

**Topic:** Cyber-gender: The influence of social media and the digital age on the EQ development of boys and girls.

**Speakers:** Megan du Toit and Megan-Lee Coetzee

**Speaker Bio:**

Megan du Toit is a Registered Educational Psychologist currently employed in the role of Academic Support Co-ordinator at St Stithians Girls' College and chairs the Campus Academic Support Committee, which represents all five schools on the St Stithians College campus. St Stithians offers a synergy model of boys and girls on one campus and embraces e-learning and the use of technology. While Megan works primarily in girls' education in her present role, her work across campus has allowed for exposure to the complexities of working with both boys, and girls and the challenges faced by boys and girls during childhood and adolescence. Megan has previously worked in co-educational and single-sex pre-school, primary school and high school settings, as well as special needs education contexts. Megan graduated *summa cum laude* with a Masters in Educational Psychology from the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, with an additional major in Ethics.

**Topic Description:**

In the digital age schools, parents, teachers and children need to adapt to rapid advances in technology, to adequately prepare children for a highly connected future. There is a growing body of research which supports and recognises the benefits of developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in children. There is also much literature providing substantial evidence that now, more than ever, our children are living in a world that demands social and emotional awareness. However, professionals working with and studying childhood and adolescent behavior and wellbeing, have become increasingly aware of the implicit need for the deliberate development of EQ and SQ skills in children living in the digital age. In particular, these should relate to navigating complex social-emotional dynamics associated with social media and technology use.

Based on their experiences within school environments that promote the use of social media and technology, Megan and Megan-Lee believe that justice can only be done to the process of equipping our children with the necessary skills, once we have paused to consider and question the following:

- Do boys and girls respond differently to the use of social media and technology?
- Do boys and girls represent and connect with another on social media differently?
- Do boys and girls engage with social media and technology for different reasons?

Based on this, are there then gender specific skills we need to focus on building in boys and girls to empower them to responsibly engage on social media platforms?

This presentation will explore gender aspects of the digital age, including the different challenges faced by boys and girls in their engagements with social media and technology. Attention will primarily be drawn towards focusing on the social-emotional and EQ aspects of gender differences in the digital age, with reference to how technology and social media influences the development of boys' and girls' self-esteem, identity and social-emotional wellbeing. Megan and Megan-Lee will then further explore some of the key gender-specific and non-specific soft skills which should be developed and addressed when educating boys and girls on their use of technology and social media.