

Shrink Rap Radio #104, August 3, 2007, Psychology and Cybersexuality
David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Joanie Gillispie, Ph.D.
(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Connie Lansford)

Excerpt: *When you look in the sexual arena, the research shows that it's men who do most of the gender bending and identity tourism. Men, I think they die 10 years earlier than women do, so we need to look at that statistic. But men feel more constrained by their social roles. And I hope that that's changing for men. So when they have the internet and they have the possibility to go online as a 14-year-old girl on a MySpace blog site, they are curious about what it's like to expand their identity.*

Introduction: That's the voice of my guest, Joanie Gillispie, Ph.D. who is co-author of the 2007 book *Cyber Rules: What You Really Need to Know About the Internet*. Dr. Gillispie received a doctorate in clinical psychology from the Fielding Graduate University with an emphasis in Health Psychology. She works from systems and individual theories, utilizing psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral perspectives. She holds a Professional Postdoctoral Training Certificate from the University of California at Berkeley in Neuropsychological Assessment Screening and a one-year advanced training in Strategic Depth Psychotherapy. Her expertise is in the area of Internet Media, understanding the psychological and social effects of cyberspace and cyberculture. Her research, writing, and presentations about the internet include media literacy, cybersexuality, and the professional issues online for mental health consumers, practitioners, and organizations. She has also taught at UC Berkeley, Dominican University of California, and the University of Phoenix. Now, here's the interview.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Joanie Gillispie, welcome to the Wise Counsel Podcast.

Dr. Gillispie: Thank you, David.

Dr. Dave: Well, I'm really glad to have you on this podcast. Actually, you and I had an earlier interview on my other podcast series, Wise Counsel. And actually, that podcast hasn't been put up yet as of today's date, which is July 26, 2007. It's in the rotation, it's been recorded, and that will be coming up soon. But I was so energized by that discussion and it seemed so important that I wanted to get you onto Shrink Rap Radio with a somewhat different slant. And, of course, on that earlier podcast we were talking about the book that you recently co-authored which is called *Cyber Rules: What You Really Need to Know About the Internet*. And the focus that I wanted us to have today is to get your input on the relationship between what's going on on the internet and the worldwide web, and how that's impacting sexuality.

Gillispie: Great! I'm all yours.

Dr. Dave: Okay. Well, let me start off by asking you first what lead to your interest in the way that the internet and the worldwide web are impacting sexuality?

Gillispie: Well, I think that my first interest was as an adolescent, and my experience as an adolescent in the era of the summer of love and the world of hippies. I looked around at my friends and the world and I was pretty shocked by how tough it was to be an adolescent. And I was always puzzled about why teenagers had to act out in ways that were unsafe and where the adults were that we could rely on to help guide us through this

uncharted territory of becoming an adult. So it was first my own experience and then as a teacher, especially in high school, I would look at my kids in the classroom and I just thought, how can I teach these kids algebra when they were dealing with all of the issues of adolescent angst, and I finally decided that I would bribe them that I could help them have better relationships with the opposite sex, or same sex, if they learned algebra because algebra was a problem-solving model for the unknown.

Dr. Dave: Hmm.

Gillispie: And they all sat up and paid attention and I realized that this was a key that resonated with everybody how to be a sexual person in an age when nobody wants to talk about it and the models of sexuality we have aren't very edifying. Often, they're negative models. And, of course, then when I became a clinician, people's sexuality were always at issue, even if it wasn't the presenting issue. And what I mean by that is that we're all looking for love. And we all need intimacy and tenderness and love. Yet we don't do that as well as we should and our lives are very pressured. We need to support and love one another much better, both in terms of sexual intimacy and also human intimacy. So then when I started to write my book and do research, what I found was some researchers—UCLA, Kaiser Family Foundation, Annenberg Foundation at the U Penn—University of Pennsylvania—that all of our interactions online are sexualized. So I thought it made a great place to study sexuality.

Dr. Dave: Yes, indeed. So how have the internet and the worldwide web changed or impacted our sense of eroticism and sexuality?

Gillispie: Well, I think because it's a mirror of who we are on ground. And the mirror that we have now shines deep into our own psyches and into our own bedroom. It also shines on the rest of the world. So we can find out anything we want on the internet and we can connect with any part of the world. We can also connect with anyone who is interested in what we're interested in. So when you look at the internet as an expanded opportunity for exploration, one of the most central ways we explore is who we are as human beings. So it is an expanded opportunity and it's an opportunity that happens anonymously. It happens easily and it happens with great autonomy. We can find things out online and we can connect with others in a way we never were able to do on ground.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, that's for sure. And what about gender-bending exploration? I mean we can play with our identity and how we put ourselves out there, and how we represent ourselves in relation to—well, gender is certainly one dimension and there are other dimensions as well.

Gillispie: Well, I'm glad you said the word "play" because if you ever watch a child—I think adults have lost the opportunity for play and joy in their lives and when you see a child and their natural curiosity, you really get what joyful, exuberant living is all about. And so as adults many of us are old and tired and the only way people allow themselves to explore themselves in a playful way now may be online. And when you look in the sexual arena, the research shows that it's men who do most of the gender bending and identity tourism. Men, I think they die 10 years earlier than women do. We need to look at that statistic. But men feel more constrained by their social roles. And I hope that that's changing for men. So when they have the internet and they have the possibility to go online as a 14-year-old girl on a MySpace blog site, they are curious about what it's like to expand their identity. And I was laughing to dads on the air in Sydney, Australia this week and I said,

“You know, I can wear pants and I can wear a skirt, but you can’t wear skirts unless it’s a kilt.” And they said, “Well, there’s some great drag queens in Sydney.” And I said, “I’m not talking about drag queens. I’m talking about regular men who may want to expand their identities on ground. They have a hard time doing it.” And with every eight-year-old boy who cried on the playground at school—what are you called when you cry on the playground? You’re called a girl.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Gillispie: You’re called gay. You’re called a wuss. So boys learn very clearly that they can’t express their emotions, especially vulnerable ones.

Dr. Dave: Well, that’s one of the first questions that pops up, probably in many listeners’ minds is when you say that more men than women are out there representing themselves as female. Is that an indicator that they’re latently gay somehow, do you think?

Gillispie: No, I think it’s more an indicator that they’re curious and they feel shackled by being men in this world.

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm.

Gillispie: You know, we want men to talk and express themselves, but often women don’t like what they have to say. And so they go silent. Women are inherently sometimes more verbal. I think men are verbal, too, but they’ve been silenced more than women have. And it’s not a matter of men wanting to be women—it’s men also connect with other men sexually online, and they don’t identify as homosexual. I have a sense that maybe bisexuality will become more the norm online. People can cross genders and sexual identity more easily without having to label themselves one thing or another. As a matter of fact, there was a large study in the California prison system that talked about men who have sex with men who are incarcerated. You know, our prison system is the largest in the world, so there’s a great pool of study there. And men need a sexual outlet and sometimes when they’re in prison they’ll have sex with men and then when they get out they will not identify as homosexual, and often they carry a lot of shame around that.

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm.

Gillispie: So, you know, we like to project parts of ourselves online and that is a way to explore and be curious, but it’s also a way maybe to practice, you know—things that we need to practice on ground a little more—you can practice in cyberspace. Some of that’s very, very good and, of course, some of that is very, very bad.

Dr. Dave: Okay. Well, part of what I really liked so much about your book was the balanced approach that you take and, rather than being totally alarmist and reactionary, you examine in a pretty careful and objective way both the good and the bad, or what you refer to as sex-positive and sex-negative content and attitudes, and we can get into that in a bit. I think there are two threads to our discussion here that I see. One is the discussion about what all this means for us as adults, and the other has to do with what it all means for kids who are coming up now. So let’s turn our attention for a bit to kids. And I know one of the things that you cited was a study done by Kaiser called—Kaiser being one of the largest health care systems maybe in the country, certainly in California—Kaiser Permanente. What did the Kaiser internet survey find about kids’ life online?

Gillispie: Well, I want to direct any listener to kff.org. It's a great site for up-to-date research on the impact of the internet on behavior and health. They've found that kids are multitasking online eight to ten hours a day with no ill effects in their homework or their family duties or their roles in the community. And by eight to ten hours, I mean they add each media hour, even though kids and young people use media simultaneously. So it's counted as one hour if you're on the internet, another hour if you're simultaneously listening to your iPod and another hour if you're simultaneously text messaging your friend while you do your homework. So you can have multiple hours imbedded within one hour, and that's how you get eight to ten hours a day. And those studies came out of data from 2003, 4 and 5. And, of course, in 2007 we have these wearable, immersible computer environments on our iPod and cell phones now, so I'm sure that has even gone up. So this is a very interesting phenomenon that the multimedia use is becoming imbedded and portable into young people's lives and into indeed all of our lives.

Dr. Dave: Now you said without ill effect on their grades and homework—did I hear that correctly?

Gillispie: Exactly. Mm-hmm, exactly.

Dr. Dave: That's surprising.

Gillispie: It is surprising. And basically, as a clinician, if you haven't addressed a problem on the ground, it will manifest online eventually. An addiction, a sleep disorder, depression... So when you see problems online—with one exception, which is paraphilias and cybersexuality—deviant cybersexuality is one exception. You need to address the problems you have in your offline life. If you don't, it's going to eventually migrate its way into cyberspace.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I'm still interested in this "no adverse effects" because when my kids were in high school and they wanted to multitask and listen to rock 'n roll music while doing their homework, as a parent I really felt that I had to intervene and say, "No, you can't listen to that music and do your homework. You're not gonna be able to concentrate as well."

Gillispie: I can understand that. The only music we ever heard was on an LP and you had to be in the family living room to hear it. Now music is portable and they can carry it anywhere. And we know sometimes that white noise, which is lots of noise in the background, actually sometimes masks the interference and lets kids concentrate. If you spend any time in a classroom and see how many distractions and how much noise there is in a classroom, it's a wonder that any student can learn. The kids are very good, if we remember, at tuning *out* noise, including parent noise, teacher noise, other student noise. If you've ever ridden on BART recently, there's so much noise you have to learn how to tune it out so you can still focus and concentrate. And so many kids report that they need this stimulation, white noise, as a background modulator. And I say to parents, you know, proof is in the pudding. How are their grades?

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Gillispie: So if their grades are good, then they need to learn how to be in the world. Now some people can't have any noise at all. I think it's more a temperament thing. But our youngsters now from the age of nine months old—this is what the Kaiser study found—is

the age of first media use, where nine-month-old babies can move around a mouse or a ball and see the changes on the screen. So they learn how to use digital media in a multi-modal format, probably before they can walk and talk. Right about nine months old is when the early toddlers begin to walk, but this is quite profound at the changes that are going to arise in children's brains with their exposure to multimedia.

Dr. Dave: Well, that's a whole nother interesting area is that, in fact, there may be some interaction between these technologies and brain development. Is there actual research that supports that yet?

Gillispie: Not yet, but when I talk to neuroscientists and neurosurgeons and neuropsychologists, they all agree that it all happens in the brain—your sense of identity, your sexual arousal, your behavior, your emotional state. So it really makes sense, and your visual cortex, of course, is a very powerful learning modality and that's the primary one that's developing in the first two years of life, as well as your motor skills. So it makes sense that when you add in media into your developmental stages at very critical periods of life, you are gonna maximize the effects that media has. For example, we know that if children don't learn how to crawl—if they have an accident and break their legs, for example, in that stage of crawling development—that if they're three years old and the casts come off, they don't walk. They first have to learn how to crawl. So there are some very critical periods of development, and I know that media is now right on board at almost every period of critical development for young people, and this will have profound effects in their neural anatomy as well as their social relationships and, of course, their behavior.

Dr. Dave: Well, this is really fascinating. I was reading an article just last night in *The New Yorker* about—"The Bionic Woman" I think was the title of the article—and it was talking about prostheses for people who've had their limbs blown off or lost limbs in accidents, and the progress that they're making in terms of being able to get the brain to relearn how to drive these devices, in essence to map these devices, these external devices, onto the brain. And what occurs to me is that these devices such as iPods and video game controllers and cell phones are literally becoming extensions of ourselves. These are tools that are every bit as much a part of us, really, almost as our hand. So certainly our brain must be developing in ways to accommodate the use of this prosthesis, if you will.

Gillispie: Absolutely. A wonderful website is the MIT Media Lab website, which talks about neural implants in the brain for paraplegics. It also talks about prosthetic devices. There's an MIT researcher, she walks on stage, she's 6'2", got very gorgeous long legs in high heels and she says, "I have legs. I have 10 pairs of them in my closet."

Dr. Dave: Wow!

Gillispie: And she talks about her prosthetic devices, that she had her legs amputated when she was one year old, and she is an MIT researcher now, in prosthetic devices, and using that technology imbedded into your neural wiring in the brain to help drive the prosthetic device. And it's very fascinating, and we do know that as computers become more imbedded into our lives and into our bodies that it's going to really open up a whole new world of ethics and of human development, and what really does it mean to be human. It's a very exciting place to be as a researcher and a psychologist, and just as a human being. I think we're all fascinated with the cyber-issues and what that means for our world and what that means for ourselves.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, definitely. I mean I'm very plugged in myself. I am what people call a crackberry addict. I've got the Blackberry and I'm kind of checking it all the time, and I'm just barely able to restrain myself from rushing out and buying an iPhone. I'm holding back a little bit, but there will definitely be an iPhone on my horizon, and ...

Gillispie: Well, then I'll ask you the same question that most parents do: Has it had any ill effects on your lives, and if it does, then you know how to cut back or modify what you're doing. Adults are so concerned about what teenagers are doing online, but I'm saying first, "Hey, who makes the media models?" It's adults. And look at your own media use. Is it altering your life in a way that's not healthy? We all have 24 hours in the day, and that's the rubric where I start with patience and with myself. What am I able to accomplish? And I need eight hours of sleep or I'm really cranky. And I need an hour's worth of exercise every day, or I can't sit and talk to people about their own health issues. So those are the things that we really need to pay attention to first. We need to examine ourselves and we need to take our own pulses first, and then we need to look at how this is affecting our world—the great issues in the cyber-sky right now.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Gillispie: It's a wonderful world of exploration.

Dr. Dave: Well, certainly without turning the tables and me becoming a therapy patient here, I would have to respond to your question and acknowledge that, in fact, you know, I see ways in which all of this has impacted me and changed me, not all for the good. I think I'm less patient than I used to be since I got involved with computers. The computer gives me quick responses. I can try out a number of possibilities right away, and if something isn't working I can quickly move on to the next, and keep fiddling with it until it works right, whereas people are much slower—they're harder to control, etc., so I do notice in myself a shorter attention span, less patience. Also that, on the whole, I'm spending much less time with people and more time plugged in, either to the computer or the TV or the iPod or podcasting. So there really are some questions that I need to look at for myself and, of course, I have that all-too-human tendency to project my issues on other people. And certainly, that's what I was doing with my kids, as you pointed out. I was telling my kids, "Well, you can't multitask." Well, the truth was probably I'm not as good at multitasking as, evidently, they were.

And another kind of side note is, it's interesting for me to see how my standards have changed and evolved as time goes on. I remember being very upset with my daughter because she was spending so much time listening to ABBA—you know, the Scandinavian rock group, ABBA. And I just thought, you know, that was horrible that she was plugged into ABBA all the time. And one of my sons was watching "The Simpsons." And I thought that was just not a socially-responsible kind of cartoon series. Well, as time has gone on, ABBA seems so sweet in retrospect—so tame and so sweet, and so much like a Sunday school picnic, you know. I long for the days of ABBA to return. And "The Simpsons" is wonderfully satirical and funny, and I recognize that and accept that now. At the same time, having said that, it seems like the things that kids are getting exposed to today, and that are engaged in, are just leagues beyond ABBA and "The Simpsons." And maybe you can discuss that.

Gillispie: Well, you bring up so many great points, and the first one is that if psychologists—this is a joke in psychology—if somebody ever says, "Hey it's all good" without

addressing what things aren't good, then we look at it as mania or psychosis. In other words, when you evaluate anything, you need to bring a dialectical process and always look at the opposing point of view, the one-eighty. So when you look at your online lives and your behaviors and you realize, wait a minute, it's making you a little more irritable and maybe it's reducing your attention span. Those are very important things to look at in what you want to accomplish in a 24-hour day. However, even though you may have a shorter attention span, it's expanding our ability to multitask in many ways. Now I'm a multitasker because I've raised a lot of kids, had a job and got my doctorate at the same time. And multitasking in many cultures is the norm. In collectivist cultures, for example, the studies are that they can use the internet modality more effectively than our linear, myopic, western, logical, sequential kind of culture. And we need to learn to lighten up and loosen up a little bit, and observe and experience lots of things at the same time, because that indeed is what life is about. But, on the other hand, if we do that we have to be very careful not to lose track of what I call "depth." We need to be able to have long-term, sustainable relationships with people and work through difficult times, and I'm concerned that young people are learning a lot of social skills online and they're experiencing a lot of different things, and the range is awesome—and sometime it's awful. But we need to make sure that they know how to have face-to-face human connections as well, and not just have the modality, "Oops, this relationship's too tough. I think I'll click this one off and move on to the next one."

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm.

Gillispie: So I am concerned that we need to balance this more. We need to balance our online lives with very robust and meaningful offline lives. And there's so much online right now that if you let yourself, you can be buried in it.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Gillispie: When I'm working on a curriculum and I'm looking at YouTube and it can suck up five hours of my time just getting images off of YouTube for my curriculum. And I've got a lot to do in a 24-hour day, as do most people. And most of it you don't want to spend whacking away at the keyboard.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Gillispie: So I think there's some very, very wonderful ways that adults can model more appropriate behavior online but also recognize where kids are more expert than we are. And the internet is one of them.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Now what about the content that kids are potentially exposed to? You talked about the natural curiosity of kids and how you were curious when you were an adolescent. And kids are tremendously curious, and you can see or do just about anything on the internet. So can you comment about the dark side of what's going on and then how one somehow finds balance with that?

Gillispie: Well, I think adults need to reclaim their authority and they need to become much more expert in helping kids understand their environment, including the online environment, and this is not happening. So when you look at what kids can access online, and I call it beyond depravity, we need to help them understand the messages that are inherent in the media that they're viewing. We've never done that with print media and

with television media and music media enough. But now that it's online, it's now interactive. And this makes the power of what they're doing online much more imminent in changing their behaviors and hardwiring and relationships. So we need to say to kids, "What is health and what is ill health? What is harmful and what is loving and positive?" We've never explained that to kids enough. So when you look at what's online, I like to really dumb it down to sex-positive and sex-negative, since we know that the internet is a sexualized place, and so is media. When you do that with kids and you ask them to define what would be sex-positive—what is a positive relationship—the first thing that kids usually come up with is respect. They usually say, "Don't disrespect me." They know that respect is a huge construct. They know what it feels like not to be respected. So they put that first, and so then I say translate that to the internet. If you see a scenario in media that's not respectful, then you have to deconstruct respect which means developmentally appropriate interaction.

Dr. Dave: At what age would you begin having this discussion with a child?

Gillispie: Well, I would say the accurate age is right about when they start to talk.

Dr. Dave: Really? (laughs)

Gillispie: And you make it developmentally appropriate. As we teach kids potty training—actually their bodies teach themselves, but we go along with what's socially acceptable as they're potty training—and you use the words that are very concrete with their bodily functions, and you explain to them what is appropriate socially and what is not, what is healthy and what are healthy ways to grow into this stage of controlling parts of their body and their functions. And you start there, and then when you get to be three, four and five, of course—the developmentally appropriate age for them to be curious about their body and other people's body. And it's very developmentally appropriate—and I used to teach preschool—to have three and four-year-olds explore each other's body. But it is not appropriate, for example, to have a nine-year-old exploring a four-year-old's body. So that's where the developmentally appropriate respect comes in. It's appropriate if you find kids playing doctor and they're the same age and they're under the age of six. It's not appropriate if one of them is over the age of seven or eight and they're playing doctor with somebody who's three or four. So this is where you start to have kids understand their bodies, their bodily functions, and where they stop and other people begin. And when you get up to the age of latency—and latency is the age of pre-puberty, which is getting younger and younger, by the way ...

Dr. Dave: Right.

Gillispie: So nine-year-olds now in many cultures in the United States are—females are starting their periods, they're starting menses, and 20 or 30 years ago it was age 11—now it's nine and 10. So the ages of latency are shrinking just all the while the ages of exposure to sexualized cultures are expanding. So what we're getting are—many parents come into my office and they have a 10 or 11-year-old that's driving them crazy and I say, "Well, you have a teenager on your hands." And they're shocked; because the big push for puberty starts before the secondary sexual characteristics are visible. So you're always shocked when the hormones kick in because you don't see the hormones kick in—you just see the results of that, which are maybe acting out, mood swings—those kinds of things. So how do we help teenagers—young teenagers? We do a better job when they're getting in school. This is where the internet is a very positive force for teenagers. I call it the best

sex ed on the planet that tells kids anything they want to know about sex and sexuality. The problem is they have to figure out what's accurate and what's not accurate. And when they don't have adults to ask in their lives, then they're consuming a lot of negative messages and they don't even know it. And that's a real problem.

Dr. Dave: Yes. You know, there's such a fusion of violence with sexuality—for example, in video games and in rap music, and so on. So what's your take on that and how does one—I mean isn't there the chance that a young person who is developing their sexuality will get imprinted or have eroticized for them something that really shouldn't be eroticized just because of the early exposure and the fact that there might be an accompanying arousal?

Gillispie: Well, we know from all of the research that early exposure to sexual scripts shapes your sexual script. So when—very often, a very high percentage, over 90 percent of pedophiles, for example, have been molested themselves as children. And if you develop a paraphilia or a sexual deviance kind of behavior or fetish—usually the paraphilia develops in childhood and adolescence. So we know that early sexual exposure to anything, but especially sexual scenarios, shape your sexual repertoire and this is a very powerful modality and it goes into the visual cortex and it gets reinforced by the sexual response and arousal. You have paired whatever the response is or the experience is to your sexual arousal, and it gets imprinted that way for the rest of your life. And paraphilias, some of them are not harmful or illegal—like a rubber fetish with a consenting adult partner is not harmful. But a fetish that may result in physical harm or death to someone certainly is a problem. Pedophilia, child molesting, as well as sex with animals—there's so much sex with animals on the internet I just call it old donkey porn as my euphemism for the depraved sexual scenarios that you see online that are so accessible to young people.

So when kids are exposed to that—and I don't mean coming across it even once a day—coming across it and then clicking off and moving on to your assignment you should be doing—that's not gonna harm kids. Sweden has done a study that they said about three times a day connecting to deviant porn altered the adolescent arousal toward the deviancy. Now that's Sweden. They study adolescent sexuality in a very open, inquisitive inquiry around adolescent sexual health and adult sexual health. We don't have that here in this country. We don't fund adolescent sexual research, especially what kids are doing online. So we don't know. Three times a day I would say to me sounds high. If you have a child who already feels isolated or they have an undiagnosed anxiety disorder or may be depressed—if they're going on to deviant sex sites, donkey porn sites and seeing underage sex, seeing sex paired with violence, seeing sex that is unusual and deviant with objects or people, they're going to be training their sexual response to be aroused to that scenario, and I think that's very dangerous. But if they come across it accidentally, even a couple of times a week, it's probably not harmful. But I would say that once day, if they're going toward it for arousal once a day that they're developing a repetitive behavior that has a strong chance of turning into a compulsion which has a strong chance of turning into a sexual impulse control problem in their life.

Dr. Dave: Hmm.

Gillispie: That sound reasonable?

Dr. Dave: Yeah, although it's tough for a parent. In one place you write, “Discipline tactics that are authoritarian or permissive don't work either online or offline because they do not

teach kids, but rely on censorship and ignorance to control them. Now what do you mean by that?

Gillispie: Well, discipline—we've done a lot of research on parenting styles—40, 50 years. The research is pretty clear that authoritarian models that are, "Do this because I say so" don't work. They don't teach skills; they just control kids. And permissive or laissez-faire parenting styles where kind of anything goes and, "What do you want to do, Sweetie?" – that doesn't work either because you're not teaching kids some of the really important messages that they need to learn and incorporate into their behavior. The middle road, which is authoritative, is based on parenting knowledge of what kids need at various developmental stages that parents need to study more—what are the stages of development and what do kids need at certain ages. They don't need any kind of a license to have a child. You need more of a study of your driver's license or to pick up a dog from the pound. You need to know more about animal development and you need to sign a lot of forms that you will be safe with this animal and give this animal what this animal needs, but you need nothing along those lines if you're gonna have a baby, and we do need to change that because the world take a lot of study. We can no longer assume that everybody's gonna move through life without harm. We're too connected to each other now and we are too crowded, so we need to really learn more.

So authoritative parenting is based on knowledge. And you can say to your child, "Okay, if you do this, you really risk being harmed, but if you can convince me that you will be safe, you understand the risks, and your past behavior has shown that I can understand and trust what you say, then convince me." And what I like to say is at age 15—15-year-olds don't lie for a good reason alone. If you're gonna give your 16-year-old the car keys, you've done it because they've passed certain skill levels, but they've also achieved a developmental milestone at home, and at school and in their community. And if they haven't, they shouldn't have the car keys and they shouldn't have the keyboard. And if you can give them the car keys, then you're ready to have them out in the world with a huge weapon that can hurt and harm people, and the same goes for the keyboard. It is a license to drive in cyberspace and if you're not safe with them on ground, they shouldn't be in cyberspace alone.

Dr. Dave: In one article you give advice to parents and you mention sort of five approaches or keys which are safety, netiquette, no delete, kinky sex, the 24-hour rule. Can you briefly take us through each of those five? What do you mean—what are you referring to by safety?

Gillispie: Well, as any parent knows and admits, if their teenager has sex or is doing drugs or is drinking or doing something, it's a big problem. But our bigger problem is their lives, that they see with young people is our number one concern. So we teach kids to cross the street. And I've adopted that model of skills to the internet. You would never let a toddler run across the street alone. You carry them or hold their hand up until certain ages, maybe six, seven, eight, nine depending where you live, and depending on their impulsivity and their personality. So use the model of crossing the street when it comes to cyberspace. You either carry them or hold their hands online which is supervised all the time. Then when they get to be a little older, based on their own maturity, you can let them use the internet with some real guidelines about what they're doing for how long and when, and you check up on them all the time. And then around 13 or 14 they go to people's houses for the night and you have to give them some autonomy out in the world, also in cyberspace. But you do check their history. You tell them that ahead of time, that you will

randomly check their history, that you will discuss any text messages or websites that they've been to that you think you need to learn about, and they also can bring you their concerns. You want children to be able to talk to you, and then when they start to talk to you about difficult things, it's very important keep your cool and to ask for a time out if you start to get angry, and so their safety is your primary concern. By the time kids are teenagers they're gonna be on whether you like it or not—either right under your nose and still doing whatever they want to, or they'll be at their friend's house or on their iPod or cell phone at school. So that's when they really need to learn how to navigate safely, and you can tell them about the criteria for deviancy and you can also tell them one of the areas about being online is that there's no delete. So anything that you put online can be out in cyberspace for the rest of their lives, and come back to haunt them later.

Dr. Dave: Yes, there are some Miss America Pageant type young women who are discovering that as things that have gone up on the internet are now coming back to haunt them, or people looking for jobs, right?

Gillispie: That's right. And, you know, I think it's—I get sort of distressed by the way our culture loves bad news, and they love gossip. And I wish that we could spend more time in compassion and understanding of people rather than excoriating them for being human. We need a lot more authenticity and no one's perfect—we're all a work in progress. So when we have so much media that's based on so much prurient interest, for me, if somebody isn't getting any themselves, that's why they're so interested in other people's lives. And it's unfortunate, because it makes us sort of be peeping toms into other people's privacy and business that shouldn't be on front page news. There's way more important things that we need to be addressing—not other people's private lives or their half-naked pictures that they put on MySpace.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Now what were you referring to when you used the word “netiquette” as one of the five talking points to parents?

Gillispie: Well, I'm pretty shocked at—even though I'm really flexible and quite progressive—I'm pretty shocked at people's bad manners. I always was; when I was a teacher and I had guest lectures, I made my students stand up and say “hello” and shake hands and look people in the eye. People don't have those basic skills. I'm a professor in different schools and I shake my students' hand when they come in the door and I look in their eyes. We don't teach people decent manners on ground. So when you go translate into cyberspace that is a very impulsive, anonymous place to be, the propensity is to just let it all hang out. And it's very hard to make sure that what you say isn't offensive or overly sexual. Oh, I think I sent you an email today with, “Here's my phone number. I'm ready.” And then I thought to myself, “Well, ‘I'm ready’ is kind of like a sexual term sometimes.” And I thought—I was just laughing and I said, “Well, no wonder it's all sexual online.” So even when you don't mean to be sexual or insulting, sometimes you come across that way just by the modality of using text. And when we all type online, we're always in a hurry and sometimes we don't spell check it, we don't preview it, reread it. We just click “send” and there it goes. But the impulsivity online increases people's ability to be angry and not pay the price. There's a lot of cyber-bullying, of course, which is entirely inappropriate. But that's largely because we're not dealing with the bullying issues on ground. And it's not just kids on playgrounds who bully; it's adults who model bullying kids. They're misusing their power. So there's a lot of press about kids cyber-bullying but I think adults need to first take their own pulse and see where they bully their children. And that's

netiquette. Don't do anything online that you wouldn't want to receive online or that couldn't come offline.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Now two other points that we haven't touched on. One was kinky sex; I'm not sure what you were implying about that in your advice to parents, and the 24-hour rule.

Gillispie: That's right. Well, kinky sex is just tongue-in-cheek that we haven't really even decided what pornography or inappropriate smut is. Even the Supreme Court had a hard time defining it. We've never been able to really define it beyond something that exists just for prurient interest and has no artistic value. Well, somebody might call something "positive erotica" in San Francisco and "depraved pornography" in Kansas.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Gillispie: It's just a matter of where you live; or in some Middle Eastern countries, for example. So defining kinky sex really is in the eye of the beholder, which comes out of the culture within which you live. But clinicians understand that sexual impulse control disorders, which are paraphilia—they thrive online because they can. There are no controls. There is nothing that you can censor online in the sexual arena and it's so easily accessible. So we know that paraphilias develop in childhood so, as I said before, if kids go on to deviant sex sites—which are all over the net—I can't do research on cybersex without coming up with what I call triple x-rated sexual scenarios.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Gillispie: And it's very distressing. We need to explain to kids just like with smoking that it's bad for you. Looking at lots of deviant sex makes you want to crave deviant sex. It's not that complicated and kids will get it. And I don't think we need to quantify it that if you do it three times a day or once a day it will have a high chance, but we just—we need not to scare them that if they see it once or twice or come across it when they're doing stuff online, it's not gonna hurt them. It's if they do it compulsively.

Dr. Dave: You think the parent should sit down with a kid at some point and look at some of that stuff and talk about it?

Gillispie: Absolutely. I think so. Well, as a parent would you rather you do it or somebody else? Would you rather you do it, no one do it, or somebody else do it?

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Gillispie: Sometimes, you know, parents say, "I'm just not comfortable with this" and then I say, "Well, find a good friend or a family member that you trust that *is* comfortable." And you know you can look at, starting with print media, social images with kids. And you can ask them, "Okay, what's sex-positive about this picture and what's sex-negative?" If you look at the perfume, Addict—A-D-D-I-C-T by Dior, there is a front picture of a girl who looks 12 in a very seductive pose, and you ask—you can ask kids to deconstruct that picture. What are the messages in it; what's sex-negative and what's sex-positive? They're very good consumers of media and they can tell you, "Well, she's 12-years-old and she's coming across in a very seductive way." I did a workshop in a library and 11-year-olds had no problem saying that to me when I held up the picture.

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm.

Gillispie: So you can start with those kinds of pictures, and with some of the more explicit pictures, there are blackout areas of genitals that you can see what the face sheet looks like, and I'd say for older teenagers you may be able to use those and say to them, "Look at this picture. It is disrespectful because they are—these three young women who look younger than 18 servicing this one man, and they're being objectified and exploited. That is sex-negative.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Gillispie: So there are ways to do it without having to look at explicitly sexual pictures that you can teach your teenagers, and then they get that piece. Kids are savvy; they get that piece. So helping them at appropriate developmental ages is very important in understanding what kinky sex is. Kinky sex is not healthy on ground. So don't do it online either.

Dr. Dave: Sex education has been very controversial in terms of doing sex ed in the schools. Where do you come down on that?

Gillispie: Well, I come down hard and fast on the fact that we're doing a very bad job on sex education. Many studies have come out that the abstinence, the curriculum doesn't work. It's not comprehensive enough. And kids who experience that abstinence-only curriculum may delay sex, but when they do initiate sex, they are least likely to use protection and practice safer sex. So we know that the sex ed in the schools isn't effective. And I would say to parents, "Do you really want to leave it up to the schools, cyberspace or your peers—your children's peers to teach them sex education? I hope not." And one of the places online people can go to are sexual information clearing houses. Dr. Drew has a great website for teenagers, and there's some great information online now for sexuality education that teaches kids information about themselves and how to achieve sexual health for their entire lives. And I really think the internet is the place where kids are gonna learn how to be positive sexual human beings, and I'm very glad for that because we're not doing a good enough job. Adults are not doing a good enough job. Our teenagers have the worst sexual health of any industrial country in the world.

Dr. Dave: Wow! Now as a psychologist yourself, what role should psychology and/or psychologists play in relation to cybersexuality?

Gillispie: Well, I love that question because, as psychologists, I think we are educators first and then healers. Sometimes if we don't have a good therapeutic connection with somebody we may not be able to help them solve or heal some of the problems in their lives, but we're always educators. We have knowledge and it's incumbent upon us to share. As a matter of fact, our ethics say we need to give psychology away. We need to help people understand themselves. So we are educators and we can take a central role in helping them understand the online and offline issue. But most of my colleagues are too busy to try to figure it out, but more and more of them—and I'd say over 50 percent of colleagues in any state in this country and indeed all over the world are experiencing patients who come in with cyber problems. So we need to be responsive to what our patients' issues are, so now some of their issues are online and we need to understand how to deal with that.

Dr. Dave: Okay, well I think we've run out of time here, so Dr. Joanie Gillispie, thanks so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Gillispie: Thanks so much, David. I really enjoy your questions.

Dr. Dave: I hope you enjoyed this interview with Joanie Gillispie. I was fortunate enough recently, just in the past couple of weeks—I had the pleasure of meeting her for lunch. We had never met before, but because of the first interview that I did with her and the fact that she's in the Bay Area, we decided to get together for lunch. And I can tell you she is very sharp, and not only is she a very experienced clinician, but she's really on top of a huge amount of the research literature, especially relating to the internet and its psychological impact, or its psycho-social impact, if you will. One of the things that we discussed was the possibility that these Shrink Rap Radio episodes might qualify for professional CE units, that is continuing education for professionals. And that certainly is something that has been suggested to me before, and that I continue to be interested in. I want these shows to be able to be turned to as many uses and to be of as much value to people as possible. And I have in fact been working on becoming a CE unit provider, and that's still in process. She also let me know that there's a vast army of teachers out there who are in constant need of CE units, and that's something that the two of us might collaborate on—either with this podcast or maybe developing some other audio content, something that we talked about. Joanie's co-author on the *Cyber Rules* book is an imminent research psychologist at a Canadian university. Her name is Jayne Gackenbach and I was already familiar with that name because she is one of the foremost researchers on dreaming, and also on video and computer games. Now, coincidentally, I had an opportunity to meet and to hear Jayne Gackenbach present at the recent International Association for the Study of Dreams Conference. And she's definitely a formidable presence in her own right. And these two women together make a real powerhouse of a team. So I can really recommend the book to you because the both of them are extremely competent and articulate and know their stuff. And I'm hoping to get around to interviewing Dr. Gackenbach at some point. I tried to pin her down at the dream conference, but there was just too much going on.

I'm glad to finally have an episode that deals, at least somewhat, with sexuality. I've been feeling that there's a gap in that area in the series, and I intend to—you know, part of my intent here is to keep the rating for this show on iTunes and elsewhere clean. But I believe we should be able to talk about the psychology of sex without violating that standard. Let me know if you'd like to hear more along these lines—that is, about sexuality. Now as synchronicity would have it—and isn't synchronicity always lurking in the background here somewhere? Seems to be. I've been doing market research all this week for a client that had me conducting online interviews with adults about their tastes and preferences, and so on, when it comes to viewing adult video material. It was quite enlightening and I wish I could tell you what I found out, but I signed a nondisclosure agreement, so I guess I've shared just enough to tease you and no more. And after all, that's part of sex anyway, isn't it?

(break with music)

Dr. Dave: Hey folks, I am really stoked. This is another red letter day for Shrink Rap Radio, and let me tell you why. I received an email from listener Penny who is a school counselor in Santa Monica, California, and she wrote, "Dear Dr. Dave, I just got my August-September issue of *Scientific American Mind*. And right there on page 20 is a blurb on Shrink Rap Radio. Congratulations!" It goes on to say, "I've shared your website with all

my therapist friends and now I'm so very pleased that your podcast is getting the attention it deserves. Take care and keep up the good work." Hey Penny, thanks so much. So, of course, I got very excited and I asked Penny if she could send me a copy of whatever this magazine had to say and so, after several tries, she succeeded in faxing it to me. And it's in a section that they call "Calendar" and they recommend two podcasts. The other one is a series on the history of psychology coming out of the University of Akron, and then they recommended Shrink Rap Radio. As a matter of fact, I can tell you what they said. They said, "Every week psychology professor David Van Nuys of Sonoma State University interviews a leading psychologist about his or her specialty, covering a broad range of topics from research on health to spirituality and even business leadership. The animated discussion often delves into the personalities of the host and guest, affording listeners a rare glimpse of the people behind the science." So I don't know how to communicate just how exciting that is to me because, of course, *Scientific American* is a very respected and widely distributed print publication and *Scientific American Mind* evidently is a spinoff of that magazine that covers issues relating directly to psychology, so I didn't even know—psychology and neuroscience, and so on—and I didn't even know about that magazine. Since they did me the favor of mentioning me, I immediately went out and subscribed, and I'm also planning to approach them to see if they might be interested in becoming a sponsor for this show because, boy, they would make such a natural sponsor. So thanks again, Penny, for calling that to my attention, and I'm just really excited.

I want to let you know that there's a new episode of my other podcast which you'll find at www.wisecounselpodcast.com. And there I interview John Clarkin, Ph.D. of Cornell University, and the interview is on transference-focused therapy for borderline personality disorder. So all you therapists and counselors and therapists and counselors in training will be particularly interested in that interview, I think, so you should go right over there and listen to it at some point.

Now, in the interview you heard what a techie fanatic I am, checking my Blackberry many times every hour, and I've been barely able to restrain myself from rushing out and buying the new iPhone. But I've shown remarkable restraint. However, I'm wondering if any of you out there are listening to this show on an iPhone yet. Be sure to let me know if you are. It will be another Shrink Rap Radio first. Now speaking of technical stuff, if you're listening to this show but not subscribed, please do subscribe; it costs you nothing. On the right hand side of each page at shrinkrapradio.com is an icon that says, "Subscribe in iTunes." Just click on that and follow the link. And speaking of iTunes, we saw our biggest jump in listeners back when iTunes featured us for a short time on their podcast page. Now, there's no certain way to make that happen again, but one ingredient that does seem to help is getting as many positive reviews on the iTunes site as possible. So many of you have written me with wonderful feedback. Can I get you to go to the iTunes store, then to the Shrink Rap Radio page in the iTunes store, and then to leave some of those choice comments there in the form of a review? If you'll do that, it will be a big help, and I'm thanking you in advance.

Sadly, two weeks in a row now there are no new additions to the Frappr map. So if you're not on our map, there's a place on the Shrink Rap Radio website where you can add yourself to the Shrink Rap Radio Frappr map and save me the frustration of looking there every day and finding no new people. Finally, the sponsors for this show are Pod Show and GoDaddy. Remember to use the code, shrink3 at checkout from GoDaddy to get a discount on your next domain name or web hosting purchase.