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Bioterrorism Affects Email

By Mike Banks Valentine

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At a time when critical issues of national importance are being discussed in basement rooms at the US Capitol due to Anthrax laced letters sent to government offices, email has become more important than ever for person-to-person communications.

Bioterrorism has now impacted even email. No worry that you'll get sick when you next check your email inbox since terrorists have not yet figured out how to send those powdery spores via email attachments (digitizing Anthrax spores seems to kill the little critters).

I sent email to my representatives this week expressing concern about how the Anti-Terrorism Bill signed by President Bush poses extensive threats to civil liberties. Even though it was routinely editorialized by major newspapers as going too far without usual protections against abuse by policing agencies, while the final bill does require judicial oversight and the bill was given a four year sunset clause to end it in 2005. I expected the usual replies from those officials in the form of canned "Thank-you-for-sharing your-thoughts-and-concerns" email. What I got back concerns me even more!

My Senator returned an email urging me to call the local office to express my feelings because . . . "As I'm sure you know, letters containing anthrax have disrupted Congress by forcing the closure of the House and Senate office buildings. The Capitol, however, remains open and legislative work continues." What has that to do with email Senator?

The Senator goes on . . . "Currently I've received approximately 30,000 letters and emails which, because of the closure of the Senate office buildings, my staff and I have been unable to open and process. Thousands of more letters are being held by the Capitol Police." Sorry Senator, that doesn't fly, it falls flat an excuse for access to email.

I have an old college buddy who works for another senator who tells me he's set up at home to retrieve the office emails and continues to work from there. I know the flow of email has not slowed due to Anthrax and it is now an even more reliable method to reach elected representatives, as it can be retrieved from anywhere.

How did my Congressperson respond? "This reply is not your final correspondence from me -- it's just an automatic acknowledgment that I have received your e-mail. I will send you a response through the regular mail service that addresses your specific concern. However, in order to ensure that I can respond properly, I ask that you reply back with your full mailing address, including street address, city and zip code."

Swell, now they're responding to email via snail mail! I prefer the email Congressman. The present danger is not just to our physical health from Anthrax, but more to the health of democracy when policy makers are inaccessible to constituents. My concern now is that they don't seem to value email as an effective way to communicate with the voting public. The average person in this country now has four email addresses and can be reached at work, at home and on the road via web-based email. This could be said to compare to having multiple writing pads and pens at work, at home and on the road.

While the famous "Carnivore" email intercepting technology sought by the FBI will now easily track and monitor our correspondence with Presidential approval, Congresspersons and Senators seem to want to continue to communicate by snail mail when it makes even less sense now to do so. Nevermind that email doesn't cost nearly as much as regular postal mail. My Congressman continued . . .

"Again, thank you for your e-mail message. I am privileged to serve as your voice in Congress." I want to know who is serving as my EARS in Congress since email seems an unreliable method of communication with representatives and regular mail is "being held by the capitol police" as email goes unanswered but for

canned responses making excuses for lack of response and then promising to send me expensive postal mail to answer my concerns.

We take email seriously (well except for silly urban myths and endlessly-forwarded-cutesy-pass-it-on-absurdities) in that it is a routine part of nearly everyones life now. Physical access to government office buildings is blocked and communication by snail mail is nearly impossible, while phone access is much more cumbersome. It's time our representatives began to take email just a bit more seriously. It'd be nice if they answered it too.

Contact your own elected representatives:

<http://www.house.gov>

<http://www.senate.gov>

<http://www.firstgov.gov>

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Depression In Children

By Stephen White

Depression affects children the same way that it affects adults. Now in most cases, trauma is a reason why depression will affect a person. Of course, trauma affects those of all ages, including children. It should be no surprise that children suffer from depression also. The youngest case of depression ending with suicide is five years old. With this information in hand, it can and should be taken quite seriously if you suspect a child is sad or depressed.

1. The Numbers

In fact, three out of every 100 children are depressed. Its hard to tell what causes depression in children, but every aspect of a child or teens life affects their state of mind. With one bit of criticism, a child could break down and become unreachable. Telling whether or not a child is depressed can be quite different from telling if an adult is depressed.

2. For Parents

Parents need to know that your child isnt depressed because you are a bad parent. You child could be depressed for many reasons and death of family or friends is usually the root of the cause. Some signs that your child may be depressed at absences from school, isolation, change in behavior, and headaches. Of course, they could have the typical signs like overeating, eating too little or not sleeping

or oversleeping.

3. The Signs Of Depression

The signs of depression are greatly varied. You might not even notice it at first or push it off as normal behaviour. Life goes fast and we tend to notice the things that we dont really want to see. The only way to find out how your child feels is to ask them how they feel. Be active in your child or teens life. Do activities together and have some time set aside to talk about the trauma of being a kid in days world. Remember, youre not a bad parent if you snoop around a little bit.

For more great anxiety depression related articles and resources check out



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