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LATE MAY EARLY JUNE ISSUE 2018

TEACHING HOPE

Freedom Baseball

Playoff

Christian Jackson
Community Focus | Local Sports
PAGE 5

Where My Pets Go

Rabbi Mark Shulman
Community Spotlight
PAGE 8

First

Impressions

Brian Startare
Feature Story
PAGE 9

Powering Down

Nicole Celentano Gallagher
Faith
PAGE 11



PAGE 7

Christian Jackson

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INDEX

Community Focus - 4,5,7,8,

Feature Article - 9

Motivational | Leadership - 10

Health & Wellness - 11

Faith - 12

COVER STORY

Teaching Hope

By Christian Jackson
Page 7

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Freedom Baseball Gets Long Awaited District Playoff Win



The Freedom Patriots baseball team has had their fair share of success in the past few seasons, achieving winning seasons by a longshot, and even winning the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference championship back in 2016. The one thing that has alluded them to this point, however, was success in the District XI playoff tournament. Over the past few seasons, the baseball team has qualified for, but never won a game in the district tournament. One of the goals for this season that Nick D'Amico laid out in the preseason was to find success in the District XI playoffs.

On May 23, the Freedom Patriots squared off against the Easton Red Rovers, who won the District XI championship in 2016, the same year Freedom won the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. It was poised to be an entertaining game filled with drama and action as two baseball powerhouses in the Lehigh Valley would collide in the quarterfinals.

Both teams started off fairly cold as it appeared that things were turning into a pitcher's duel as Freedom's Alec Huertas and Easton's Eddie Olsen traded blows, retiring hitters aplenty. Freedom's bats were particularly cold however, as they didn't record a hit through the first three innings of work.

As for Easton, they would get the scoring started off in a big way. Luke Storm would step up to the plate with a runner on second in the bottom of the third to hit an emphatic two-run home run over the right center field wall. The home crowd exploded as the Easton Red Rovers would

take a 2-0 lead, stomping on the psyche of the Freedom Patriots. Those were the only runs scored in the inning.

Alec Huertas would have to put that longball in the back of his mind as Nick D'Amico would keep his arm on the mound. He, as well as the rest of the Freedom Patriots would have to remain unflustered to make this long-awaited win a reality as they would need to execute all three phases of the game to the fullest. From there, the game moved into the fourth inning. It was still a 2-0 Easton advantage. If there was ever a time to make a statement with the bats; it was now.

It was an encouraging start to the fourth inning for Freedom. Griffin Connelly led off the inning with a single past second base. Alec Huertas would be hit by a pitch to put two runners on base, putting Freedom in a very ideal position. Tim Healy would put the Patriots on the board with a single. Freedom would move into one run within the Easton lead at 2-1. Easton would finally get the first out of the inning thanks to a fielder's choice to get Healy at second, but the tying run would score as David Smith was credited with the RBI. Easton would retire the next two to end the inning to keep it a 2-2 ballgame.

In the bottom of the fourth, Freedom would rely on some great defense to help them through the inning. Derek Bast would make a great sliding play off a hard hit bouncing ball in the infield to record the out at first. The Patriots escaped the inning issue free.



After an uneventful fifth inning for both teams, the game headed into the sixth inning with the score still tied at a pair of runs apiece. Alec Huertas kept his great day on both the mound and at the plate going with a leadoff line drive double to center field. The next two batters would both get out as Huertas remained on second base. Nick Stannard then came up to the plate and hit an RBI single to put Freedom on top for the first time in the ballgame at 3-2. After retiring the Red Rovers in relatively short order, it was time for the final inning of the ballgame.

Freedom was looking to add some insurance runs in the top of the seventh inning. They would do just that as Huertas would go onto drive in another run to make it a 4-2 Freedom lead, adding that key insurance run, but it turns out that they wouldn't need it as the Red Rovers were once again retired in short order as Freedom would get the monkey off their back, winning the District XI quarterfinal matchup with a 4-2 victory over the 2016 District XI champion Easton Red Rovers.

Player of the game for Freedom was Alex Huertas, who was 1-2 with a run scored and an RBI. He also pitched a complete seven innings, allowing that lone two-run homer off just three hits. Easton's Luke Storm drove in the only two runs off that home run.

By Christian Jackson



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Freedom Softball Falls Again to Easton in District Playoffs



It was a very impressive season after the Freedom Patriots softball team went 7-13 last year. This year's squad turned their fortunes in a big way and doubled their win total to a 14-6 record. To end their regular season, the Patriots faced off against the Easton Red Rovers, in which they lost 4-2 on May 11. Roughly two weeks later, the Freedom Patriots softball team got another crack at the Rovers... this time in the playoffs.

The 2018 District XI softball tournament's quarterfinal matchup between Easton and Freedom took place on May 24. Revenge was on the mind of the Patriots. Could they learn from their mistakes against the Red Rovers nearly two weeks prior and come away with a statement-making playoff victory and join the baseball team in the semifinals after they also defeated Easton the day prior?

It was a slow start for the Patriots offensively, as they were retired in order in the first. It was clear that this game may be won on the defensive/pitching side of the ball. The Patriots once again turned to Glorainne Potenza to try to silence the bats of the Easton Red Rovers.

In the bottom of the first, Easton let Freedom know that it wasn't going to be an easy day for the Patriots. They would score the game's first run in the opening inning thanks to Courtney Grundhauser driving Zariah Alvin to home plate. At the end of the first inning, it was a 1-0 Easton lead.

It still wasn't pretty for the Patriots as they were retired 1-2-3 in the top of the second inning. In the bottom of the second inning on the very first pitch,

Easton pitcher AJ Bryfogle hit a home run to center field off Potenza, and just like that, it was a 2-0 Easton lead in the game. Easton was trying to get some more offense mounted but Easton's Elizabeth Pursell was thrown out trying to steal second base, ending the inning.

Freedom then went to the top of the third, but once again were retired 1-2-3 as the Patriots still didn't have a hit after three innings of work in a fast-moving game. Easton almost got another run on the board, but Lina Ramos would try to score from first base off a double by Gillian Walsh and get a bit too greedy in the process, getting thrown out at home to record the third out.

The Freedom Patriots finally got their first hit in the top of the fourth thanks to Julia Roman, but couldn't get any offense going as the Red Rovers turned a 5-4-3 double play to end the inning, still frustrating the offense of Freedom.

Glorianne Potenza's day would come to an end with the bases loaded in the bottom of the fourth inning with nobody out. Juliana Presto would relieve her on the mound, and she would get the Patriots out of the fourth inning with no runs scored, granting her team a fighting chance with no damage done.

AJ Bryfogle continued to frustrate the Patriots, whose next five batters would all record groundouts, not being able to lift the ball whatsoever. Easton didn't really have much offense to show either at the tail end of the game, but still maintained a 2-0 lead.

It was the last chance for the Freedom Patriots, it was now or never. They did end up getting their first two batters on base, as the team had runners on first and second, but would get doubled off, then record a groundout as the Freedom Patriots season was over, falling to the Easton Red Rovers 2-0 in a fast paced, low scoring game. Easton's AJ Bryfogle was stellar both as a batter and a pitcher, hitting that game-deciding two run home run, and pitching all seven innings, allowing just two hits on the day.

It was a tough end to what was a great season for the Freedom Patriots softball team, who turned their fortunes within the span of a year. Thankfully for them, even though there are four key contributors leaving to graduation, there are plenty of underclassmen coming back who all got key experience this season. The future looks very bright for this young softball team.

By Christian Jackson

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Freedom High School Teacher's Lessons on Giving Back



High school is a time in which the mind and soul are coming into form. Positive influences and pure beacons are important into shaping those who are in the next generations of doers, and that starts with the work of a good teacher. Meet John Wallaesa, 54.

He is a history teacher, primarily at the ninth-grade level, and has been teaching at Freedom for 18 years, having taught at all grade levels. Mr. Wallaesa's dedication, connection with kids, and general interest in history, made him want to leave behind the stress and long hours of being a retail manager and to go back to school in his 30s and make his dream a reality. He is notoriously a huge fan of his Pittsburgh Steelers, New York Mets, New York Knicks, and Notre Dame Fightin' Irish and has a wife and three sons.

John's life was changed about eight years ago when he went to the doctor for what he thought was arthritic pain developing in his later years. It turns out that there was something else happening. "I started to notice strange symptoms... people started commenting on my walk being 'weirder,'" Wallaesa said. "I didn't think much of it, I just thought 'oh I'm just getting old or something.'"

"Then I noticed that I couldn't jump anymore, that my run was very awkward, I couldn't go on my tip toes... just odd stuff like that. So I finally realized there's something more here than getting old. I went to a rheumatologist thinking it might be arthritis or something.

She knew right away that there was something more to that so she sent me to a neurologist. Before they could even diagnose it, I ended up in the hospital... they diagnosed me with about three or four different things before they figured out that it was CMT because it's hard to diagnose," Wallaesa said.

He has an axonal form of CMT (Charcot-Marie-Tooth) type two, a form of Muscular Dystrophy that affects the nerves, which hinders his mobility and causes a great deal of fatigue. Despite walking with the aid of shin splints, a cane, or sometimes even with a mobility scooter, Wallaesa doesn't

let it keep him down, and motivates him to live his life as a positive influence.

Mr. Wallaesa has always been inspired to give back and be charitable. That mentality has sent to him be the advisor of the Freedom High School portion of the Bethlehem Area School District Mini-THON event, a joint effort between every school in the district to raise money and awareness for pediatric cancer.

Money from the Mini-THON event supports the Four Diamonds charity, who also oversees the THON event at Penn State. Since beginning the mini THON event six years ago, the school district has raised about \$550,000 through the event itself, as well as other smaller events throughout the year. The event has grown significantly. The first year the Mini-THON raised over \$23,000. The last two years, the event has raised over \$130,000. While the money that gets raised is certainly a good thing that teaches the kids to give back, how to be charitable, and always be mindful of the less fortunate, Mr. Wallaesa hopes that the kids take away much more than that from Mini-THON.

"When we first started I had no idea that it was going to grow like it has. The kids are amazing. These are great kids who are dedicated, so it's very motivating. It's easy to stay involved in it because you see how much these kids care, you can see the good that it does, the connections they make. I've always said it's a blessing. I wouldn't trade it for anything," Wallaesa said. There have been some Freedom alumni, who served as leaders with the BASD Mini-THON, who have gone onto bigger ventures after high school thanks to Mini-THON.

"Several Freedom students who were largely involved as captains at Freedom have gone on to serve on the executive committee at Penn State's THON," Wallaesa said. "I expect that number to continue to rise," he added. As a matter of fact, Kelly McCready, who graduated Freedom and who was very active in the Mini-THON, was just elected to executive director at Penn State's THON for the 2019 event. Given his CMT and the limitations that come along with it, Mr. Wallaesa has since gathered a renewed outlook that has contributed to his work with Mini-THON.

"It's provided me with perspective... the fact that I've kind of had to slow down hasn't been a bad thing because you develop a greater sense of compassion and understanding that despite my limitations, children with cancer and their families are going through so much more... I'm just happy that I can give back." John Wallaesa is of course a teacher. His job is to teach young minds and get them ready for the next step into adulthood. Over the years though, there has been some valuable information he has learned about the ones he teaches.

"You learn not to jump to conclusions and try to understand that everybody has a back story... don't judge. It's taught me that if you really want to be effective as a teacher, you need to get to know the students the best way that you can," Wallaesa said. By being a positive role model and influence, John Wallaesa tries his best to let the work he does and the way he lives shine



through every day, and he is motivated by not only himself, but the kids he is teaching to become better people. "As a teacher you have to set an example. Despite your limitations or problems, you can't let that get you down.

You can't let that define you. If by getting up and going to work every day and trying to be the best teacher I can be, if that provides a model for young people to follow, that's great." "I'm also proud of the work that the kids do for THON.

I know they're inspired by it, and that other people in the school and community are inspired by it... I think what I try to do is to quietly live by example... it's not the setbacks that define you, it's how you handle the setbacks that define you," Wallaesa said.

For more information on the BASD Mini-THON and the events they run, go to the BASD THON page on Facebook, visit basdminithon.com, or to find out more about Four Diamonds, visit fourdiamonds.com. BASD Mini-THON is always looking for more corporate sponsors. If interested, email jwallaesa@basdschools.org.

By Christian Jackson

I Need To Know Where My Pets Go

Recently I lost my companion dog of 10 years. Piper was as close to me and I was to her. There is a wonderful backstory, no life story that space here does not allow me to share.

What is the most urgent to share is how the Lord ministered to me in my grief, when I cried out to him “I need to know where do our pets go!”

As a Rabbi one might think I should have all the answers, I don’t and that always leads me to seek out the Holy Spirit. As always scripture provides the truth and offers peace.

Animals just as we are, are His creation Genesis 1:24-25 & they are good! Genesis 1:31a “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good.” Verse 30 says animals have a living soul... and in Ecclesiastes 3:18-20 ESV:

“As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath (Ruach “spirit”); humans have no advantage over animals... All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return...”

Going back to Genesis God makes covenant with all creatures; Genesis 9:9 “As for me - I am herewith establishing my covenant with you, with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you ...” And verse 16 “The rainbow will be in the cloud; so

that when I look at it, I will remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of any kind on the earth.” In the Renewed Covenant (New Testament) From scripture we see a resurrection for not only man but beast!

And salvation? “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3:6) and Psalm 36:6 ESV “Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O Lord.”

Do animals know God? “and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13 ESV)

And the word says that the animals worship. In Psalm 148:7-8 calls on everything to praise the Lord. He included in this call the animals our King created, spoke into existence, Psalm 150:6 “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!”

Is Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus vested in animals? After Jonah preached and the people of Nineveh repented, Jonah expressed his displeasure at God’s decision not to send destructive judgment on the people.

In confronting Jonah about his hard-hearted attitude, God reminded Jonah that not only have 120,000 people been spared, “many animals” were also spared (Jonah 4:11). The psalmist speaks of animals in general, saying,



“They all wait for You (God) to give them their food in due season” (104: 27 ESV). Our Lord loves animals, and that is a character trait passed to us! I not only had an obligation to care for Piper, but desired to because I love her!

Why did the Lord create animals? Several reasons, beasts of burden, food, the eco system, but the top one for me? Is joy! In this world it is sometimes easier to see love from animals than people.

I believe that the scriptures assure us that just as we will see our faithful loved ones again in the resurrection, we will also be reunited with our companions of the animal world. It is my hope and I believe the promise of our Messiah for the Olam Haba, the world to come!

By Rabbi Mark Shulman
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First Impressions

“It's pretty simple, pretty obvious: that people's first impressions of people are sometimes a big mistake.”

Did you ever first lay eyes on a person and immediately cast an opinion? Of course you have, it's only human nature. But how many times have you revisited that initial thought? Were you right? Or were you presently surprised that after some thought and reflection you were wrong as the day is long? There's a valuable lesson right there, especially in sports.

In the world of sports, and here in Philadelphia, fandom runs wild. The televisions and radios are saturated with games. The internet is streaming coverage left and right. It's all around us. And there to help the fans react, and formulate their opinions, almost instantaneously, is social media and sports radio. See something. Have a thought.

Tweet and share. Light up the phone lines. The problem with that process however, is that often times; there is more to the story to eventually follow. It is indeed great therapy to get things off your chest but it's best to let those opinions marinate a little. First impressions last for as long as you let them.

Take new Phillies manager Gabe Kapler for instance. Could there have been a worse and more inauspicious debut than that of the Phils' skipper? He removed his starting pitcher while he was cruising with a 5-0 lead and threw only 68 pitches. They eventually lost the game 8-5. That was followed two games later by an embarrassing call to the bullpen for a reliever who hadn't warmed up as of yet. Rough. And the Philly faithful let him know about it.

He was booed incessantly upon his return home after his every trip to the mound. And hey, he deserved it. But he also, by some human measure, deserved a second chance and more time to turn things around. And to his credit, he has righted the ship some and has the Phils playing good baseball. Time will tell.

I'm reminded of the hiring of Eagles head coach Doug Pederson, who NFL analyst and former GM Mike Lombardi described as the single worst hire ever. “Doug Pederson might be less qualified to coach a team than anyone I've ever seen” he offered. He then followed with “When will the Eagles admit their mistake?”

Will they throw away 2017 by stubbornly sticking to the Pederson Principle? Well, I'm sure glad they didn't because Lombardi must now refer to Pederson as a Super Bowl winning coach. How was that for first impressions?



There's tons more. From Ricky Watters “For who for what” where he ingratiated himself into Philadelphia lore after short arming a catch in his first game to Donovan McNabb who was lustily booed after his name was called during the 1999 NFL Draft.

Watters went on to rack up nearly 4,000 rushing yards in three seasons with the Birds, while McNabb, while aloof and often failing on the big stage, put together a very solid tenure in midnight green. After all, he still remains the franchise's all-time passing leader.

Now that doesn't mean your first instincts are always wrong. Not surprisingly, sometimes things are exactly the way they appear. Remember Shawn Bradley, the 7-6 phenom from BYU the Sixers selected number two overall in the 1993 draft? Well, he stunk from the start. The fans got that one right, as they did on the Eagles' reach on Freddie Mitchell, hardly the people's champ.

But with all of those I told you so's, they're great stories of redemption rising in contradiction from the unfavorable first opinions. I mean who thought the Phillies' Charlie Manuel would last nine seasons; win nearly 800 games and win a World Series?

There are very few who trusted The Process and thought Sam Hinkie was a fool, but the 76ers have turned the corner and his tanking experiment, laughed and mocked at, is starting to pay dividends.

Sometimes it takes just a few moments, a statement here or there, or usually a big a win to turn things around. Winning, is said to be the greatest deodorant of all. There's nothing like a title to turn what was thought as buffoonery into sweet lasting history.

So, wear that suit on your first interview. Hold the door open for her on the first date. Always hustle during your first practice. And in Philadelphia, bust your ass every play and shift.

First impressions do matter, but every once in a while things don't start off exactly the way you planned. Time has a way of fixing those errors so it's best to reserve judgment for another day. Isn't that right Nick Foles?

By Brian Startare

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May the 4th Be With You, Everyday

This past week marked May the 4th. Star Wars aficionados rejoiced around the world with memes, messages, and salutations uttering those famous words, “May the 4th Be With You.” Everyone, that is, except me. Those of you who know me, understand what the Star Wars movies have meant. As a little girl, I dreamed of going into space. I joined the Astronomy Club in middle school and even went to the Air Force Academy to learn and experience all things above ground level. I can still quote *Episode IV: A New Hope* verbatim, am suspect of anyone who believes Episodes I, II, and III belong in the Star Wars canon, and have a copy of my father's best-seller, *Life is Tremendous*, autographed by Mark Hamill and Gary Kurtz as one of my most beloved artifacts.

Here I was cranking and banking through May the 4th when someone finally stopped me and said, “May the 4th be With You!” How did this happen? How did I miss the day to honor my all-time favorite movie in the universe? And then it struck me like a shot from a Storm Trooper’s blaster that finally hit something; I was so filled with the Force that I didn’t recognize the Force as something

separate from me; I had become the Force. Psychologists call this state of being all in, getting into the flow.

Getting into the flow is where you stop looking, questioning, and dipping your big toe into all that is going on around you and dive into the deep end of humanity. I entered the flow of all that was going on around me in such a way that I no longer had the sensation of movement. I was the movement, so it became intrinsic and not something I extrinsically recognized. Dr. Csikszentmihalyi did a TED talk where he describes The Flow as what brings lasting satisfaction and fulfillment and makes life worth living. The Flow, or the Force, for us Star Wars fans, is the sweet spot where you have the will and the skill to meet the challenges ahead, and you do so without thinking or being aware of what you are doing. Just like when Luke Skywalker stayed on target and fired his proton torpedoes down the exhaust shaft blowing up the Death Star.

A close analogy is the experience of skydiving. Before stepping out of the plane, you are still aware of gravity, the harness, and your fear. Once you slip

the surly bonds and enter the atmosphere, everything changes. You get into the flow of the air and become a part of it. I read this excellent description by Jessica Hui, “There's rushing wind, and there's blue. So much blue, and so intense: the blue of the sky, the blue of the Bay and the ocean. The view and the sensation are so consuming, I forget entirely about the parachute, barely remembering to look at my videographer. Everything feels both beautifully close and breathtakingly far. It's also incredibly radiant — bright white fluffy clouds below, brilliant ocean intensifying toward the horizon. Your gaze seems to extend forever. Time dilates. The twelve or so seconds of free-fall feel endless.”

Her words are a perfect description of how I've experienced life the past months. It has nothing to do with emotions or feelings, but more of the driven energy that moves you with certainty toward your higher purpose. When we give ourselves entirely over to living a tremendous life, we become unaware that we are living it because we are all consumed with being it. I have heard about the state where you become so entrenched in your desires that it becomes a part of you. The state where you lose track of time and world events because you are vectoring and operating in a completely different realm. It took me forgetting about the Force, to realize that I had indeed become The Force.

By Tracey C. Jones



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Do You Expect Success?

Once I was scheduled to speak at two large business conventions the same weekend. I started the weekend in Orange County, California. I spoke on Friday night to 20,000 people then rose early the next morning to fly to Charlotte, North Carolina.

THE SCARY AIRLINE ADVENTURE

When I arrived at the airport I was informed that the departure would be late. I had a connection in Dallas, Texas and knew that I had little margin for error. Everything was late and when I arrived in Dallas I was told that my flight to Charlotte was also delayed. By this time, I had calculated that the Charlotte flight would get me to that airport at a certain time and that I would arrive at the arena approximately 20 minutes before I was scheduled to speak. I had to do everything in that 20-minute span, change clothes, prepare (pray!) put on a wireless microphone and walk on stage.

I had mentally measured all of this while I was waiting for the Charlotte flight to leave. I could feel the tension growing. Then I remembered something I had learned from some positive Christian friends who had taught me to see every circumstance as an opportunity to see what God could do. I felt a surge of excitement. My focus changed from fear to anticipation. I prayed for God’s help and sensed a

calm settling over me. I used the flight time to Charlotte to review my material. I mentally rehearsed every point and practiced every story. I continued to pray for God’s blessing.

When I landed in Charlotte I was ready. A driver transported me to the arena. I was so focused that I was able to easily and quickly change my clothing and put on the microphone. I was ready to walk onto the stage in 13 minutes. My in-flight preparation worked. When I was introduced, I was ready to speak to 30,000 excited people. It was a great night. God abundantly blessed! I have had many similar situations over the years. Once I received a call while I was in the shower, my hair covered in shampoo, and was told that there had been a scheduling change and I was due on stage to speak in 20 minutes. I made it.

Because of these experiences, I have developed what I call, “stage focus.” I now prepare and memorize my material well in advance. I ask God to help and use me and I go into and stay in my “stage focus” as the time approaches for my presentation. I have even learned how to talk with people and keep that focus. All of this is based on one thing. A positive, expectant attitude. This is a positive commitment to meet challenges, overcome obstacles and face the future with a happy expectation of success. It is, above all, a decision to trust God.

Occasionally I encounter a person who is suspicious of positive thinking. I do not believe that positive thinking is a substitute

for a healthy faith in God. But I do believe that while it is true that positive thinking will not get you into Heaven, it will make the journey there a lot easier and happier.

In summary, positive attitude produces certain important results.

1. Positive attitude is an aid to calm, rational thinking. You see things more clearly when you remove fear and negative perspective.
2. Positive attitude stimulates creative thinking and helps you generate fresh ideas and inventive solutions. You see possibilities.
3. Positive attitude makes relationships more smooth and happy.
4. Positive attitude improves work performance. People like to work with those who are positive.
5. Positive attitude attracts leaders. Successful individuals are drawn to positive people and often want to help them.

The Bible says in I Thessalonians 5: 16-17, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Trust God, be positive and expect great results!

By Ron Ball

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Powering Down For Health

Technology can be an awesome thing! It connects us to others, it's super convenient and, if used mindfully, can even help us find a little bit of calm. But as the old adage goes, too much of anything can be bad for you. It's no secret that a little unplugging can go a long way, yet we're spending more time than ever glued to our screens. But here's the sad reality: All this tech is taking a toll on our health. Perhaps it's time to power down for a bit and take a social media time-out.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS:

Staring at your phone all day might wreck your spine. Recent research by New York spine surgeon Kenneth Hansraj found that our constant Instagram scrolling, Facebooking, Snapchatting and incessant text messaging may be hurting our backs. The study found that when you tilt your head 60 degrees to stare at your phone, you're putting 60 pounds of pressure on your neck. Previous research also shows that sitting in front of our computers all day can also negatively affect our stature. Are we reverting "back" to Neanderthal times.

Your phone could cause breakouts and blemishes.

Here's a gross fact: Our phones are actually teeming with bacteria (think about it, where don't we bring our devices?). And where are we putting that bacteria? Directly on our face. Have you looked at your phone screen lately? Yuk!!

Germs pile up on our phones thanks to our external environment, which could cause acne or eczema outbreaks, Everyday Health reported. Luckily, the problem is somewhat easily fixed. Experts suggest cleaning and sterilizing your phone, as well as going hands-free whenever possible.

Wi-Fi exposure may lower men's sperm count.

Laptops are extraordinarily convenient for comfort — but men who work with them on their laps may be hurting their reproductive chances. One 2015, study found that men who were exposed to electromagnetic radiation from laptop Wi-Fi, at one and seven hours, had sperm with DNA damage and decreased motility.

And it's not just the computers. A recent meta-analysis of past studies, led by researchers at University of Exeter, U.K., suggests that men who store their phones in their pockets risk exposing themselves to radiation levels that may also lower sperm levels.

All that messaging may be giving you text claw.

It may not be an official medical diagnosis, but the symptoms are still very real. Any repetitive motor activity — like grasping

your phone too much — could cause muscle tension or irritate current conditions like tendonitis. It could also cause forearm or wrist pain. Also, see nomophobia.

Too much screen use could strain your eyes.

When you were a kid and someone called you out for falling asleep you'd say, "I'm just resting my eyes." It may have been a cover up then, but it's important now if you're stuck staring at a computer all day. Too much eye contact with our screens is exhausting our sight, causing our vision to become blurry and drying out our eyes. But you're not alone: Nearly 70 percent of American adults say they've experienced symptoms of digital eye strain at some point in their lives, USA Today reported. (Should have bought eyeglass stocks in 2007-ha ha)

Constant tech-indulgence may be giving you a headache.

No, that pounding in your head you feel isn't because you noticed on Facebook that your ex just got engaged (although, that may be part of it). If you stare at a screen for too long, you may experience tension headaches as a secondary result of digital eye strain. Reading dark text on a bright screen can lead to muscle spasms at the temples. To alleviate the pain, adjust the contrast on your screen or you can try the reverse option on some apps like Twitter.

MENTAL EFFECTS:

All that Googling can cause anxiety.

You've heard of hypochondriacs but what about cyberchondriacs? It sounds outlandish, but it does exist. The cause? An effort to self-diagnose a health problem you might be having. Experts suggest that searching for your symptoms online can result in some serious anxiety, Greatest reported.

Not only that, but constantly scrolling through your social networks isn't helping your anxiety either. One 2012 study found that excessive social media use may increase our stress levels. Yikes!

Staring at screens can ruin your sleep.

Before you shut down for the day, make sure to also shut down your phone and computer. Research shows that excessive tech use — particularly right before bedtime — can have an adverse impact on our sleep cycles thanks to the glowing light that's emitted from screens. This is especially

true for young adults, who arguably need the most help when it comes to getting the proper amount of shuteye.

Loneliness and Facebook browsing are inextricably linked.

Previous research found that the popular social networking site can cause feelings of loneliness, but a recent study is suggesting a slight variation: Lonely people just turn to Facebook more often. Regardless of the research, experts conclude that this Internet paradox is a very real phenomenon. Our social networks are linked to feelings of loneliness, as well as a decrease in happiness and satisfaction — and that's not exactly warm and fuzzy news.

Addiction=withdrawals.

It may sound frivolous, but there is such a thing as technology addiction — and it's a prominent problem. Nomophobia is real. 74 percent of users would feel panicked without their phones. Research from Swansea and Milan Universities also found that heavy Internet users suffered from withdrawal similar to those experienced by drug users when they went offline, TIME reported.

Too much tech is literally changing your brain.

Emails, text messages, news feeds, oh my... oh no! Research shows the technology we process each day is actually rewiring our brains, between the multitasking and the addiction we feel when we're without it. "We are exposing our brains to an environment and asking them to do things we weren't necessarily evolved to do," Adam Gazzaley, a neuroscientist at the University of California, San Francisco, told the New York Times in 2010. "We know already there are consequences."

By [Nicole Celentano Gallagher](#)

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LIVE A BROWN DOG LIFE



Your Character Is Showing

Every year the National Basketball Association (the NBA) invites young players to try out at a league-wide “combine”. To qualify for an invitation a player must have impressive talent and a high skill level.

The young men know that this is an opportunity to increase their odds of being selected to play in the best basketball league in the world. Each young player is required to pass a rigorous physical examination and his previous year of college play is carefully scrutinized. Physical fitness and conditioning are crucial for success.

But the players are not aware of the most important part of their audition for greatness. Each player is picked up separately at the airport and transported to their hotel. The staff person who meets them has been instructed to observe how the young man treats them as a “lowly” employee.

The staffer carries the luggage and opens the door to the car, but his real purpose is to see how the prospective player responds to him as a human being. The staffer even monitors the conversation to discover how the player interacts with another person who seems unimportant. Is he respectful? Does he use foul language? Is he polite? Does he thank the staffer for his help?

The staff person then takes the young man to a restaurant and observes how he orders his food and whether he is courteous to the servers. When this process is finished the staffer checks the young man into his hotel and gives him his instructions for the try-out. Throughout this entire procedure the young player does not know he is being tested.

The NBA scouting officials would not have invited these young men if they had not already passed their physicals and demonstrated their ability to play the game at a high level. What they are looking for is character and they believe that character is best revealed by how someone treats other people.

They want players who respect other human beings and care about others more than their own ego. Amy and I had just finished a speaking tour of Australia and flown back to the United States the day before I was scheduled to speak at a conference in Orlando, Florida.

We were exhausted and decided to go to bed early, so we could be rested for the opening day of the conference. We woke around eight AM and Amy went to check on our convention arrangements and I went for a run. I left a “do not disturb” sign on the door.

When I returned an hour later I saw that the room door was open, and the sign had been removed. I was irritated and was about to enter the room and rebuke the maid inside for removing the sign and cleaning the room when I was not ready. As I prepared to walk through the door I heard the maid softly singing, in broken English, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

I was immediately ashamed and asked God to forgive me for my angry, rude spirit. I realized that the maid was not trying to interfere with my schedule, she was simply cleaning my room and she was a sister in Christ. I was not “better” than her. God loved us equally.

How do you treat people when you have power over them? How do you work with servers in restaurants and individuals who mow your lawn? How do you speak with people who need you? Do you respect everyone equally?

Always remember that God made and loves each person. Jesus died for everyone. You may be blessed, but God intends your blessings to encourage and help other people. Like the young men at the NBA combine, never forget that your character is showing.

The Bible says in John 13:34, “A new command I give you; Love one another. As I [Jesus] have loved you, so you must love one another.”

By Ron Ball

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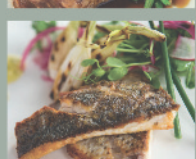
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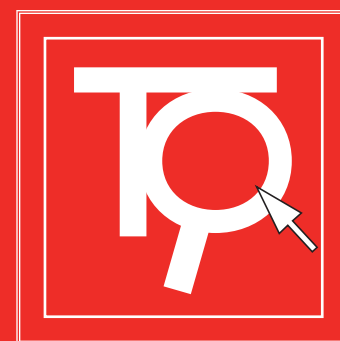
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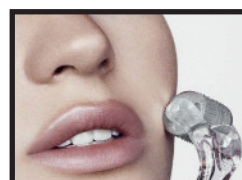
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