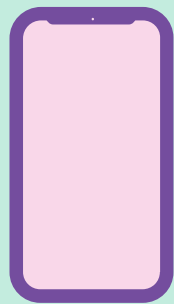


Is Technology Hijacking Our Kids' Childhoods?

Since smartphones became common in 2012, parents have struggled with screen time, revealing changes in family life we are only just beginning to understand.

1 What's Happening?

- 48% of teens say they're online almost constantly, often disengaged from real life.
- Children aged 11 to 14 now spend up to 9 hours a day on screens — what researchers are calling “the great rewiring of childhood.”



4 What's the Real-World Impact?

- Fragmented attention spans - kids struggle to stay focused: "I read one sentence, I get bored, I open TikTok."
- Despite safer streets, children are indoors more than ever, while risks increase online.
- Girls face rising self-consciousness and disconnection through image-driven social media.
- Boys are pulled into dehumanising content and addictive online behaviour.
- Academic levels have dropped since 2012-many link this to touch-screen saturation.



2 What does the data show?

Mental Health

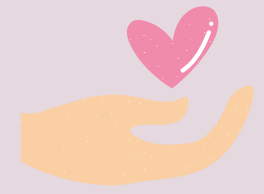
- 18% of children aged 7–16 had a probable mental disorder in 2022 (up from 12.1% in 2017). *NHS England, 2022*
- Instagram worsened body image for 1 in 3 girls with existing concerns. *Meta, 2021*
- Heavy social media users were 70% more likely to fall asleep late. *CLOSER, UCL*
- 79% of children had seen violent pornography before 18. *Children's Commissioner, 2023*
- 19% of 10–15-year-olds experienced online bullying. *Office for National Statistics, 2020*

Learning & Behaviour

- 2 hours of daily screen time linked to poorer memory, attention, and language. *Dr Sina Joneidy*
- 79% of young women and 81% of girls (7–21) experienced online harm. *Girlguiding UK*
- 1 in 4 children show signs of smartphone addiction. *King's College London, 2019*

3 What's Driving This Shift?

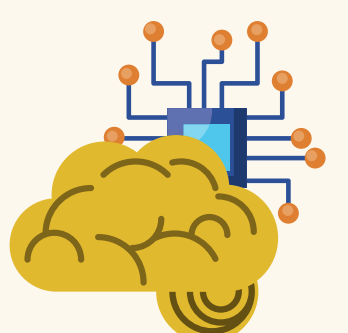
Tech companies use persuasive design to deliberately exploit our brain's reward systems. The goal? To keep kids constantly stimulated and hooked-leaving no room for hobbies, boredom, or creativity.



Dopamine addiction forms as children get caught in an endless loop of stimulus -> reward -> repeat, always needing more.

5 The Brain is Still Developing

- Children's brains are highly plastic-but only until their mid-20s. The habits we allow now will shape them for life.
- When we're bored, the default mode network in the brain turns on. This is essential for developing identity, values, and a sense of meaning. Constant screen use robs children of this critical process-fueling today's mental health crisis.



6

How Can We Free the Anxious Generation?

1. No smartphones before high school
2. No social media before 16
3. Phone-free schools
4. More independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world



7

What Parents Can Do:

- Replace screen time with real-life adventures, creative play, and connection with peers.
- Consider flip phones or basic mobiles as alternatives.
- Keep all screens out of bedrooms.
- Talk openly with your child: acknowledge their fears of missing out, and show them they're not alone.
- Team up with other families who share these values-this makes it easier for kids to feel included and empowered.



8

Join the Movement

Discover more ideas, resources, and a supportive community at:

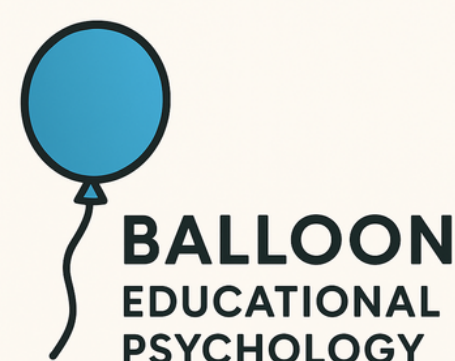
www.anxiousgeneration.com

Join other families in pledging to delay smartphones and protect childhood – sign the Parenting Pact today at:

<https://parentpact.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>

If you don't know how to talk to kids about screens, online safety, or social media, these 200 Conversations Cards Set can help:

<https://raisingdigitalcitizens.com>



You can scan the QR code or visit the website below to learn more, including information about the services offered by Balloon Educational Psychology:

www.ballooneducationalpsychology.com



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Recommended Sources for Online Safety Advice

- **UK Safer Internet Centre** – Offers age-specific advice, resources, and reporting tools.

www.saferinternet.org.uk

- **NSPCC / Childline** – Excellent guidance on social media, gaming, and talking to children about online risks.

www.nspcc.org.uk |

www.childline.org.uk

- **Internet Matters** – Tailored guidance by age, platform, and topic (e.g. screen time, cyberbullying, inappropriate content).

www.internetmatters.org

- **Thinkuknow (by CEOP)** – Educational resources from the National Crime Agency about staying safe online.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

- **Common Sense Media** – Independent reviews and advice on apps, games, and digital well-being.

www.commonsensemedia.org