



the MIND reader

Volume 2, Issue 4

June 2014

PAGE 1

- I ♥ Nerds

Page 2

- Every Day is Nerd Day!
- Revenge of the Nerds

Page 3

- I ♥ Nerds (continued)
- Nerd Culture—Online Gamers

Page 4

- Revenge of the Nerds (continued)

IN NEXT ISSUE:

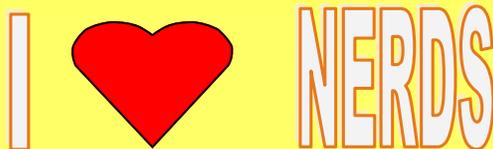
*Fun in
the Sun*

Editor:

Dr. Sheri Fluellen

Contributors:

Julie Kostrey
Doug Blocksma
Lindsay Simineo
Mark Russell



By: Julie Kostrey

Having recently gone through the interview process for positions as a therapist, I've been asked time and again about the different places I have

lived and worked. Prior to moving to Cheyenne, I lived in the Chicago area to complete my graduate degree. Immediately prior to that, I had the good fortune to live in NYC, the big apple, the city that never sleeps, and one which is arguably one of the most intense, diverse places on earth.

The church I was affiliated with while in NYC had a congregation that represented some 50 different countries from around the globe. Members were individuals who were at the top of their fields, from web designers, musicians, administrators, teachers, actors, doctors, managers, students, and tradespeople, to name but a few. Worship on Sundays was a major production, inclusive of a choir, musicians, artists, actors, and dancers with professional training and experience in performance. For all intents and purposes, members of the church all were "nerds" in the sense that they were passionate about what they did. Their commitment, leadership, skills, training, and determination to do "their thing" (whatever it was) had rendered them experts – to a nerdy degree.

The youth group at that church was also very active, requiring a full-time Youth Minister (a doctoral student at seminary who also happened to be a well-known Christian rap star with numerous CD recordings and many speaking engagements to churches throughout the country). The Youth Minister had a full schedule on Sunday mornings, as well as activities and groups throughout the week. Not only were the kids of the adult (nerdy) church members invited to participate in these activities, but all kids in the neighborhood were welcomed to join in the fun. In short, all were included and no one was left outside the life of the church – from nerdy adult members to neighborhood kids with an excess of free time.

The importance of being inclusive, celebrating differences, and acting in supportive ways to all members strikes me as all essential aspects of that cute 'n clever, kid-like declaration, I Heart Nerds.

And as it turns out, the "golden rules" implicit in loving nerds (those instructive of how to treat ourselves and others) is more than just plain old good common sense. As any good therapist understands, there's important science behind human behavior that should be considered. As a brand new member of the Mind Spa team, I've done a bit of scientific homework I'd like to share. Yeah, pretty nerdy of me, I know.

In a recent study published in the *Journal of Social Issues* (1), researchers examined the reactions of 6 to 12 year old children to in-group members who accepted or rejected them and assessed whether their reactions were influenced by their rejection sensitivity (a pattern of social information processing that includes a heightened tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to implied or overt interpersonal rejection) and social acumen (children's knowledge of how the social system works, their social perceptiveness, and their skill in engaging positively and effectively in social interactions with others).

Researchers found that children as young as 6 years display considerable perceptiveness to being in a group (i.e., accepted, rejected, or ambiguously rejected) and these perceptions influenced their quite nuanced reactions to the group and its members. The results of the study also found that children's reactions to their group are independently influenced by sensitivity to the possibility of rejection, as well as their level of social acumen.

The study concluded that from as early as age 6, kids who suffer peer rejection have resulting negative emotional experiences and this impacts their relationships with others. Additionally, it has potential to trigger their rejection sensitivity, which is linked to further problems such as anxiety, distorted thinking, social withdrawal, loneliness, anger, retribution, and aggression. (Continued on pg. 3)



Every Day is Nerd-Day!

By: Doug Blocksma

“Apparently you can't hack into a government supercomputer and then try to buy uranium without the Department of Homeland Security tattling to your mother.”

- Sheldon Cooper, Big Bang Theory

“Be nice to nerds, chances are you'll end up working for one.”

- Bill Gates



“Nerd. One whose unbridled passion for something or things defines who they are as a person without fear of other people's judgment.”

- Zachary Levi, Actor

“Dear ‘Cool People’ they didn't name a candy after you, did they? Sincerely, Nerds.”



The word Nerd conjures up a very specific image. Broken glasses, goofy teeth, bad hair and an overabundance of specific knowledge of the Jedi order. The fact that this image is still the first thing that pops into frame is actually out of line with our current popular culture and is not representative of the state of actual ‘Nerd-Culture’ in this country. Nerderly is all around us, and we all engage in it in our own specific ways. The internet has allowed for communities of such specific interests to find one another that was not possible when our Nerd forebears were toiling away in solitude in their basement dwellings.

The truth is in the numbers: The action-movie-summer-blockbuster season has been completely taken over by comic book (NERD) franchises. In the last decade, 3 of the top 4 grossing films have all been “nerdy” – in fact, five of the top ten grossing movies of ALL TIME are of this ilk! (Avengers, Dark Knight, Dark Knight Rises, Star Wars Episodes IV and I). The San Diego Comic Convention is the place for announcing not just comic book storylines but a place for all media to reveal trailers and plot lines. The most watched television show in the country is a zombie saga

that was originally published by Image Comics. We are surrounded by the nerds, nay, we have all become the nerds ourselves.

So what happens when the nerds become the mainstream? When people not only have access to the things that make them happy, but the stigma of a ‘guilty pleasure’ is rubbed away by our mutual enjoyment of the time-space-continuum and completing the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs? I think the world becomes a better place. I think that being allowed to love something that excites you and gives you joy without fear of high school torture is the kind of world that I want to live in. And I'll leave you with a (prime) directive to watch this clip of Wil Wheaton, the captain of the nerds, as to why it's important to embrace your inner nerd.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_BtmV4JRSc.
Live long and prosper.



Revenge of the Nerds: How the Nerd Culture has taken over the Mainstream Culture faster than a speeding bullet.

By: Lindsay Simineo

In the eighties, *Revenge of the Nerds* chronicles a group of stereotypical nerds on their quest to stop the harassment they receive from a local fraternity. They have all of the characteristics that nerds possess, interest in intelligence, extreme obsessions in sci-fi or fantasy culture, and an odd fascination with trivia and random facts. The movie ends well with the Nerds being victorious in spreading the message that it is okay to be different.

The acceptance of nerd and nerd culture would not occur in main stream culture for another 30 years. Now in 2014, there is no denial of its triumph. It is common for the blockbuster movie season to open with a superhero flick. Last year *Doctor Who* set a world record for its 50th Anniversary episode, for being the most simulcast and most viewed program ever. One can look on every major broadcast channel and find a program with some element of science fiction in it; from *Marvel: Agents of Shield*, *Cosmos*, *Resurrection*, *Grimm*. Comic Cons have sprung up all over the country, including Denver and Cheyenne. The evidence is obvious, nerds are dominating with a force we have never seen before.

Why this sudden shift now in the mainstream culture and why is everyone so stinking excited about all this nerdy stuff?! The answer can be found by looking at generational patterns, specifically the Millennial Generation.

The Millennial Generation is defined as anyone born between 1982 and 2004. This generation was given the name “millennial” by researchers in the 80's. The majority of the Millennials are raised by Baby Boomers or by Generation X, depending on age. Baby Boomers had a strong sense of independence and social change; whereas Generation X had these same characteristics but also a huge emphasis on education as well having more college degrees than any generation before it.

Early in its study, when the first Millennials were in adolescence, researchers declared that this generation was narcissistic or egotistical in nature. However, more recent studies have shown a different side of them. Educational sociologist Andy Furlong described Millennials (in his book *Youth Studies: An Introduction*) as optimistic, engaged, and team players (2). Author David Burstein describes Millennials' approach to social change as “pragmatic idealism,” with a deep desire to make the world a better place. Millennials currently have more student loan debt, have a higher optimism in the country's future, and are more proficient/interested in technology than any generation before them (3).

(Continued on pg 4)

I ♥ NERDS (Continued)

So, you may ask, what does this have to do with nerds and/or my fond memories of that NYC neighborhood church that welcomed everyone, and where each member was valued – for nerdy skills that benefited the organization or “just cuz”?

What the research seems to imply is that in light of all the potential negative consequences, there is great importance for good health and growth for people to be able to be authentic in terms of what makes them the unique individual they are, and also experience a sense of acceptance and belonging, and improve friendships and relationships.

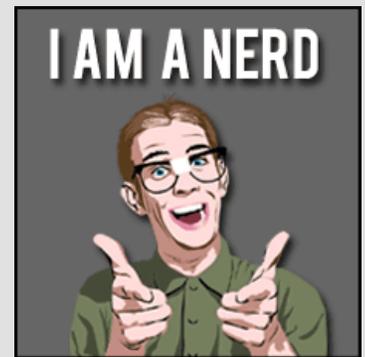
As Mind Spa welcomes me on board as a new therapist, I am grateful for the opportunity to be accepted and celebrated for those qualities that comprise my inner nerd (look for more self disclosure in future editions of this newsletter), as well as be part of a team of professionals with the common objective of helping our clients and the larger Cheyenne community maintain good health. For me personally, this also means finding a strong church family in which I can use my unique skills and talents in service to God within an organization that shares my values.

What about you? Are you a nerd? Are you different? What is your claim to nerdiness? Do you have a unique skill, passion, or interest that goes beyond that of others you know? Do you feel

part of a group that is strong enough to accept differences and not only the commonalities?

What about any parents out there? Do you have a nerdy kid – be it video game guru or spelling bee champion? Are you ever concerned about your kid’s uniqueness in terms of fitting in with the rest of the crowd? How can you help your child be the authentic best he or she can be and at the same time avoid bullying or other group violence to encourage strong social relationships?

These are all important questions to ask ourselves in our different roles in the world, both professionally and personally. Talking with your or your child’s therapist can be useful in exploring unique authentic qualities, discussing the quality of relationships, participation in groups, and the meaning you or your child give to such individual/social expression.



Nerd Culture—Online Gamers

By: Mark Russell

Understanding cultural context has become a very important aspect of developing a healthy relationship in therapy. Some people might not consider what kind of nerd a person is, I on the other hand believe that some people identify so strongly with their “nerdy” hobbies and lifestyles that they very much become a part of an individual’s culture. Gamers seem to have developed a culture all their own. Gaming in general is becoming an increasingly influential form of media entertainment and online gaming has had growth popularity and influence. For a little context, World of Warcraft – a massive multiplayer online role playing game – had around twelve million individual active accounts at one time (4). Steam – an online gaming database for multiple gaming genres – averages over seven million active players during peak hours (5). League of Legends – a multiplayer online battle arena – has an astounding sixty-seven million individual accounts with approximately twenty-seven million players online simultaneously during peak hours (6). As a point of reference, New York City has a population of just over eight million people.

There are both positive and negative aspects to online gamer culture. Perhaps the most important aspect to consider is that online gamers are very socially driven – just not in the way that most people would think. Online games often develop clans or guilds which are groups of players that have created a community related specifically to the game they play together. These communities may be limited to a single game or may span multiple games. Relationships are often focused primarily on the game, but there have been multiple online gaming relationships that have led to real life friendships and even marriages. Online gamers are also relatively competitive within their respective communities. An unfortunate side effect of both the competitive nature of games and the anonymity of playing online is toxic behavior where individuals will treat other players very cruelly with little regard for how they are impacting the other person on an emotional level.



Understanding the social context and culture of online games can be very informative for people who are not a part of these communities. Parents in particular can benefit from learning more about these cultural qualities to online games. First of all, online relationships are meaningful and just as real in many ways to Gamers as coworkers or schoolmates. Sometimes, the fact that a coworker or schoolmate is a Gamer as well is a significant factor in developing a friendship. Additionally, parents need to be aware that younger children playing online games are likely going to be exposed to toxic behavior. People can be very mean to players who are still learning how to play. Taking time to engage with children to better understand their online relationships and the emotional impact that they have can provide additional support while they navigate negative interactions – much in the same way they learn to navigate negative relational experiences at school.

Hopefully, this article provides a glimpse of online gaming as a culture and what it means to be a part of this culture.

Revenge of the Nerds: How the Nerd Culture has taken over the Mainstream Culture faster than a speeding bullet. (Continued)

What the studies do not explicitly say (but the conclusions is obvious) is that Millennials are nerds. *Huge, gaping, loud nerds*. How can this be? Their demographic information gives them away, specifically about technology and about education.

These two factors have proven to be very important to this Generation, and they have used these two features to feed their nerd desires. When it comes to technology, the internet has helped them gorge on shows, books, and comic books. This is the age group that had developed "Binge TV" (watching multiple hours of a show until it is completed). They have also used this technology to further their education, becoming developers and inventors. It is also easy to see by looking at the generations before them. By being raised in a culture of individualism, independence, social change and education provided by their past generation parents, Millennials were given ample opportunity to foster their nerdy interests and carry them into adulthood.

It is because of this nerdiness that is present in Millennials that we see the mainstream culture responding. The main demographic that TV, movies, and most marketing strategies try to focus on is the 18-49 range. As of 2014, Millennials make up nearly half of this demographic and with each passing year taking more and more of it over. Thus, if the mainstream media is wanting to market to this age demographic, then the nerdier it will become.

What the nerds in the eighties didn't tell us in the movies was that someday they were going to have kids. By having kids they would foster their nerdy ways and in decades take over the world. That time is now. The greatest revenge was laid out years in advance. As a fellow nerd and Millennial, I could not be more pleased or excited.

If you need me I will be in my basement binging on hours of *Doctor Who* on Netflix.....



719 E. 17th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82001
Phone: 307-509-0772
Fax: 307-426-4133

314 N Last Chance Gulch #306
Helena, MT 59601
Phone: 406-686-6463
Fax: 307-426-4133

OUR admin TEAM

Kristen Cooper
Office Administrator
Kristen@mindspatherapy.com

Tonia Carter
Director of Administration
Billing@mindspatherapy.com

Stephanie Bledsoe
Administrative Assistant
Stephanie@mindspatherapy.com

OUR TEAM in Cheyenne

Dr. Sheri Fluellen, PhD - Clinical Director
Licensed Psychologist (WY & CO)
Sheri@mindspatherapy.com

Doug Blocksma, MA - Assistant Clinical Director
Licensed Professional Counselor (WY)
Doug@mindspatherapy.com

Linda Malm, MS
Licensed Professional Counselor (WY)
Linda@mindspatherapy.com

Sarah Tilley, MA
Licensed Professional Counselor (WY & VA)
Sarah@mindspatherapy.com

Lindsay Simineo, MA
Licensed Professional Counselor (WY)
Lindsay@mindspatherapy.com

Mark Russell, MA
Provisional Professional Counselor (WY)
Mark@mindspatherapy.com

Julie Kostrey, MA
Provisional Professional Counselor (WY)
Julie@mindspatherapy.com

OUR TEAM in Helena

Jim Patterson, MA, MDiv
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (WY & MT)
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (MT)
Jim@mindspatherapy.com

References

(1) Nesdale, D., Zimmer-Gembeck, M.J., & Roxburgh, N. (2014). Peer group rejection in childhood: Effects of rejection ambiguity, rejection sensitivity, and social acumen. *Journal of Social Sciences* (2) Youth Studies: An Introduction By Andy Furlong. (3) Fast Future: How the Millennial Generation Is Shaping Our World By David Burstein. (4) <http://us.blizzard.com/en-us/company/press/pressreleases.html?id=2847881>. (5) http://store.steampowered.com/stats/?snr=1_steam_4__110 (6) <http://www.forbes.com/sites/insertcoin/2014/01/27/riots-league-of-legends-reveals-astonishing-27-million-daily-players-67-million-monthly/>