

Vol. 2 Principal's Acorn Ally- Together Nurturing Acorns Into Mighty Oaks



Introduction: The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt

Growing up on Mars

Jonathan Haidt's introduction to *The Anxious Generation* uses the following illustration to convey the impact technology has had on our world. "Suppose that when your first child turned ten, a visionary billionaire who you've never met, chose her to join the first permanent human settlement on Mars." He goes on to explain that you, her parents, did not need to give consent, she signed herself up and all her friends are going, too. He equates how the rapid integration of technology into childhood is akin to placing them in a radically unfamiliar environment, like Mars, has profound impact on their physical and mental development. Just as a child on Mars would face unpredictable challenges requiring new adaptations, today's children are growing up in a technological landscape that we have yet to fully understand the long-term implications of. He refers to this as the rapid rewiring of the brain. His choice in illustrating this concept as sending a child to Mars is extreme, but selected to demonstrate the extreme impact technology can have on one's life.

Technology, while offering convenience and entertainment, has profoundly impacted children's development. Haidt highlights that young brains, which don't fully mature until around the mid-20s, are particularly vulnerable to the psychological manipulations of technology. Social media platforms and apps are

designed to engage children through constant feedback loops—likes, shares, and instant gratification—leading to potential addiction and a diminished capacity for real-life social interaction. In addition, these feedback loops feed a child's false sense of self and they become reliant on the feedback it provides for their self worth.



The rise of a "phone-based childhood" has led to less time spent in physical play, which is crucial for developing social skills, empathy, problem-solving abilities, and emotional resilience. Instead, children are increasingly interacting through screens, where relationships can be easily discarded and genuine human experiences are replaced with virtual ones. This shift from a play-based to a phone-based childhood means children are missing out on essential developmental experiences that are needed to navigate the real world. The correlation between increased screen time and our children's overall happiness underscores the urgency for better policies and safeguards to protect developing minds.

This realization is what brings me to writing the Acorn Ally, because we do not need to wait for these policies, we have the power to make changes right now. I have personally seen the impact of phone based childhood with a rise in students with anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction with peer relationships, lack of focus, impulse control and engagement. I believe that with a collective understanding of the impact screen time has on our children's lives, we can make a change for the better.

In the words of Maya Angelou,

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.”

Resources:

Here you can find multiple strategies for parenting and great information on the topic

<https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/>

Here you will find information and ideas

<https://www.waituntil8th.org/>

If you would like to join me in studying this topic, you can purchase the book on Amazon and Audible (I have both)

Warm Regards,
Mrs. Christierson