling with some type of problem and extreme use. But sometimes there are some issues with, with couples that I see, of, of the partner coming to me saying, "This is a huge issue. I'm not sure what to do." And so it can kind of be, it can be both. I've seen a partner kind of come in saying that I have an issue. I have a problem. I need some help. And so there's some openness to that want to change. Um, the beauty part I would focus on is their marriage and the relationship is worth fighting for, and to be able to say, "Look, this behavior, this, this problem doesn't have to get in the way of it, so let's work on how to get to that relationship to be at a better place."

Liz Higgins (39:58):
Right. And I'm wondering, can you kind of talk us through - what does a better place look like? Because again, for me with this whole subject, I go back to this fact that we really, the goal isn't to remove social media. It's not like, it's not like alcohol or drug addiction in the sense of 100% sober. It's like we have to transform our relationship to this thing, this experience. And so I'm kind of thinking about it in terms of relationships, but whatever you can share for us, what does it typically look like when somebody's come to work with you? They've really kind of dived into the whole issue, got into the heart of the habit and made some transformations when they leave... and they're off into the horizons, hopefully in a place of health and wellness. What does that usually look like?

Jeremy Edge (40:50):
Yeah. It looks different for every couple, to be honest, but it looks like something where it's, the technology use is adding value to the relationship and to the people individually. And so for, for the couple, like for social media, for example, you can utilize social media to enhance the relationship and to improve their relationship. Throughout the day, you can send a sweet picture or a direct message to your spouse, and you can say sweet things about them online, you know, with their, with their okayness, obviously with their approval of it, obviously. But like, you know, you can send, you know, posts about, you know, kind of doting on your spouse. And so you can utilize, you know, a text message or a call or, um, you know, emojis are great now. Right? So you can do some pretty cool emojis to just show them that you're, you're thinking about your spouse and you love them.

Liz Higgins (41:38):
Oh yeah. I love that. You said, make a phone call and I'm like, "Oh my God phone calls... When my husband and I call each other, it's like, what's wrong!?"

Jeremy Edge (41:48):
Yeah. Well, I mean, it can be done. Like you can be creative with it too. Like you can do like those funny, like I think for the iPhone 10s, you can do like those, like faces or whatever, with like different like, uh, you know, dinosaur or like a ghost or whatever. You can do, like some funny stuff too, just to help, like, use that technology to bring you together. So that can be really great.

Liz Higgins (42:09):
That's great! So it's like ways of implementing it into your life, but it's not your life. And it, it kind of enhances your communication and connection to your partner rather than...

Jeremy Edge (42:20):
Yeah, it doesn't replace the relationship. It doesn't replace the in-person, you know, physical hug or kiss or, or hangout time or, or eye contact and, and communication and deep conversation. It doesn't replace that, but it can add to it. It can help that connection, you know, become, you know, it can help the connection be stronger.

Liz Higgins (42:42):
Ooh, I love that. I love that. And I wanted to wrap things up by asking about, you mentioned parenting and you hear from a lot of parents and stuff like that. And I know right now, well, as far as millennials too, there's plenty of them that have children and have, at this time in the year, started navigating school. And of course under this context of the pandemic experience, many,

many schools are starting virtual and kids are going to be doing more screen time for school. So I'm just curious. Do you have some pointers or suggestions for parents that might be feeling overwhelmed by this and just where they can kind of start to have that healthy balance of screening?

Jeremy Edge (43:24):
Yeah. So for the first thing, I think we need to give ourselves a lot of grace, you know. With COVID, our personal screening is going to go up because of work and because of play and everything. Right? But our kids, our kids use this as well, and that's okay. That's okay. You know, and so the fact that they watched maybe two or three hours of a show or Daniel Tiger, or, uh, you know, do a little iPad game, like that's not gonna ruin them. Their, their brain isn't gonna rot.

Liz Higgins (43:53):
I feel like you're speaking directly to me right now. I really appreciate this!

Jeremy Edge (43:59):
Well, and, and I say that intentionally because, you know, I, I, when I get home, I, you know, I put on some Peppa Pig for my kiddo and cook dinner and, you know, I'm not able to have every minute with, you know, uh, screen free, but that's not the point. They're, they're living in a world that is, screens are a big part of it. And so it doesn't mean that okay, when they wake up Peppa Pig starts and that, you know, at 8 PM, Peppa Pig ends, it's like, it's intentional time around that. And so I think one big thing that we can do is just be intentional about our screen use of any kind. And so our kids can say, "Yeah, yeah, let's watch some, just watch some TV. Right. Let's watch something." Right? And I would encourage parents to engage in that, initiate that because the kids are gonna want to watch TV all day.

Jeremy Edge (44:49):
Right? And if we are the ones saying, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no" every time then they could associate screen use with, Oh, this is a bad thing. Or my mom and dad don't want me to ever watch screens. And so it's like, um, you know, it's like a cookie or whatever. It's like, if it's something that's really, it's a lot of limits on it, so they'll want to get it more and more. But if we're saying, "Hey, yeah, let's, let's go watch something. Let's, let's go watch a movie. Let's go watch, you know, Frozen or whatever. Right? Like it's okay to say, to give them that cookie every now and then, and say, "Look, I approve of this. But after this, after watching an episode of Daniel Tiger, let's go do something else. Let's go play outside or let's go do some drawing or just read a book." Right? You know, when we, when we set the limit, we need to set the limit, but then intentionally redirect them to something that is healthy and engaging. Um, or just something else that's engaging. So it's not like the...

Liz Higgins (45:40):
That's so helpful to hear, because I think I've just felt when I let it become a power struggle, it's like it gives the cookie the power and it gives the TV the power. And most of all over me! Because I'm the one that's had to get really real with myself these past, you know, four to, four to six months or whatever, about this particular issue and really revisiting my expectations that I have of myself, I think, as a mom to provide this just, you know, learning environment for my children at all times. And giving into too much TV makes me a bad mom. And it's so strange because consciously I know I'm a good mom. You know, we have a good family life. It's, we're doing things okay. And it's okay to give in, but it's been so hard. And I just have to be honest, it's been like... Therapy and really having some open conversations with my husband and just

releasing rigid expectations of myself. That's really led to a better outcome in more balance with the whole thing. And I just love what you said. It's like, it's okay. You're not ruining your kid.

Jeremy Edge (46:50):
Yeah. Yeah. And that can be a good conversation too, is like, "You know what? Hey, we watched kind of a lot of TV today. What'd you think about that? You know, I kind of feel like I want to go do something, right. What do you think?" Right? And it can be just a good conversation to have of like, okay, we watched some TV, this is fun. This is cool. Movie nights are great. Like, you know, again, use our screens to bring people together. Talk about what you're talking about, what's going on with with Peppa Pig or talk about, you know, what they've learned in Daniel Tiger, you know. Sing the songs with them, you know, and just engage, bring it to life outside of the episode, um, through everyday conversations. So that can be really good way to kind of utilize, you know, screens and tech to help us out.

Liz Higgins (47:30):
Oh my gosh. I think that's a great suggestion. And it makes so much sense because adults do that anyways. I mean, we talk about the things we're watching. My husband relates life to Star Wars often. So that idea of talking about those things that you watch with your kids, having open conversations, and most of all being a little more relaxed with yourself on the expectations and the stress that we're all under as parents right now. Thank you so much. That is so helpful!

Jeremy Edge (48:01):
I just think one more thing that I think has been pretty helpful for me too, is to bring in our kiddo when we're using our phone. Like personally, if we're answering an email and it's appropriate to like to say, "Hey, this is what I'm working on." I think it can be really helpful for the kiddo to see how we utilize tech and how we use tech. And it helps us be more accountable and intentional about our screen use as well. And so like, you know, if you're typing on the computer - "Yeah, come over here! When I'm done typing we can type together. Here, write your name. Yeah, sure. This is how you do that. Oh, this is how you change the font. Yeah. Very good." And so we can start at a young age too, and help them to learn how to navigate tech and to be comfortable with it. And not for it to be a scary thing that they have to explore and learn all by themselves.

Liz Higgins (48:46):
Right. Or, or not a thing that the parent is trying to hide, which I've totally been there with the whole mindset of, "Oh, I don't want them to see me pulling my phone out. I feel so guilty that I'm not being present with them", but it's like legitimately answering an email or something really quick. I hadn't even thought of it that way, to include them in it and let them experience that with me.

Jeremy Edge (49:07):
When we bring technology, we bring our phones out, phubbing... We can feel, we can feel disconnected. Right? But if we're able to use that again, to help bring the connection closer, "Hey, come over here. Let me show you what I'm working on." Like that, then that changes everything.

Liz Higgins (49:21):
And I just see the ways that could be so helpful for a parent's relationship to their children, but also a person's relationship to their partner. But I don't, I hadn't even thought about trying to include my partner in something I might be looking at. I mean, we do it from time to time, but to

really be like intentionally trying to involve him in something that I'm looking at, like it could bring us closer.

Jeremy Edge (49:45):
Yeah. Yeah. And that's not to say that, you know, all the time at dinner, we should have our phones out. Like I'm a big, big advocate to, to not have phones at meal time as much as possible. But, but if we do need to be able to interact and we're not able to play completely presently for the three hour stretch, like it's okay to say, "Hey, this is, you know, I'll be with you in one second. Are you finished? Anybody want to see what I'm looking at? You know, and so that could be helpful.

Liz Higgins (50:09):
Right? Ah, this has been so great. Jeremy, you're obviously very knowledgeable about these subjects and I feel like we could talk a whole nother hour about trust and relationships related to tech. And I know that you also work with clients through issues with pornography and, I've decided to table that one for another episode, but we'll definitely be talking about that soon because it's just another really relevant part of this whole thing. But thank you so much! And where can people find you? I'm just, I would love to give people information on any freebies or anything you have out there that, where they can follow you and find you and just keep up with what you're doing.

Jeremy Edge (50:50):
Yeah. Um, you can find me... My website and practice name is escaping the.com, just type it as it's sounds. And then you can go to, I've got a lot of content on my website. I've really tried to make it as content and resource rich as possible. And so people can go to escapingthe.com/resources. And on there, there's a whole bunch of free information that I've compiled: websites, books, that one app, uh, website that I talked about, Freedom, is on there as well and different practices that are just really good, counseling practices that I've found have been helpful in the area. So.

Liz Higgins (51:26:
Oh, that's awesome. Yeah. And I've been on your website. It is absolutely thorough. There's so much good stuff out there. And there's great information for people if you are struggling with any of these things, but also the family members. And again, just, how to help you get started in helping your loved one, get better, find more balance with social media or gaming. So escapingthe.com is where people can find you and follow you. And you're on Facebook and Instagram too, right?

Jeremy Edge (51:54):
Yes. Yes I am. Yep. Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Liz Higgins (51:59):
Awesome. Well, thank you so much, Jeremy, for coming and doing this. I really appreciate the conversation.

Jeremy Edge (52:05)
Thank you for your time, Liz. Yeah!

Thanks again for listening to the podcast. If you like the show, leave us five stars or write a review. If you're interested in learning more, sign up for my free ebook "The One Barrier to Commitment All Millennials Face" at millennialrelationships.com.

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