

Vol. 4 Principal's Acorn Ally- Together Nurturing Acorns Into Mighty Oaks

Meet Up with Friends Daily

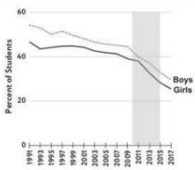


Figure 2.1. Percentage of U.S. students (8th, 10th, and 12th grade) who say that they meet up with their friends "almost every day" outside school.¹³ (Source: Monitoring the Future. I explain how I use this important dataset in the endnotes.)¹⁴

Chapter 2: The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt

Part 2: The Decline of Play-Based Childhood
Chapter 2: What Children Need To Do In Childhood

In recent years, the shift from play-based childhoods to device-centered lives has significantly impacted children's development. Play naturally encourages neural development through frequent practice of social and cognitive skills, yet this is hindered when children primarily engage with digital environments.

Key Aspects:

- **The Importance of Free Play:** All mammals have an innate drive to play, and children deprived of this are at risk of not developing the skills needed for successful communication. Play allows children to learn critical skills by experiencing repeated social interactions in low-stakes environments, such as joking, gossiping, or teasing. These interactions teach children social cues, nonverbal communication, and how to repair social missteps. In the last few years, schools have shifted to extensive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) throughout the day with an emphasis on understanding emotions and how to respond, read body language, and proper ways to handle conflict.
- **Technology as an "Experience Blocker":** Digital devices disrupt childhood experiences essential for emotional and social development. Key to this development is attunement, which is the ability to sense and respond to others' emotions and needs. This skill is foundational for social and emotional regulation. Children who lack these real-life interactions may struggle with self-

regulation, attachment, emotional resilience, and decision-making as they face life's challenges.



- **Social Learning and the Influence of Social Media:** Children learn cultural norms mainly through two types of biases: *conformity bias* (peer influence) and *prestige bias* (emulating those who are seen as successful). Social media amplifies these biases, shaping children's ideas of popularity, success, and social standards. Conformity bias, takes hold when children use social media, observing and desiring "likes" and shares to gauge what's acceptable. Prestige bias influences who children view as role models, often leading them to idealized social media influencers rather than real-life role models. The greatest thing to consider here, is that the more time a child spends interacting with the influencers on social media, the less time they are spending with their family and loved ones who have great potential to be positive influences.
- **Expectant Brains and Sensitive Periods:** The brain has optimal windows for learning specific skills, known as sensitive periods. For instance, learning a language is much easier before age 12, while cultural learning is most active from ages 9-15. This period is crucial for in-person interactions that teach cultural and social norms, which virtual interactions often can't replicate. Missing out on real-world interactions during these sensitive periods may impact a child's long-term social competence.

In sum, the move from a play-based to a device-centered childhood could disrupt essential developmental processes, affecting social, emotional, and cognitive growth in ways that may not become fully apparent until adolescence or adulthood.

Resources:

You can find multiple strategies for parenting and great information on the topic <https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/>

You will find information and ideas

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

Let Grow

<https://letgrow.org/program/parents-and-families/>

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. Christerson