

VTech Guest Article

Get Wired...No Excuses

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It was 1954, and the neighborhood was abuzz. We were the first on our block to get a TV. Friends and relatives squeezed together on our plastic slip-covered couch. My mom ceremoniously placed a bowl of fruit on top of the humongous TV cabinet. We held our breath. My father turned the knob, and there she was, Miss Francis. We all watched the show Ding Dong School together.

So went my first joyous encounter with technology. My second came decades later with my first word processor, a Wang (a what?) with its five-page memory at a cost of \$4,000. I never looked back on the loss of whiteout or the rotary phone. I got wired! Yes, it was not intuitive, and sometimes I felt dumber than toast. But, I refuse to be left behind in a fog of cloud-based technology. How about you?

Age-friendly computer training

Thankfully in a time of rapidly changing technology, age-friendly training is coming to the rescue. Since 1986, [Senior Net](#) has taught more than a million boomers and seniors how to use computers.

"I learned many computer skills, which were a great source of comfort, allowing me to stay connected with friends and family, to entertain myself with games and music, to Skype with my daughter, and to stay informed of world events while I was home recovering," said 93-year-old Martha Streeter.

Everyone learns differently. [OATS, Older Adults Technology Services](#), offers live training and inter-generational teaching programs. In 2012, OATS opened the Senior Planet Exploration Center in New York City, which goes beyond computer classes with lectures, video games and Skype stations.

Hands-on classes also are available through your local senior centers or call your local Department for the Aging. If you like a college atmosphere, [OSHER Life Long Learning Institute](#), offers courses through more than 100 university-based learning chapters.

Once you are computer literate, check out these websites, developed especially for us:

www.Grandparents.com, www.Caring.com, www.RedHatSociety.com, www.BoomerLivingPlus.com, www.SilversPlanet.org, and health hubs like www.PatientsLikeMe.com and www.DiabetesMine.com.

Age-friendly tech design

The importance of technology for boomers and seniors boomers doesn't stop with computing. For example, VTech's CareLine™ is a dual-purpose home phone specially designed with enhanced audio and big numbers. CareLine also provides an easy-to-use accompanying pendant to make voice-activated calls from as far away as 600 feet from your home, making it an emergency support device as well.

From wall sensors to GPS to search tools like Google, boomers and seniors are the largest users of technology of any demographic. The array of technology is vast. In January 2013, the [Digital Health Summit](#) and the [Silvers Summit](#), both part of the [Consumer Electronics Show](#), displayed hundreds of age-friendly health and

communication tech items. Now, we can take our own blood pressure or glucose levels and send them automatically through a monitoring system for quick analysis. Robots resembling penguins and dogs keep us company, monitor our medication and remind us to hydrate. Smart clothing includes a T-shirt that monitors your heart rate, and smart houses turn off our stoves and turn on our lights. It's all in the aging technology mix, as well as VTech CareLine with its innovative phone system.

Adapting to new technology

Although technology is exciting, there may sometimes be some personal resistance. Our brains might lend a clue to this. As we age, the brain loses a type of intelligence called fluid intelligence. We may learn new things more slowly, and our finger dexterity might slow down. The good news is that when we force ourselves out of our comfort zones, we build new reservoirs of neural connections in our brains. When you take on a difficult task like learning to email, or navigating Facebook, be comforted, you are strengthening your brain.

Start slow with a warm-up from the website [CogniFit](#). This is a great place to test and improve eight areas of cognitive fitness, including the hand-eye coordination, memory and speed you need to be a tech savvy adult. It's fun, too, as you can create brain prowess competitions with your friends.

Get wired!