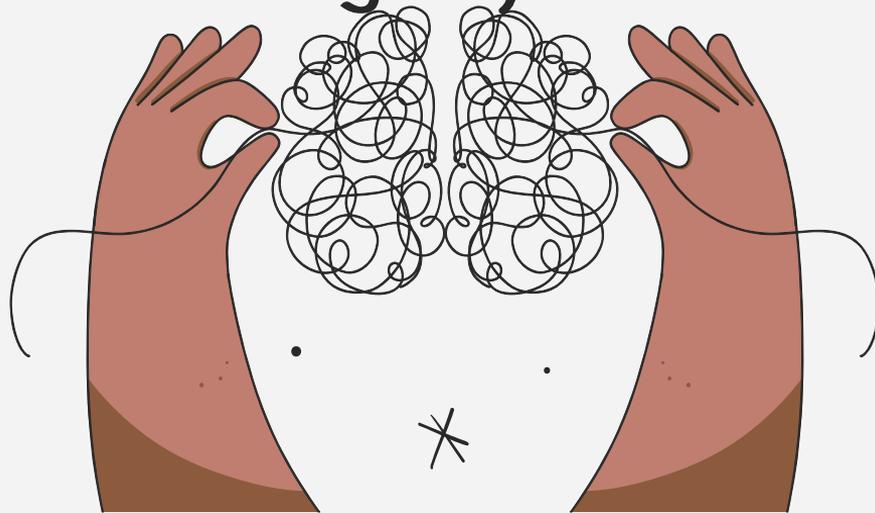


The Anxious Generation

District 28 Family Engagement Series
January 22, 2025



Presenters

Dr. Scott Meek



Dr. Ginny Hiltz





Agenda

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01

The Anxious Generation Overview



Understanding the Rise in Childhood Anxiety

1. Decline of play-based childhood began in 1980s with fears around stranger abductions
2. This resulted in more supervised play
3. Add in the rise in phone-based childhood beginning in early 2010s

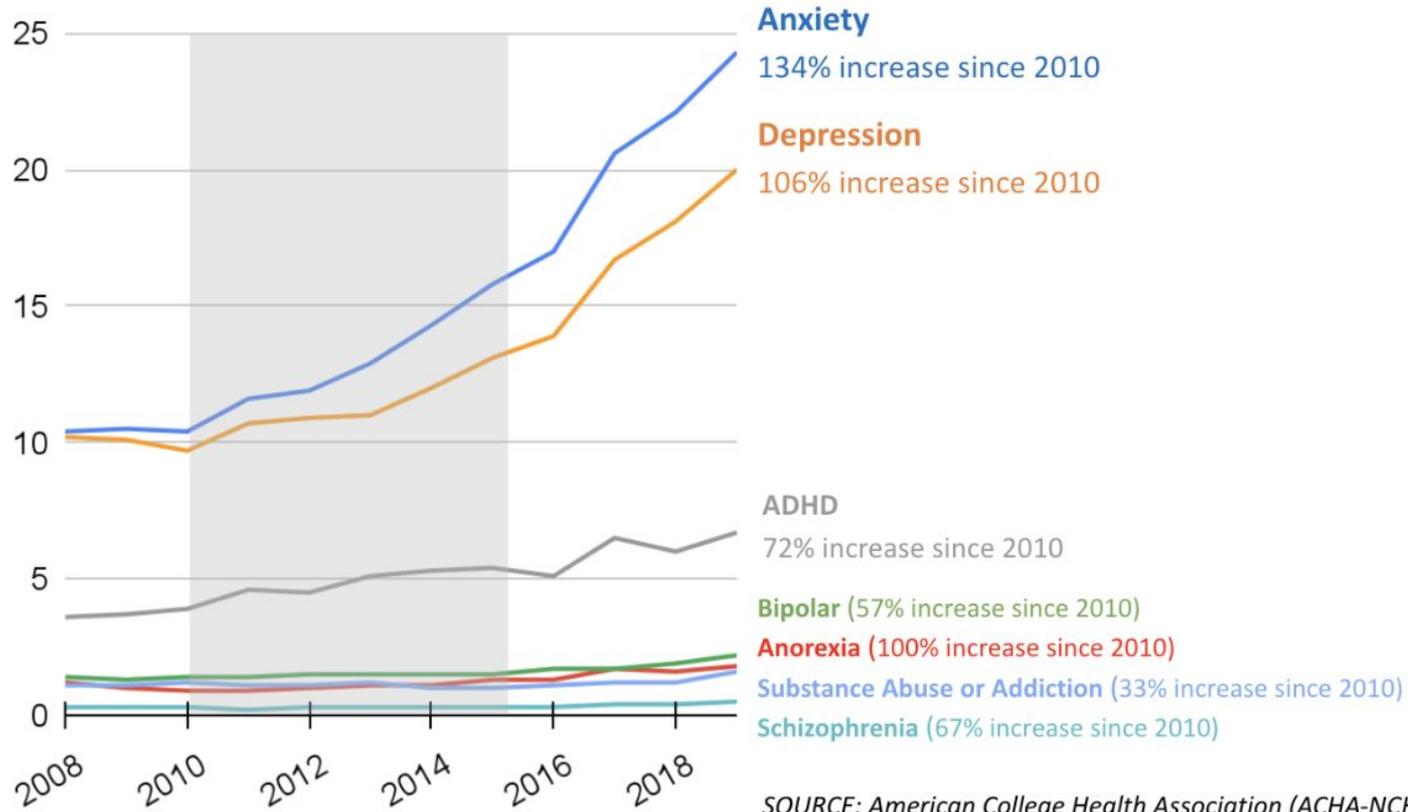
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“The Great Rewiring of Childhood”

“Anxiety is not just an individual struggle; it’s a generational crisis.”

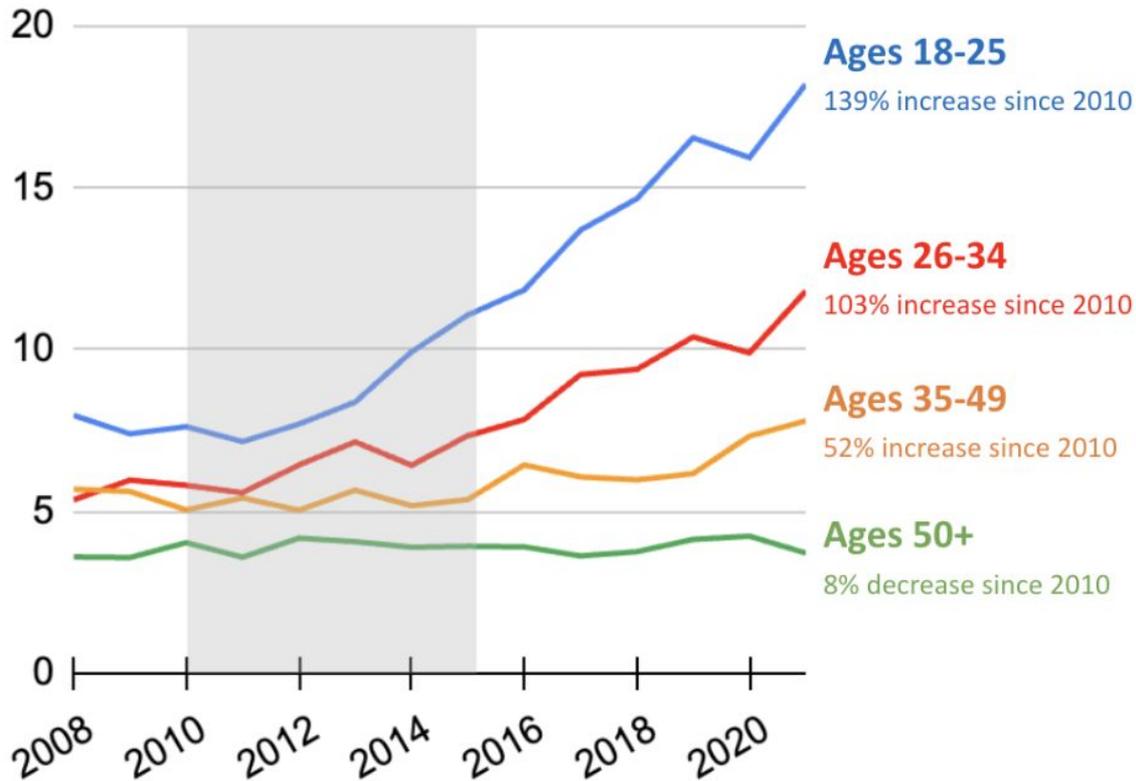


Percent of U.S. Undergraduates Diagnosed with a Mental Illness



SOURCE: American College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA II)

Percent U.S. Anxiety Prevalence



SOURCE: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health

Cultural & Social Influences

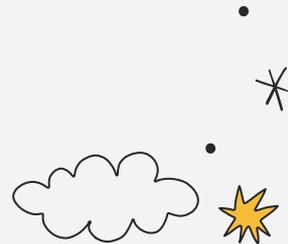
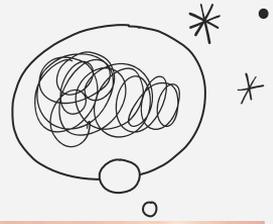
Two powerful factors as children get older...

CONFORMIST BIAS

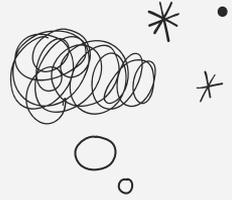
PRESTIGE BIAS

Think about how these factors play out regarding social media and “influencers”...

"The digital age has redefined the way we connect, but it has also exacerbated our feelings of isolation."



Role of Parenting

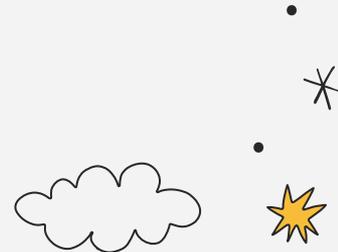


We want our kids to be
“ANTIFRAGILE”

When you're antifragile, there's a need to experience difficulty in order to get stronger.



"The role of parents is to guide, not to control;
fostering independence is key to building
resilience."



The 4 foundational harms of the phone-based childhood

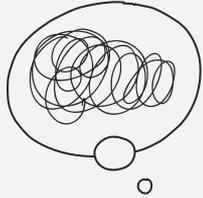
- social deprivation
- sleep deprivation
- attention fragmentation
- addiction



@jonathanhaidt #freetheanxiousgeneration

"Open conversations about mental health can
break the stigma and foster a supportive
environment."

- Loss of face-to-face play
- Opportunity cost..the time our children are spending on smartphones takes away from other things they could be doing (e.g., sleeping, playing, exercising)
- Underdeveloped prefrontal cortex
- The role of dopamine



Two Sides of the Anxiety Coin

"Under-parenting"
Online



"Over-parenting" in
the Real World

02

Scenarios for Discussion



Scenario #1



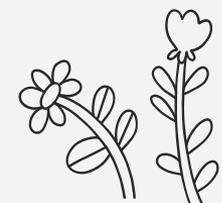
Social Anxiety

Liam, a 2nd grader, is invited to a birthday party but feels anxious about interacting with other children. He worries about not knowing anyone and fears being left out, leading him to want to decline the invitation.



- **Discussion Questions:**

- How can parents support Liam in this situation? Should they let him decline the invitation?
- What strategies can be used to help children develop social skills and confidence?



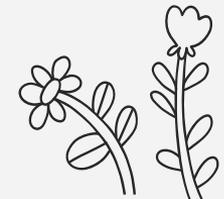
Scenario #2



Social Skills

Nadia is a 4th grade student. She is upset because a friend has made mean comments about her on a group text thread. The friend is spreading rumors and gossip and trying to turn other kids against Nadia. Nadia is feeling anxiety about facing the student at school.

- **Discussion Questions:**
 - What are the school's and parent's roles in supporting Nadia?
 - In what ways can parents foster social skills without overstepping?
 - How has technology created different social challenges for children?



Scenario #3



Technology Addiction

Alex is a 7th grade student. He prefers to be on his phone or gaming device over most other activities. His behavior escalates when his parents try to limit his screen time, creating tension and conflict for the family.



- **Discussion Questions:**

- How can Alex's parents help support his unhealthy relationship with technology?
- Are there ways to set limits without removing technology access completely?
- When is it time to involve others for support?



03

School's Role



Things Schools Can Do..

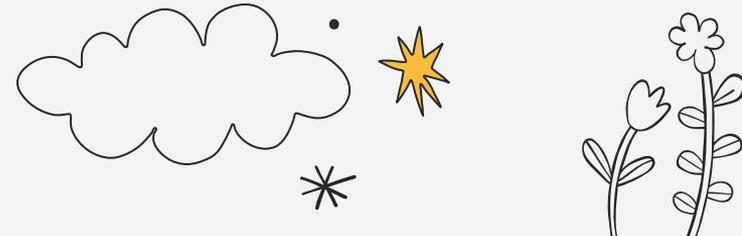
1. Teaching coping strategies and prioritize students' well-being and mental health (CASEL)
2. Become “phone-free” schools—what does this really look like?
3. Allow more time for play/recess and provide children the chance to work things out
4. Embrace the “Let Grow” Project: Go home and do something you’ve never done on your own before.

*Time to Talk: How can parents support schools in doing these things? What might make parents uncomfortable as we consider these changes?

15 Ways Teachers Can **HELP STUDENTS MANAGE ANXIETY**

Incorporate Mindfulness Exercises Throughout the Day	Check In With Students & Focus on Relationship Building	Exercise and Get Moving!
Have Structured Routines	Encourage Positive Self-Talk	Read Books About Managing Anxiety
Maintain Clear Rules and Expectations	Set Achievable Goals	Model Using Coping Tools Yourself
Cultivate a Calming Classroom Environment	Create a Strong Classroom Community	Give Students A Choice to Work Alone or With Others
Provide a Calm Corner in Your Classroom	Validate Your Student's Feelings	Refer Out for Additional Support

WholeHearted School Counseling



04

Parent/Guardians' Role



Role of Parents/Guardians

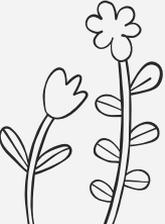
Think like a gardener, not like a carpenter!

(Age 0-5)

- Play opportunities w/ mixed aged children
- Model + behavior (especially with phones)
- Give them more responsibility
- Limit screen time (other than FaceTime, Zoom)

*If for some strange reason you WANTED your child to be kidnapped by a stranger, how long would you have to keep them outside, unattended, for this to be statistically likely to happen?
750,000 years.*





(Age 6-13)

- Put a limit on daily screen time total
- Use parental controls and content filters
- Focus on maximizing: in-person activities and sleep
- Phone-free meals
- No phones in bedroom after a specific time
- Monitor 'The Big Three': social media, pornography, video games
- Delay social media accounts until 16



"It's been so nice getting to interact with you for these past six years. Here's your first device."

Figure 12.1. H. Lin, in *The New Yorker*.¹⁷

05

Additional Resources





CATCH

Thanks to Dr. Lisa Novak and CATCH who started the conversation about *The Anxious Generation* in our community. [Click here](#) to access all of their outstanding resources.





Let Grow

The Let Grow Experience encourages parents to allow for more independence, free play, and responsibility for their children. Learn how on their website.





Links & Downloads

- [NASP Handout on Anxiety](#)
 - [NASP Handout on Testing Anxiety](#)
 - [Child Mind Institute](#)
 - [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
 - [Wait Until 8th](#)
 - [D28 Social Media Delay List](#)
 - [Help! My Kid Just Got an iPhone!](#)
 - [Common Sense Media](#)
 - [APA Recommendations for Teens Viewing Online Videos](#) (new Dec. 2024)
 - [Organization for Social Media Safety](#)
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Books & Media

- *Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive!) in Their Digital World* (book)
 - *Raising Humans In a Digital World* (book)
 - *Behind Their Screens: What Teens Are Facing* (book)
 - Common Sense Media Conversation about the book
 - *Screenagers* (movie)
 - *Chasing Childhood* (movie)
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Access these slides here:



Provide feedback here:





Thanks!

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