

Psychology of the Web, Online Gaming, Internet Use, Abuse and Addiction, Digital Immigrants & Digital Natives

Interview of Dr. Zur with Casey Truffo, Director of International Therapist Leadership Institute

Casey Truffo: Hi, everyone. This is Casey Truffo and I'm here with Dr. Ofer Zur, the architect, founder of the ZurInstitute.com. I think there's probably not a therapist on the planet that doesn't know about the Zur Institute. It's a place where you can get literally hundreds of CEU programs. I know I'm up for renewal in about two weeks. I'm going to be visiting your site to make sure that I get enough of my CEUs. They're wonderfully done. I just want to welcome you, Ofer.

Ofer Zur: Thank you. I speak with you again on completely different topic and another cutting-edge topic. That's nice. You're keeping us really at the edge of our seats with new ideas and new challenges.

Casey Truffo: You were the one that brought this to me and I just think it is so important. The title of this session is "Helping Children and Parents Deal with Internet and Online Gaming Use, Abuse, and Addictions." Share with us your whole thoughts about the digital natives and the digital immigrants. I just find that fascinating.

Ofer Zur: I think we as therapists, as parents, and as educator are encountering something that is a little bit unprecedented with the way we have been trained or used to function. We have a new tribe of what we call digital natives who are in our midst. They are in our schools. They are in our homes. They are in our therapy sessions. We lack the skills and knowledge, the compassion, the understanding of how this subculture operates.

As a result, we get worried. We get concerned. We feel shut out. We yell, "You're addicted. You're ADHD. You are going down the drain into destruction," even though they are preparing themselves perfectly for their future, not for our future. We see distressing parents concerned about kids wasting their time in the computer, distressed teachers where the kids do not read, and distressed therapists where the natives come to their offices and they are texting and sometimes watching short videos in the middle of sessions or checking our Facebook profile and want to be our friends.

We are just at lost and create a lot of tension and a lot of unhappiness that so much of it comes from just sheer ignorance. I see my job as bridging between cultures, with your help today, Casey.

Casey Truffo: Tell your story about your daughter.

Ofer Zur: I'm not sure which one. I have three digital natives in the midst. I left right now the house and my 15 years old was sitting on a computer and he was definitely

checking his Facebook right after school. The NBA, he's preparing to play, so the television is on. He's doing homework. He's reading the text in order to do the homework and video trailers actually playing at the right-hand side and his iTunes is on.

I'm looking at this kid and I say, "How does he function?" I get overwhelmed looking at him, to say the least, just counting the things that he's supposed to multitask. He doesn't multitask. It's another misunderstanding that we have. Does he really read? Does he do his homework? Is he ADHD? What does he do? How does he do that?

You sometimes put makeup in the cars when you drive, Casey. This is the most complex multitasking that you probably do.

Casey Truffo: I can't do that, literally.

Ofer Zur: You can't even do that.

Casey Truffo: No.

Ofer Zur: I can talk on the phone while I drive and actually I'm very focused. This is a good multitasking that I can do. How do we view the kids' relationship to read and indeed they don't read the way we would have hoped they read? How do we deal with the multitasking? Where are they going? Are they going to be ready for the world? This is the question that we would like to address today.

I've been guided with this journey with my daughter, who is 27. She's UC Berkeley, philosophy major, so she's very good in anthropology and asking the hard questions. I have a watch girl, above me, that will make sure--She calls me on--We had a conference with other presenters and an authoritative older man, I don't know even his name, and now, he said, technology depresses us and technology cause all this harm. It was just such a perfect immigrant statement that was so ignorant--to the studies that the technology depresses us.

Sure. We have studies that technology dumb us down. No, we don't. The immigrants, we give it such a bad name. As therapists, we are a little bit worse in all this, because we think we know. At least parents, sometimes, get overwhelmed and don't know. With therapy, we have an illusion that we know, but we really don't understand this tribe. Today, we'll try to do an intro into this tribe.

Casey Truffo: Where do we start?

Ofer Zur: Where do we start? Let's start perhaps with the difference between the two generations, between the digital immigrants and digital natives. We're between the two generations. There's no really clear line in the sense that the kids who grew up with VCRs and computers are all the digital natives. They are usually 40, 45, and less. Anybody above 45, above 50, is definitely with the digital immigrant, in that

case. It doesn't mean that we don't buy computers. That just means that it's a language and culture that we're not used to.

Some of us are more adaptive than others and some of us are reluctant adapters and some of them are non-adapters. It's not that all digital immigrants are clueless, technology-wise, except that we just haven't grown up with that. It's not in our DNA. Our brain didn't need to adjust to that at age 3 months old.

Casey Truffo: One of the definitions of technology that I've heard is, technology is what's come after you were born, because a microwave to my 90-year-old mother-in-law is technology, but to my stepdaughter, "What do you mean? There was a time before microwaves?"

Ofer Zur: That's ancient. This computer technology, there's a difference ...

Casey Truffo: Ofer, let me interrupt you a little bit. You're breaking up a little bit. I don't know if you can move around somewhere.

Ofer Zur: Actually, I'm on a landline, if you believe it or not.

Casey Truffo: It's not an Internet phone, right?

Ofer Zur: No. It's actually not an Internet phone.

Casey Truffo: That sounds better. Sometimes I just move it a little bit and it seems to work a little better.

Ofer Zur: You tell me. I'm not sure what did I do, but I just put the plug a little bit.

Casey Truffo: That sounds much better.

Ofer Zur: Good. The older ones, we prefer to talk on the phone or talk in person. The young ones prefer to do it via chat or Facebook or via games. It means if I want to connect with my kids, all three of them, I can call from now until the cows come home, or I can just text them and they respond to me within seconds, including in the middle of school. I'll text my son in the middle of school, he'll look at the phone, put it back in his pocket and text me in his pocket without looking, "Dad, what do you think? I'm in school. Don't text me now." He can do it in the middle of an exam. Less than five seconds and he can do it without even looking.

We text sparingly and they text with their eyes closed all the time. We prefer synchronistic communication. That means face to face at the same time, the same way that right now we are in this teleconference. They often prefer in asynchronistic or what we call sequential communication that they get in Facebook or they get in texting or we get in email. It could be very fast, but, nevertheless, it's sequential.

One of the major differences or conceptual differences that we have with them is we like manuals. We like to, "I wanted to know how to put PowerPoint today, how to create the flyer." I ask my techie how to do it and I ask him, "Please give me one, two, three, four." It was so hard for him. He said, "I know how to do it," but he couldn't explain to me how to do it because for him, he click, clicks. The same is almost my kids. If I ask them a question, can you tell me one, two, three, four, they look at me as if I'm an alien, and I am.

They work intuitively and they figure out by clicking very fast, by trial and error. They don't think about it as trial and error, but we can think about it as immigrants as trial and error, very fast. This is how they figure out. This is how a 2 years old can figure out the VCR remote. It's not because you go to the manuals. You don't have a system of linear and hierarchical, but it's in, what you call intuitive.

Most software, most computers are geared towards this population. This is why it's so hard for us sometimes to figure it out, because we like manuals and they don't like. They just do it intuitively. When you and I do things intuitively, Casey, we can figure it out, but when I at least won't remember how did I get there, then I have to start from scratch. The native have a learning curve through intuitive learning. Even when the immigrants learn intuitively, sometimes, it doesn't help us. We need to start from scratch next time.

We speak proper English and they got to go, G2G, laughing out loud, whatever it is that they needed those. They use a lot of instant messaging type of shortcuts and, definitely, part of the gaming and part of the communication. We tell our friends about the latest trip by phone or in person or in a slide presentation online, and they'll just do it through an album online to all their friends in Facebook.

Casey Truffo: Ofer, I found out one of my staff members was pregnant because it came in on her Facebook profile.

Ofer Zur: I have a friend who found out that one of the best friend died. This is somebody not from the childhood. This is somebody that they've been in contact on a weekly basis, and have found out on Facebook that their friend died.

Casey Truffo: Wow.

Ofer Zur: We get all outraged about it as immigrants, but for them it's more effective and you cannot argue that's ineffective. It's highly effective way to communicate with hundreds or thousands of people. We use Internet to gather information primarily, watch the news and stuff like that. They use it to socialize, to play, to watch videos, to create videos. We think that they waste their time online, but actually they are happily connected and happily learning.

Some of the biggest games that they play, the World of Warcraft, it's a highly learning type of game to learn how to work together, to learn how to raid, to learn how to accumulate stuff, highly creative avatars that they create. We think it's a

waste of time, but in fact, it is creative and some of it is highly waste of time, as well, but it's not all waste.

We think about one task or pleasure at a time and they, like I described my boy, who do it seven at a time. We find it very hard to deal with seven tasks at a time because we are lousy in multitasking and we are worse at hopping. Their brains don't really multitask, necessarily. They hop from one task to the other really, really fast.

We have a sense of concern with privacy, with kidnapping, with assault and robberies. The main concern is issues of sexting, inappropriate picture, the sense of privacy is very different. We see truly people who see the world and see themselves in a relationship to the world very different than we are. As therapists, as parents, as an educator, the first step for us is for us to understand this tribe who operates so different than we are.

Casey Truffo: Yes, because when they're in our office, that's a little bit harder to see. You have an example here of during a counseling session, the teenager will answer her phone.

Ofer Zur: They will answer their phone and it depends what kind of immigrant or digital natives we are as therapists. If it's a native therapy, probably they will not blink. It will seem very normal. Usually, those, they'll text back or answer very fast, they won't think twice about it, but many ... I was in a presentation in Virginia and one woman, older woman, stood up in the back of the room and she says she look at it as resistance. Sure, we talked to this 12 years old who just answered the text, that being distant analysis from a psychodynamic point of view. Sure, this will get you very far.

I saw somebody yesterday. He got a text and he got a video and he said, "Would you like to see the video?" I said, "I better want to see the video." I moved my chair, sat next to him. The video that his friend sent him, he took his iPad out and he showed me the video that he created that morning. Suddenly, I was in his world. I'm learning the video, joining him, and really understanding the aspiration of this young man. We talk about what's the challenges. What do you want to do with that? Where does he go career-wise? I flew with his digital nativeness rather than look at that as rude.

Casey Truffo: I love it.

Ofer Zur: Because I didn't think he was rude and he sure wasn't. He just was in his world. It's not much different when I went to the Somali desert and six out of seven kids will die before age 2. We can say they don't love the kids, they bury them without tears, but this is the rule of the desert. The desert cannot sustain seven kids.

How do we really shift our world view? Therapists present a paradox. We're so proud of ourselves of individual differences. We're so proud of ourselves of getting into the world view of our clients, but in fact we are really lousy at that. We come

up with a lot of judgment. One of the big ones is Internet addiction. This is one of our subtopic.

Casey Truffo: You want to go there?

Ofer Zur: No. Not yet. We'll leave it to the very end because it's really a very minor concern. My concern is with the digital immigrants not understanding. This is the biggest problem in the culture, not they're addicted. Not to say there isn't addictive, addictive behaviors, and there are not abuse, that they have.

I can throw my 2 cents on that. What we know about abuse right now, that most kids in United States and in Europe, at least, what they do is, they discover a game and they could dive into that and spend sometimes up to 18 hours a day. What happened to most young people, they correct, kind of a John Grohol model, they go from use to overuse, to abuse, to correction, to balance. Few of them will go from use to abuse to addiction.

A lot of them will self-correct. They self-correct when they get their grades at school. They self-correct when they're kicked out of school. They self-correct when somebody tell them either you get offline or I'll divorce you, or the parents go to the end of their rope. Most kids self-correct. I have talked to hundreds of young people. This is their experience. Their experience that they did overuse for a while and then correct. We can talk later on more about Internet addiction.

A word about multitasking and hopping, perhaps, this will be something for us to know. When my kid does all these seven activities that I described, watching YouTube, reading, watching the NBA, watching a trailer, doing homework, and of course, Facebook, in and out, in and out of Facebook, he does not multitask. His brain quickly hops. He shut off the video in his mind and he goes to Facebook. He responds to Facebook and then he does a reading of one paragraph of the text online. Then he does his homework, he writes two sentences, and then go back to Facebook, and then watch a bit of the NBA.

His brain really does not multitask. It's impossible to multitask within these tasks. What the brain does, which our brain of the immigrants cannot do, it hops very fast and, many argue, very efficiently.

Casey Truffo: Can I say something about that?

Ofer Zur: Sure.

Casey Truffo: There's a book I don't know if you've read called "The Myth of Multitasking: How 'Doing It All' Gets Nothing Done" by Dave Crenshaw. It's one of those stable books where somebody goes in, a consultant goes in, to help this lady manager out, and he shows her how much more efficient she is if she finishes one task before taking on another. I'm wondering. Maybe there's some truth to that for those of us that are digital immigrants.

He says there's no multitasking. It's called switch tasking because you really can't do multiple things at the same time. What you're saying is that the kids are doing this switch tasking very fast and for them, it's normal, it's easy, it's intuitive, it's supportive to who they are in their growing and learning. Perhaps, is it possible, for those of us that are digital immigrants, that it wouldn't work for us, that we really do need to slow down?

Ofer Zur: What he talks, he talks about the dumbing-down generation. He threw a tantrum about technology. That's what he does. As we know, the train left the station. We can scream and yell as much as we want, but this is how, the kids are not reading books right now. They're reading paragraphs at best. You're absolutely right that we are not effective in hopping. We just can't.

Casey Truffo: That's what I'm saying. We are not effective at that, right?

Ofer Zur: But the young ones are effective and they are going to go around the world differently. He said that they are dumbed down on the criteria that they don't know how to balance their checkbook.

Casey Truffo: I see.

Ofer Zur: They don't need to learn to balance their checkbook anymore. The checkbooks are balanced online. Nobody need to balance the checkbook. If they even verify their expenses or not, it's being balanced perfectly online 24/7, every millisecond. We say they don't read books. And this is a criteria for somebody to be dumbed down. The answer for that is dual. First of all, they don't read books from beginning to the end. They scan a lot of the books and mostly they read one paragraph at a time.

Is that dumbed down with the criteria of us immigrants? Probably. But this is not the world that they are going to grow into that. There won't be checkbooks in Europe at 2017. I'm not sure it's illegal, but it won't be available. It will be all online. The young ones will know how to operate right there. When we say "You're so dumb, you cannot balance your checkbook," it's dumb to say, in some regard.

The same thing around reading. We can talk about, what is our weddedness to reading? Again, I'm challenging everything that we thought intuitively is correct. We all went to school and we go do MA and then we survive the MFT exam and the psych exam and social worker exam, and now we're going to have LPC in California. We had to do tons of reading for that. We all read Tolstoy and other classics when we grew up or we pride ourselves of reading the best 50 classics. They are not going to go through that.

What's the value of that? It's really nice for us immigrants and give us good sense of being cultured and stuff, but reading is something new, that just started in 13th, 14th century with the press. Before, that was oral tradition. Educated people heard a lot of stories from the elderly of the tribes and from the wise women and from

other people who were functioning as leaders and teachers within the tribal cultures, and whatever they were before the 12th century.

Now, we have, for the last 700 years, we have the press and everybody thinks the criteria for intelligence is reading. These kids are going to different mode of being. It's not the oral history of the early years of humanity. It's not the short period of the print and the written word. It's now images and graphics.

We are moving to a different world. They're going to see the world via the images that of course they see through the Internet. If we use a digital immigrant criteria, they come out pretty dumb. But that's pretty dumb of us to do, because that's not the world they are growing up to.

Casey Truffo: There was a time when if you didn't know Latin, you were not very cultured.

Ofer Zur: Who would have heard about that? There was times that in order to get a PhD, you need to speak two other languages, and one of them will be Latin. I come from a European culture that this was a value. Who would have heard about that right now? They are moving to a new way of processing and communicating and seeing the world, which are image and graphic-based and it's not the written word of the last 700 years, and it's not the oral tradition where human beings spent most of their evolutionary time, was around that one.

Whenever we say "Oh my goodness, they don't read," that's a value judgment of immigrant that we need just to say, "What's the value in that?" It's just--we don't.

Casey Truffo: That's a hard one because there wasn't the video back when my parents were young, so reading was incredibly important. At the same time, now we're looking at our children and our grandchildren and say, "They're looking at YouTube videos. That's just waste of time." Where, indeed, that's where some of the most important learning, I think, at some of our schools. I live in Southern California where we have some of the worst ...

Ofer Zur: Actually, the most important learning will be in gaming.

Casey Truffo: Yeah, I agree with you.

Ofer Zur: The train has left the station on that. He also have a whole thing about gaming and how dumbed down it is. Some of the first-shooter games are pretty dumbed down. I have no doubt. They're really killing time.

Casey Truffo: Remember Pac-Man?

Ofer Zur: Pac-Man involves some skills actually, but not very sophisticated. Most of the games right now are highly interactive. Again, if we end up, perhaps, we can open it a little bit more discussion after that. If we see 20 years from now, most of the school will be teaching kids through gaming. The kids will not fall asleep. They are

going to connect to the game and go to 11th century Europe and make an avatar and live within this culture and learn about the music and the food and the culture, and the history, and how to learn, and how to interact, and how they did war.

It will be some conflict involved and the kids will have to get together within the tribal system and to win over another tribe. There will be some tensions. The game will draw them. They'll be able to collect some gold, to be what World of Warcraft is about. They'll do it with 40, 60 kids around the world, from all over the world, getting together and ready to do raids, to learn how to work together.

The question, really the more important question, not whether it's dumbed them down, all these activities, from YouTube as well as to gaming, is ... By the way, tomorrow, I'm going to Sacramento to make seven YouTube short movies about boundaries and about gifts, and about touch, and about digital ethics, and about dual relationship, and I'm going to put it on YouTube, just because, as you said, this is a lot of where the learning is.

The question is where the balance is. Do they go and play ball? Do they also have physical activities offline? Do they have a balance of connecting with people online versus offline? Do they have an experience of nature not via the Internet? The issue of balance of online, offline, with friends, without friends, virtual versus non-virtual, and we need to work out, watch out we don't call it virtual versus real, because this is real for them, the issue of balance is a more important question rather than the issue, are they being dumbed down or not, because they are not. They are being educated to the world they have to live in.

Casey Truffo: I mentioned this on the preview call. For those of you, if you want to check out TED, T-E-D, Talks, Jane McGonigal, she does a great one on gaming and how really the future of our world, problems can be solved when we bring the world together in a game-like way. She was saying something like, "Solve this problem, 10 points, 10 points." It's very funny in the video, Ofer, because she said, "The worst thing about giving this presentation is I'm not going to get a plus one at the end of it."

Ofer Zur: As you mentioned, I just Googled it and I'll just start watching it very quietly. I'm multitasking.

Casey Truffo: (laughs) The judgment part, I think, was really an important point that you brought up, between--I think of it more as adults and children, but I do think that there is this big spectrum, big long kind of thing where on that one hand, we have very solid digital immigrants and on the other, we have maybe natives. We're all on that scale somewhere in between.

I know when I go to get my nails done, it's in this nice, quiet, little spa salon. When the young people come in and they're talking loudly on their cellphones, they're thinking nothing of it and I'm thinking how rude it is. That is my judgment. If my phone rings and I have to take it, I apologize to my nail lady.

Ofer Zur: They have a different sense of space and time. In my presentation, I show some of the videos that these kids put on YouTube, and there's just no sense of privacy. I tell my kids, "Whatever you put online, you have to treat it as if it's tattooed on your forehead. It will be there forever. Your college counselor will see it. Your future mate will see it. Your future employer will see it."

Casey Truffo: Do they get that?

Ofer Zur: They don't. We didn't get a lot of things when ...

Casey Truffo: No.

Ofer Zur: I'm not sure about you. You probably were perfect little girl, Casey, but I sure wasn't.

Casey Truffo: No.

Ofer Zur: I had to learn the hard way again and again and again. Some of them getting it better than others and many of them don't. Don't you open some questions, wonders, ponders?

Casey Truffo: If you're on the phone and you want to press star 2 and you want to give an opinion or ask a question, go ahead. We do have a question on the webcast here about sexting. We have two questions. Actually, one person says, "What is that? I've never heard of that." Another person says, "Where do we draw the line with our kids?"

Ofer Zur: The one person who never heard about is an immigrant, we can say. Sure. Sexting, it's most commonly a girl sending a picture of herself to her boyfriend whom she loves and she'll always love him, even though she's 14 and 15 and he's the love of her life. Then the breakup or she's got to give a kiss to another boy and he's getting pissy about it, or even without being pissy, he just broke up and he's sending her naked pictures to all his buddies who's sending to everybody else.

What I found out from my 15 years old, actually, that it's not only girls' naked pictures floating around. It's actually boys as well. Boys' private parts are floating around in sexting right now. This is another force of the Internet. It becomes equal opportunity.

How do we deal with the kids? Perhaps I'll answer a bigger question, what about pornography and stuff like that? Because a lot of dark forces, the suicides, how to commit suicide, and sites how to detonate a bomb, and of course the porn, is what drives so much of the Internet development. It's the porn academia in the military that developed the Internet in some regard. Definitely, the porn people developed the cam technology and the buying online before eBay and Google, before eBay and Amazon.

For my 15 years old, I have parental control on the Mac, for the PC to be non-internet. My 17, almost 18 years old, many years ago already learned how to go around this. At his age, I'm not interested in controlling. I'm interested in him internalizing the controls. There's a lot of conversation about pornography and violence. We have good relationship and we're preparing for college. We go around, traveling to different states to look at colleges, and fantastic conversation on the plane and as we hike or climb Kilimanjaro. We know how to walk and talk for days, weeks at a time.

We need to protect them. I'm a friend of my 15 years old on Facebook and my daughter is a friend of my almost 18 years old, my 27 years old. We have checks and balances about what's happening with them. As we grow older, we don't need to have hands off. My daughter is so good with her privacy setting that I see only what she chose to show, which is fine with me. I thank her. [crosstalk 00:34:54]

Casey Truffo: Exactly. I have a question here. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Ofer Zur: Sexting is, I think, on the dark side of the Internet that we just need to continue to educate them about. It goes with right age. When do we teach them about sex? How do we teach about sex? When do we talk to them about condom and birth control? We talked about sexting. It's part of the conversation. For this, the digital immigrant needs to know what they're talking about so they can have the conversation.

Casey Truffo: I guess my worry is just the legal stuff. My understanding, and I'm not an attorney, obviously, but some of that, sending of those sex pictures to the love of your life can end up with some legal consequences such as child pornography.

Ofer Zur: It's really one of those cutting-edge right now question about, do you prosecute the 13 years old who have a naked picture and they disseminated online or via the phone. We are so archaic. The way we do therapy is archaic. Our laws are archaic. Our education system are archaic. Their train left the station of technology, or our train, but the laws and the education and the parenting and so many other things are so archaic and irrelevant.

Intelligent people struggling with that or intelligent people like you inviting some education on this topic, and some attorneys and legislators understand it to be completely crazy to arrest the 13 years old into making a sex offender, because of what he has on his phone, a child pornography. Then we have a lot of frigidity. The good news that us digital immigrants will die and the legislators will be digital natives.

Casey Truffo: I predict they'll have some problem with their kids. [crosstalk 00:36:54]

Ofer Zur: Definitely, they'll have different kind of troubles with their kids, but I don't think it will be the same jumps that we have, that we are getting.

Casey Truffo: You think this is a big jump?

Ofer Zur: I think it's a big jump. The technology, it's really changed our lives differently. We rebelled against our parents and we went to Woodstock and we love the Beatles, whatever. It's really radical. There was television that they didn't grow up and phones that they didn't grow up with. We did some changes, but I think this is changing, in a much more essential way, the relationship to the world and the relationship to each other much more, that it's a bigger leap than television and phone did even though it was a big leap compared to what our parents did.

Casey Truffo: The way they're learning, the way that they process information is just different.

Ofer Zur: Absolutely. This is where the intuitive parts that I described before as well as the gaming, but we call them ADHD even though they sit 18 hours a day and playing a game. What kind of ADHD is that? We just give it a name calling just because we don't know what it is and we feel shut out. The more we yell at them that they are not attending to us, the more they want to go and play the games away from us.

Sometimes we don't know what kind of a game and say, "You can play for two hours." Some games you cannot play for two hours. You need to have four minimum two to three times a week. Some kids will need to have four times, three days a week rather than two hours every day. We need to know what they are doing. I got a temporary account of World of Warcraft and my boy and I went online and played together. He thought I'm so dumb and slow and incompetent. It was wonderful the way he could establish expertise. [crosstalk 00:38:52]

Casey Truffo: It wasn't about basketball and being able to do better hopes than you or running, where you could outrun him.

Ofer Zur: I can't do either, by the way. Don't rub it in, Casey. It gave him a fantastic sense of mastery and we learned together. Now, I know about World of Warcraft firsthand and also I had an experience with my son, laughing together.

Casey Truffo: That was great. OK, so where shall we go next with this discussion?

Ofer Zur: Are there any questions?

Casey Truffo: Those were the two that I had so far. Again, if you have any other questions, if you want to press star 2 if you're on the phone or if you want to put it in that little Q&A box. There is one coming in here right now. It says, "What do I do in session when the family is there worried about the child because a 15-year-old is texting with an 18-year-old boy?"

Ofer Zur: 16 and 18?

Casey Truffo: 15 and 18.

Ofer Zur: I think they should feel safer than if they were really driving in his car somewhere.

Casey Truffo: Good point, and drinking. I was in a car with a boy when they were drinking. My parents didn't know about that.

Ofer Zur: I don't want to ask you what you did at 15, Casey, with 18 years old, but it seems to me that it was much more dangerous than texting. It was drinking and driving.

Casey Truffo: Probably so. Driving and alcohol and texting and driving are maybe similar kinds of things that teens were doing in different generations.

Ofer Zur: In some regard, the parents may want to say, "This is a little bit safer." Now, the question is, there's a lot to teach them about the Internet and predatory behavior, do they know the person, because there is so much anonymous interaction online that they're used to, they don't know who they're talking to. That gives a lot of freedom on one hand, but there's also dangers with that, because we hear the rare stories where some girls met somebody that they met online and it didn't end up really well.

This requires us the information, who is this 18 years old, how do you know that he is who he is, because there's no way to know it online and there's no way to know it through texting or sexting, whatever that they do. It's a lot of conversation, but it's a conversation asking them to explain to us what they do and how they do it, and help them think about it rather than try to control it, which of course we can't, because we don't know even the technology.

I'm inviting parents and therapists to dialog with their kids about this issue, who is this guy, and how do you know him, do you plan on meeting him? In some regard, as we say, it is more safe in one way because they cannot get pregnant via texting, but on the other hand, you don't know who it is and you don't know who their parents are, perhaps, as it used to be in the old neighborhood. It's a whole new complexity, difficult and less difficult, that we need to embrace through knowing, getting on the floor--

I remember when my kids were 2, 3 months old. I went on the floor to see what the world look like from when you had these 1 inch above the ground. I saw the ugly gums under the chairs and the dust under the lower shelf, and I said, "Goodness." It was a different perspective. We need to get on the floor and to join them in order to be able to parent them well rather than do the yelling, you are addicted and blah, blah, blah, and throw tantrums, which throw them even more into technology. It's a challenge for us.

Casey Truffo: There's another question that came in here. It says, "Do you think it's our fear and our inability, that we don't understand, that causes us to do that yelling?"

Ofer Zur: Absolutely. This is, perhaps, one thing from today that people would take with them. I really encourage you. Go to my website and find the article that I wrote

with my daughter about digital native and digital immigrant. We have a PowerPoint. We have resources, information about the gaming and education. We have a great chart about how different the native from the immigrant. I gave you a handout, Casey, that you can put out.

We have of course four online courses, three by Kimberly Young on the topic of Internet addiction and one with my daughter and I on the digital divide, what we call. What this caller or this person wrote is right on. We don't know and we end up yelling, which create more alienation and makes them want to play even more games or watch more YouTubes away from us, just to get away from us.

Casey Truffo: They feel so misunderstood.

Ofer Zur: Absolutely.

Casey Truffo: We lose that connection.

Ofer Zur: For goodness, and that's right. Absolutely. In order for us therapists to help parents, we need to get on the floor. We need to know what they're talking about. It shouldn't take much, really. I have a bunch of resources on that and my daughter did a fantastic job, really, continues to correct me in my ignorance.

Casey Truffo: I'm going to give that website. It's Zur, Z as in zebra, U-R institute.com. When you get there, you can look for that. You can go to the blog. On searching in the blog, just put in "digital immigrant," and the blog entry will come up that you and your daughter wrote. I also want to guide you to the goody bag. In the goody bag, Ofer has given a ton of stuff there for us. He's also given us a 10% discount on some of your online courses.

So thank you for that quite a bit. Again, I'm going to be over there soon getting mine. I really appreciate that. Go ahead and make sure you guys look in the goody bag and see everything that he's got to offer.

Ofer Zur: The other thing is, perhaps, because it's a therapist conference, we could talk about what's relevant for us as therapist, because the digital divide of native and immigrant, it also create a whole slew of complexities. We should do another teleconference on that, what I call digital ethics. It's just the hardest things in ethics and psychology right now. Our client is Googling us. How far do they go into Google? Do they do a simple Google or do they get intrusive Google? That means where they can find a whole find a whole bunch of information about us.

Is it okay for us therapists to Google our clients? Under what circumstances it's okay? Do we need to get informed consent? Of course, the hard core immigrants, "No, it's unethical." Then you talk to some other therapists, I talked to a woman yesterday who work out of home, and she said that I Google everybody before they come to my home. I don't do the interview first, interview outside the house. I do it on the phone and I want to know if I have a rapist or a criminal coming to my office,

or whatever it is.

She Googles them to see what she can find before every person. I help her put it into the informed consent. There's a paragraph. I have also articles about that, whether it's okay to Google clients.

One of the examples in *New York Times* and *Boston Globe* and *LA Times* came up with around Googling clients. You have a client who is unconscious in the hospital and you get a sense that there's a suicide attempt. Would you go online and find out perhaps what he or she took, ingested, so you can save their life? Would you do that without consent?

A knee-jerk reaction for most digital immigrant is, "No, I'll never Google my clients without consent. I'll never Google my clients, period." Then we get into more complex situation that, I gave you just two examples, that you see that people may consider doing it and you can put it in the informed consent, that I will Google my client in time of crisis, or I do Google clients that I see in my home office.

Casey Truffo: Since I'm more close in the middle on this continuum, tell me why it's unethical to Google your clients if what is out there is in public domain?

Ofer Zur: I don't say it's unethical but the people who argue that will say, "You don't drive into the neighborhood where the clients live and take a binocular and watch what they do just because it's available to the public." We are not private eyes. It's kind of getting us in different modes, searching them online. I can see their point. Again, I don't say it's ethical or unethical because what I want right now is not to know for a while.

Casey Truffo: Exactly.

Ofer Zur: That's the junction. The fact that it's public domain in the old non-digital world, the houses are on a street where it's public domain to drive, but we don't go and drive by their houses.

Casey Truffo: We had a legal and ethical day pre-conference workshop and I was talking with Steve Frankel about this and he spoke as an attorney and a therapist. He will say to his clients, "I understand that you might be interested and you might end up Googling me. I understand that. That's natural curiosity. I also want to tell you that I am not intending it at all no matter what you do or say in therapy in our room together to abandon you. I will say that the quickest way to fire me as your therapist is to end up at my home should you ever find out where that is." I think he was really setting a limit as to what he would take on the other side from somebody.

Ofer Zur: When they are intrusive, at certain point, we say no. Most clients Google us and they should. This is how informed consumers finding a heart surgeon or a cosmetic surgery or a dietitian. I want to know if my heart surgeon killed five people before

me. This is a consumer-driven medical field. This is why people go to Yelp and find out about us. I think it's a right thing to do. Do a lot of people complain? They Google us and our board to see. There's a website called Complaint Boards that people check. I think it's due diligence on their part.

What Steve is probably referring correctly is to go further and try to get it to become our friend with pseudonyms or go into the Listservs, which is very easy to do, or pay somebody to find information about us that can be highly intrusive and even criminal. We have the right to say, "That's inappropriate. I'm not going to work with you. This is illegal," whatever it is. The basic Google or the more sophisticated Google, it's really appropriate for them before they come to see us for therapy.

The question of them Googling us, us Googling them, then the question of Facebook, is it okay to have clients as friends in Facebook? Of course, all the rigid uninformed digital immigrants will say "No." And I'll say "It depends." It depends on your site, what kind of site you have. Many people start developing more Facebook sites that are 100% business site, the way they do with Twitter. GM does it. Ford does it. Toyota does it.

Now, the question is about issues of confidentiality. The latest article in the--by Younggren and Eric Harris talk about confidentiality in *The National Psychologist*, and I have it in my website as well an article on that. What happens if clients start not only becoming friend, even if it's a professional site, but to start communicating in a non-confidential manner because it's not private, the website. They are not HIPAA-compliant, blah, blah, blah.

Do we use them only as fans rather than friends? It's so complicated. The answer of no, no, no, and no doesn't really hold, as we are being thrown into this digital ethics question.

Some more digital ethics questions are email between client and therapist. Do we do clinical work like that? Is it a protected site, privacy-wise, confidentiality-wise? What about e-therapies that people do via email? Skype is not protected, but there are some sites who indeed are protected, with firewalls and other technologies. There's encryption emails that some people are starting to use even though it's not very consumer-friendly yet.

So, e-therapy and the question of texting with clients, how do you keep records on texting with clients? I did a consultation with somebody, actually, who found out that she can print her text. She went to a techie guy that could print her text, which I thought was just fascinating. Now, texting will become part of the medical records. How do you keep it? Our client is texting us without a blink. There are so many interesting digital, cutting-edge questions in ethics and we really need to make sure that we are not jumping into conclusion and knowing too fast right from wrong.

Casey Truffo: One of the things that somebody told me early in my career was regarding a legal or ethical question. They said, "Don't ask a question you don't want the answer to." I thought that was an interesting thing. You said, "I hope we don't find out too soon some of the answers to that." I think you're right. Our associations, our laws can never keep up with the speed at which technology is moving and the culture is changing. It's a challenge for everyone.

Ofer Zur: It's a challenge, so we can have good methodologies of asking what is the context of the therapy and who is the client. What's on their Facebook? Who is the therapist? What is the nature of communication? What is the nature of their relationship? What is the setting? Forensic setting could be very dangerous to do any of this stuff. Again, Googling people if you have a home office has a different flavor versus Googling people in forensic setting.

I would like to introduce a thoughtful methodology with integrity rather than just jumping to the don't, don't, don't, because we just finished well beyond don't touch, and don't self-disclose, and don't give gift, stuff like that. The field hopefully has evolved beyond that now. Now, we're getting tight again on the new ethics and the digital ethics, and I really hope that it will stay open and it will stay inquisitive.

Casey Truffo: Excellent. We just have a few minutes left. Did you want to talk about the Internet and gaming addiction assessment?

Ofer Zur: The heart of Internet gaming addiction or any kind of Internet addiction is not much different than any other gaming. The question does it interfere with major functions of your life, which has to do with health; if you are at school, with your education; with your relationships, if you're married or have relationship. The question is not so much of time and not so much of what you do, but does it interfere with other function.

We know that some kids have an addictive brain. We say alcoholism can go in the family. Whatever it is that happens, some kids will get addicted. Some adults will get addicted, whether it's alcohol, methamphetamine, marijuana, gambling, pornography. There are some people that are truly addictive. Netaddiction.com, Kimberly Young, has probably the most comprehensive and the most helpful site with self-assessment about addiction, so you can get your own score and see where you are or you could do your child, you could do your spouse.

The treatment for that definitely has to be abstinence-based rather than—sorry—harm-reduction-based rather than abstinence-based, because the world, in order to function effectively in the world, people will have to have access to computer. We don't want to use the abstinence base of the 12-step program in almost all rehab programs. It may be appropriate for alcohol and cocaine and heroin, and these kinds of substances, or pornography even.

With the Internet addiction, we needed to move it to a harm reduction where people use it in a way that is not destructive and interfering with their lives. The

program, the 400 programs in China, they're all abstinence-based and they use beating and they use electric shocks, and there were reports of at least one death. Of course, this is outrageous and immoral and inhumane, and they're trying to change it.

Singapore has a fantastic model. I was lecturing there last year on this topic of cyber-wellness and, actually, my daughter and I may go there in December this year again to lecture there. They're very enlightened. What they are really teaching young kids is a balance between online and offline from very young age. They introduce computers into their educational system, from the government, directed, kind of, programs very early on, but at the same time, they teach them about issues of pornography and stalking and all these things online as well as how to get offline, online, to move in and out.

We don't have this kind of programs yet in United States. Some of the Internet addicted online, there are some programs, which make a lot of people laugh. There are a lot of good cartoons about Internet-addicted people doing 12-step online. It's funny, but actually there's a lot of merit for them if they learn how to do the harm reduction. We need to be thoughtful not to move to an abstinence model. We do need computer in order to function as a full citizen in this world.

Casey Truffo: We're getting some comments in here that says they'd really like to hear us talk about that digital ethics. I know you and I have talked about it. We're going to make sure we do that some time soon.

Ofer Zur: Yeah. This is really cutting-edge. I do have a lot of material on that online. I have blogs online. You can put your 2 cents. The blog is actually interesting because people just bring different perspective, which just show how rich and diverse it is. What I don't like is when the people get all huffy about their position rather than being thoughtful about their position, but it's the nature of our profession, a little huffiness.

Casey Truffo: We haven't always been known for our flexibility. Let's put it that way.

Ofer Zur: No. We sure haven't. [crosstalk 01:00:47]

Casey Truffo: Although there are over 400 theories of therapies, so maybe we are more flexible than I thought. Listen, Ofer, it's been a sheer delight talking with you today. You bring such an interesting and entertaining perspective and you're always one step ahead of the average bear. I just really, really want to thank you for your thought leadership in this area, for being a personal mentor for me for many years and just for this conversation today. Thank you very much.

Ofer Zur: Thank you, Casey. It's so nice always for you to lead conversation. I can always relax into the interview because I know you'll carry it beautifully. Thank you.

Casey Truffo: A lot of people have said that these talks are kind of like fireside chats. That's what I

enjoy about them too.

Ofer Zur: Me too.

Casey Truffo: Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Ofer. We'll look forward to seeing you on other calls. Take care. Good night.

Ofer Zur: Thank you.

Casey Truffo: Bye-bye.

Ofer Zur: Bye-bye. Good night.