



PAPAYA

Let's talk about our kids and their tech

JENNIFER POWERS

Choosing a different path for your family

Created by Dr Susie Davies, Papaya Talks—all rights reserved

01.

I'm not here to tell you what to do.

02.

It's not just smartphones.

03.

Causation is hard to prove.

04.

Some technology is good.

Screen time

The average amount
of time a teenager
spends
online in the UK

4.54 hrs

=

34.3 hrs

a week

=

75 days

a year

=

14.3 years

a lifetime

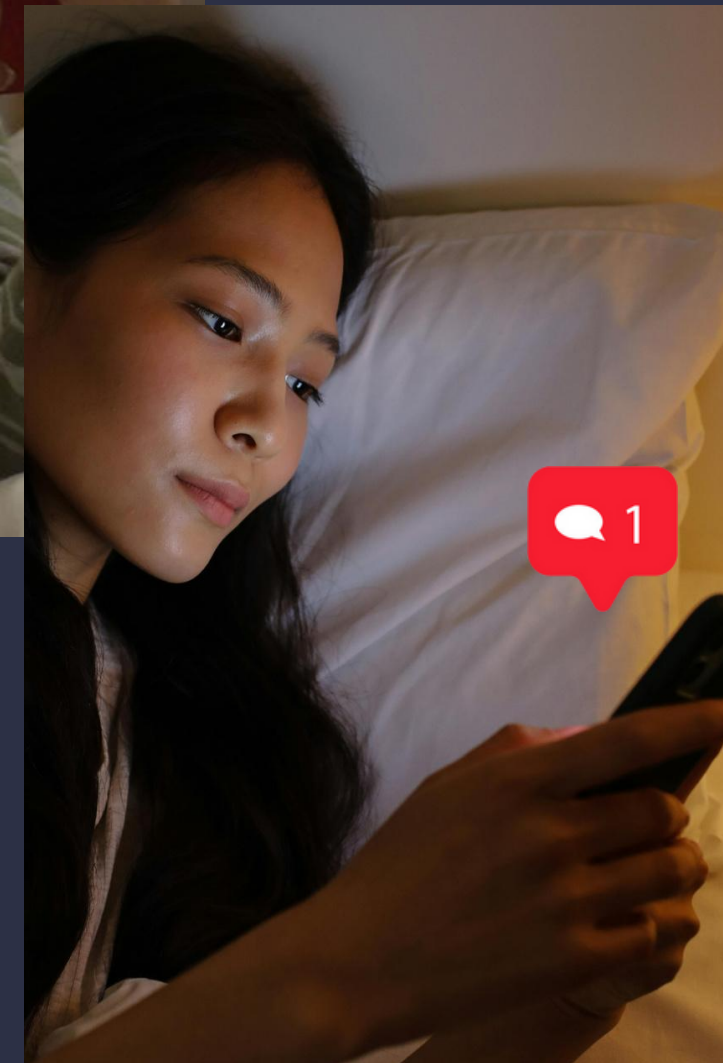
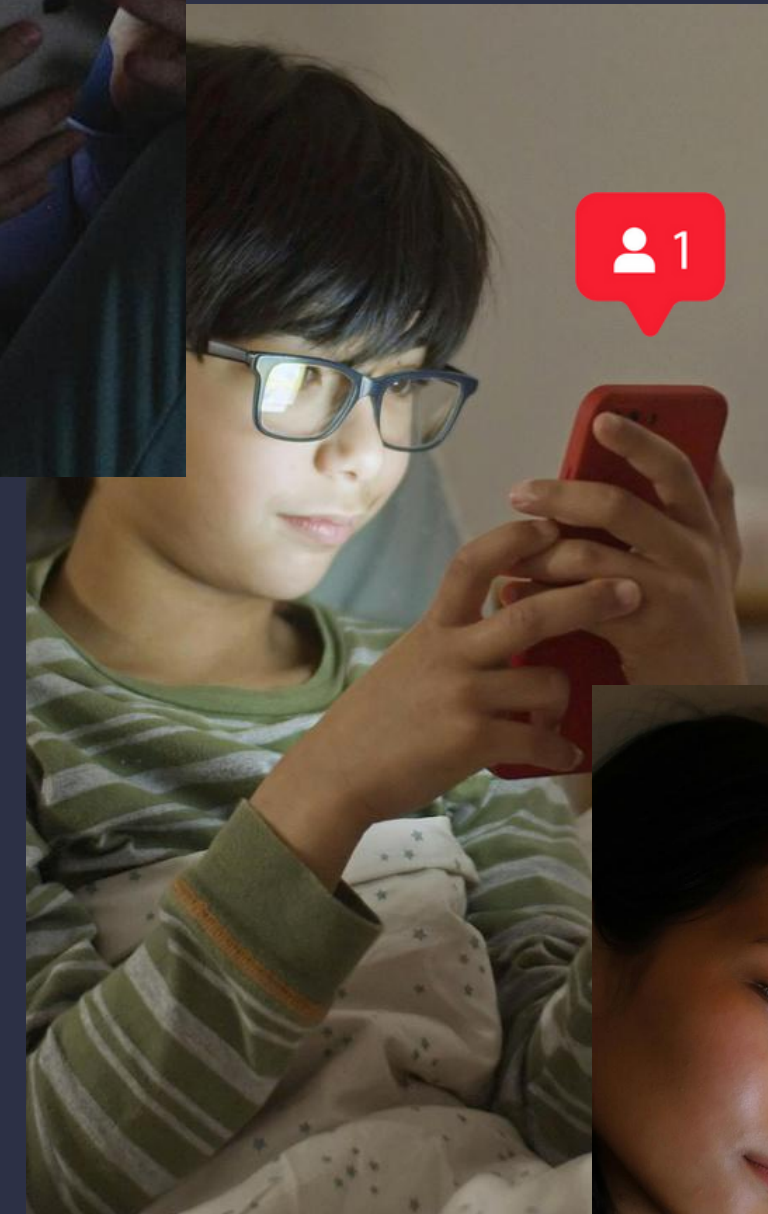
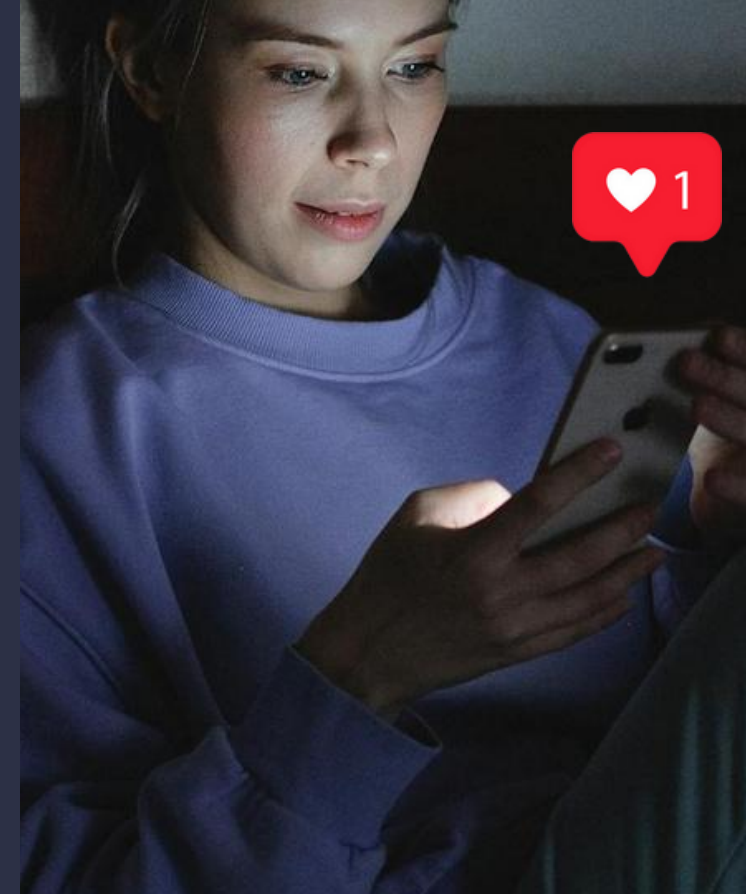
*Ofcom 2025

According to Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*, the average teen spends between 6 to 8 hours a day engaged in screen-based activities, with approximately 4.8 hours dedicated specifically to social media.

Persuasive design

Smart technology taps into our dopamine reward pathway making us all vulnerable to overconsumption.

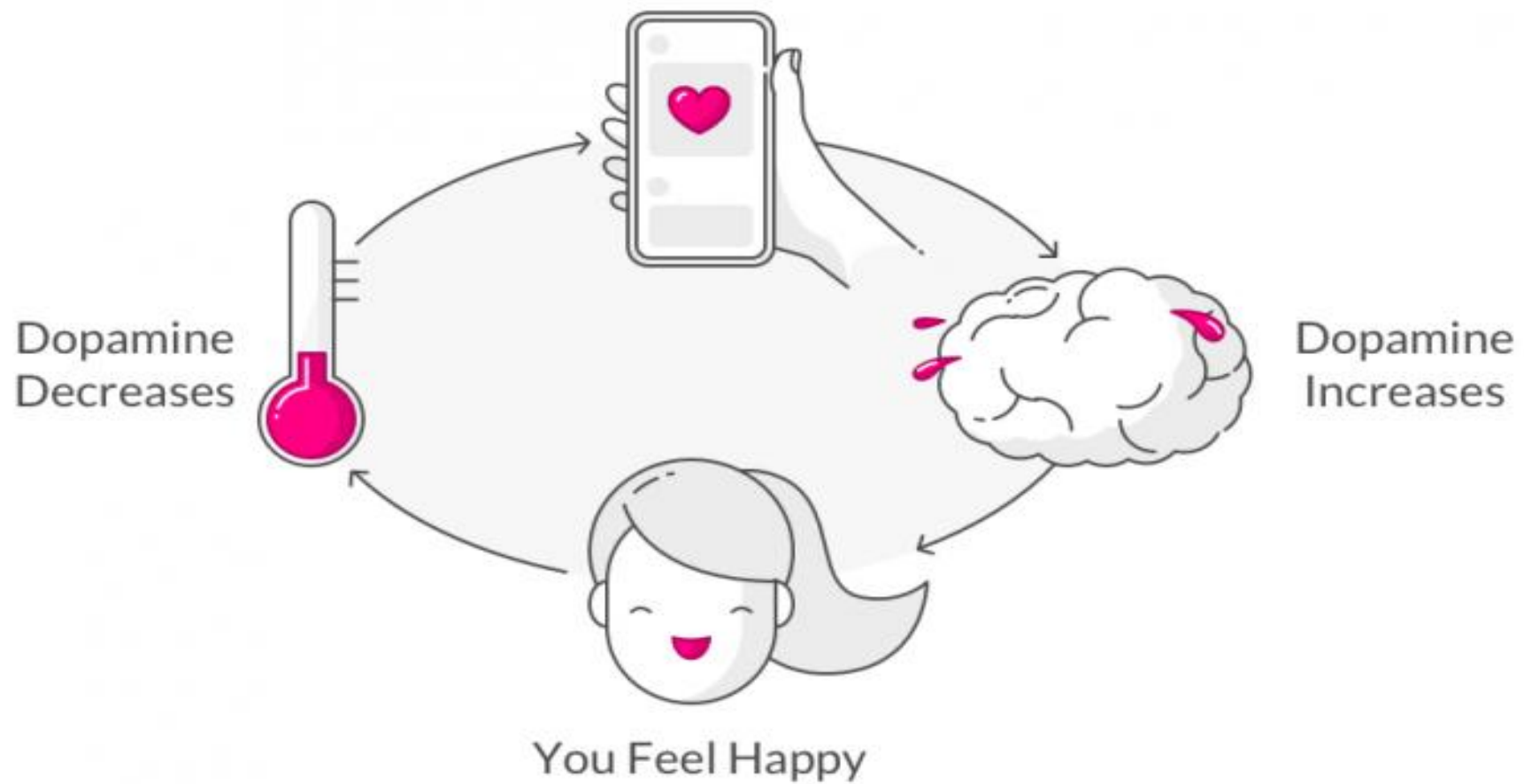
So powerful is persuasive tech that it has been described as being akin to involuntary hypnotised.



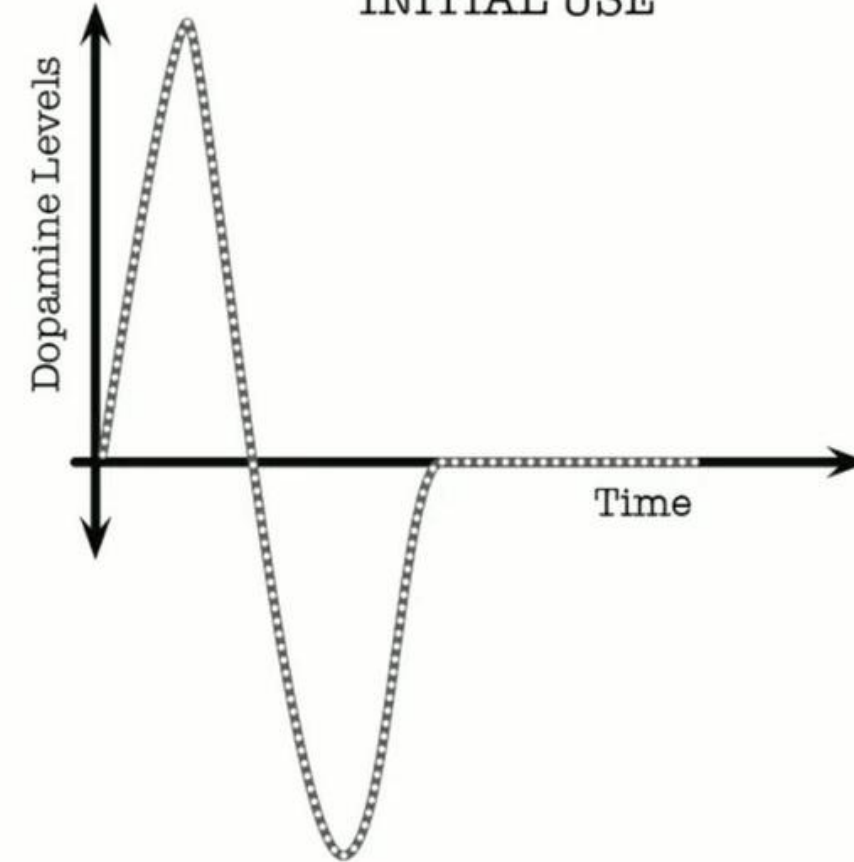
The dopamine paradox

The Dopamine Reward Loop

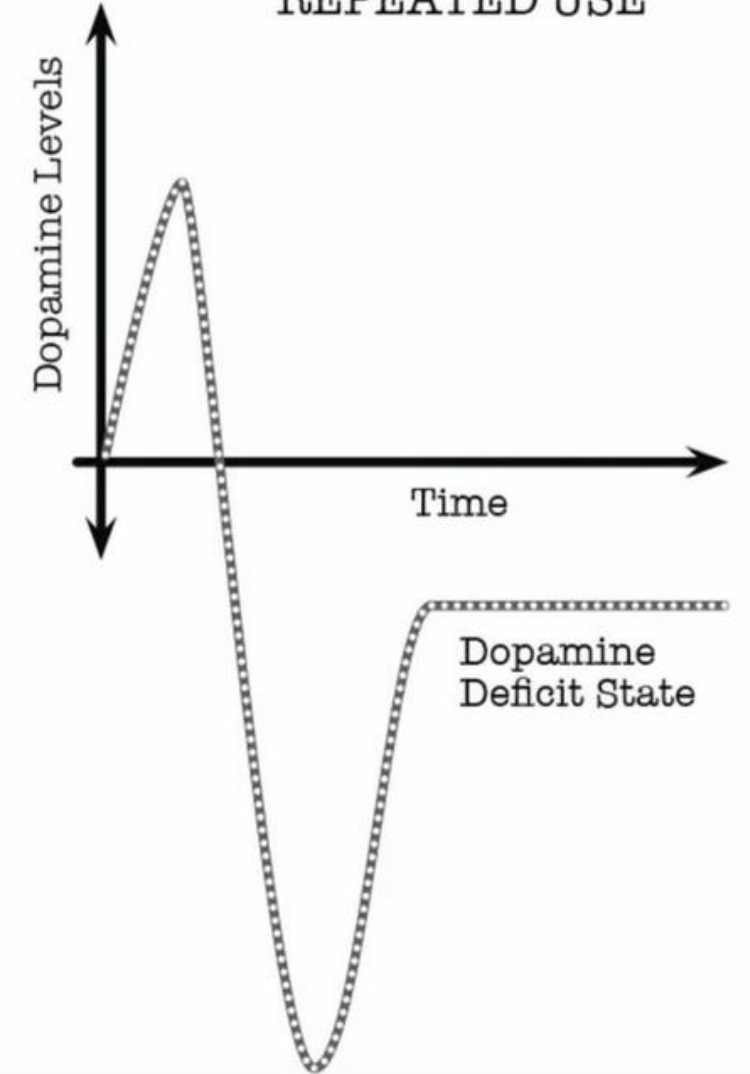
Pick Up Your Phone



HIGH DOPAMINE REWARDS: INITIAL USE



HIGH DOPAMINE REWARDS: REPEATED USE



Timeline

EARLY 2000'S



2007-2008



2009-2010



2010-2014



2015-2025



Early 'Smartphones' & social giants begin

Facebook 2002
YouTube 2005



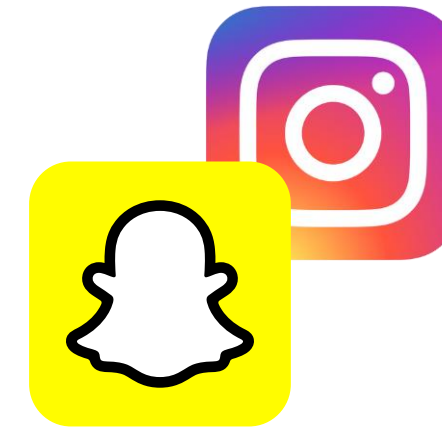
The iPhone 'touch screen'

Appstore 2008;
1st Android 2008



Tech behaviourists maximise engagement

The like button & retweet button, infinite scroll, push notifications, algorithms and front-facing cameras

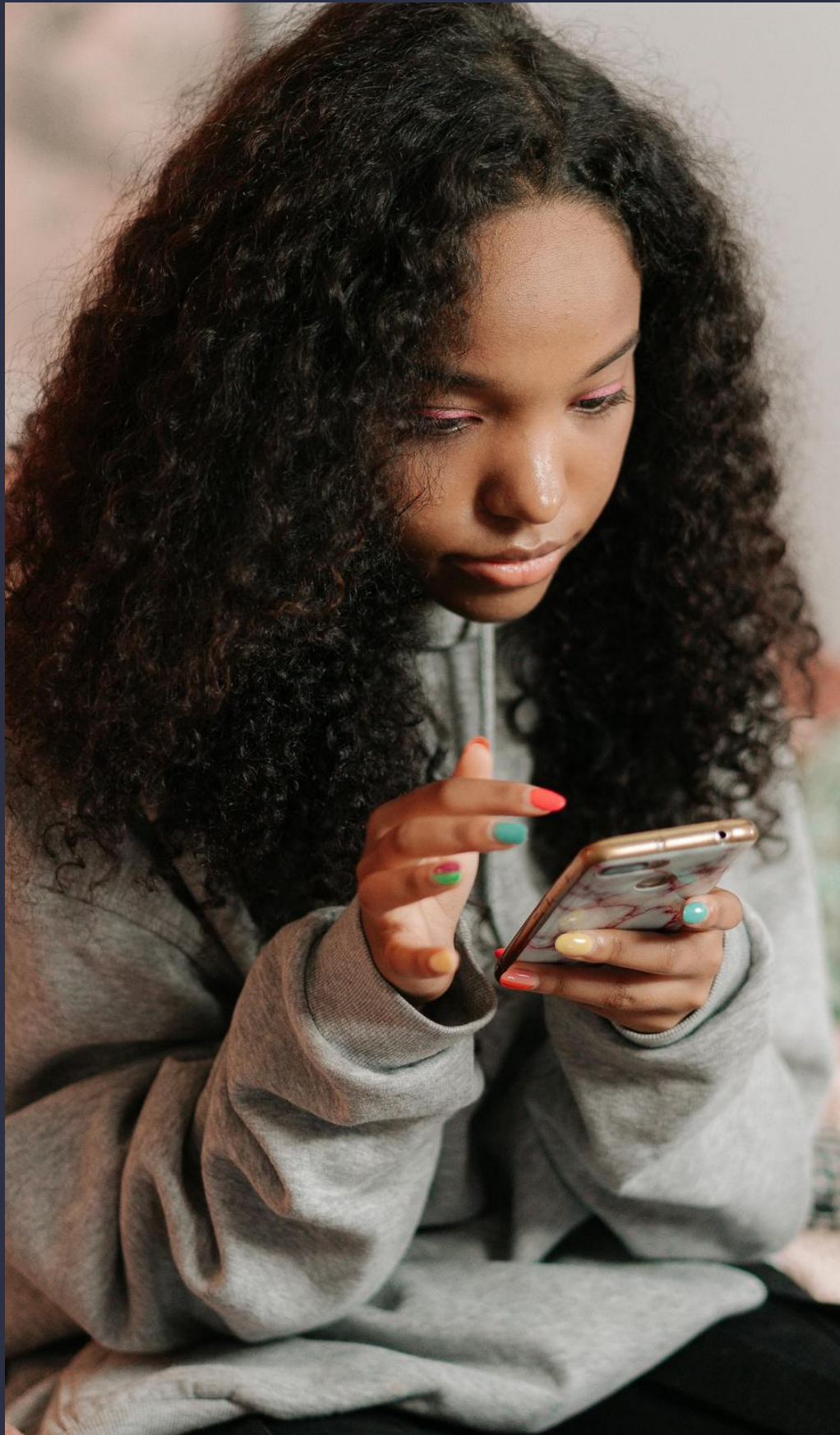


Internet everywhere - 4G
Instagram
Snapchat



97% of UK 12yr olds own a smartphone

2024: Social Media revenue >\$250B; TikTok hits 1.8B users in 8yrs



Children with Problematic Smartphone Usage (PSU) are twice as likely to experience anxiety and three times as likely to experience depression compared to children without PSU

*King's College London, 2024

Mental health

Self Harm in UK teens

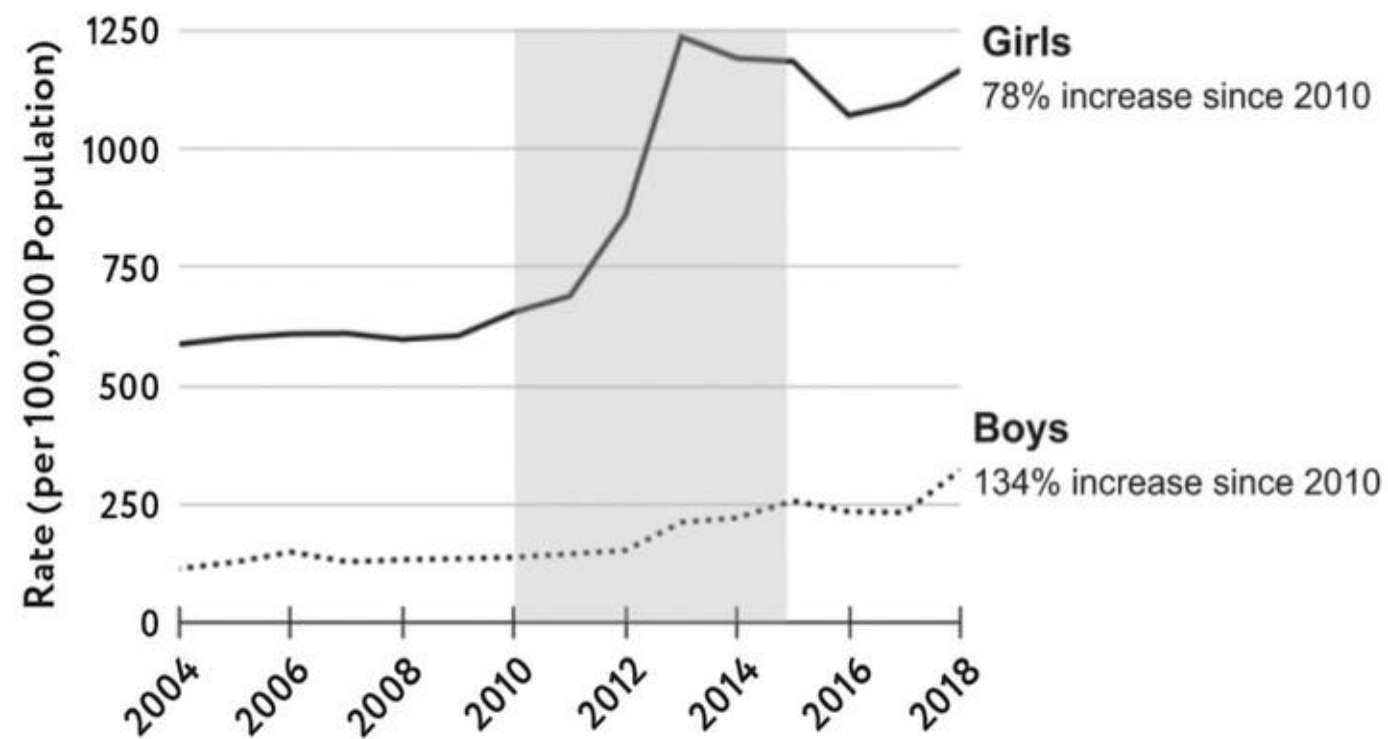


Figure 1.9. U.K. teens' (ages 13–16) self-harm episodes. (Source: Cybulski et al., 2021, drawing from two databases of

According to NHS data in the past decade childhood outdoor accidents have reduced:

↓ 70%

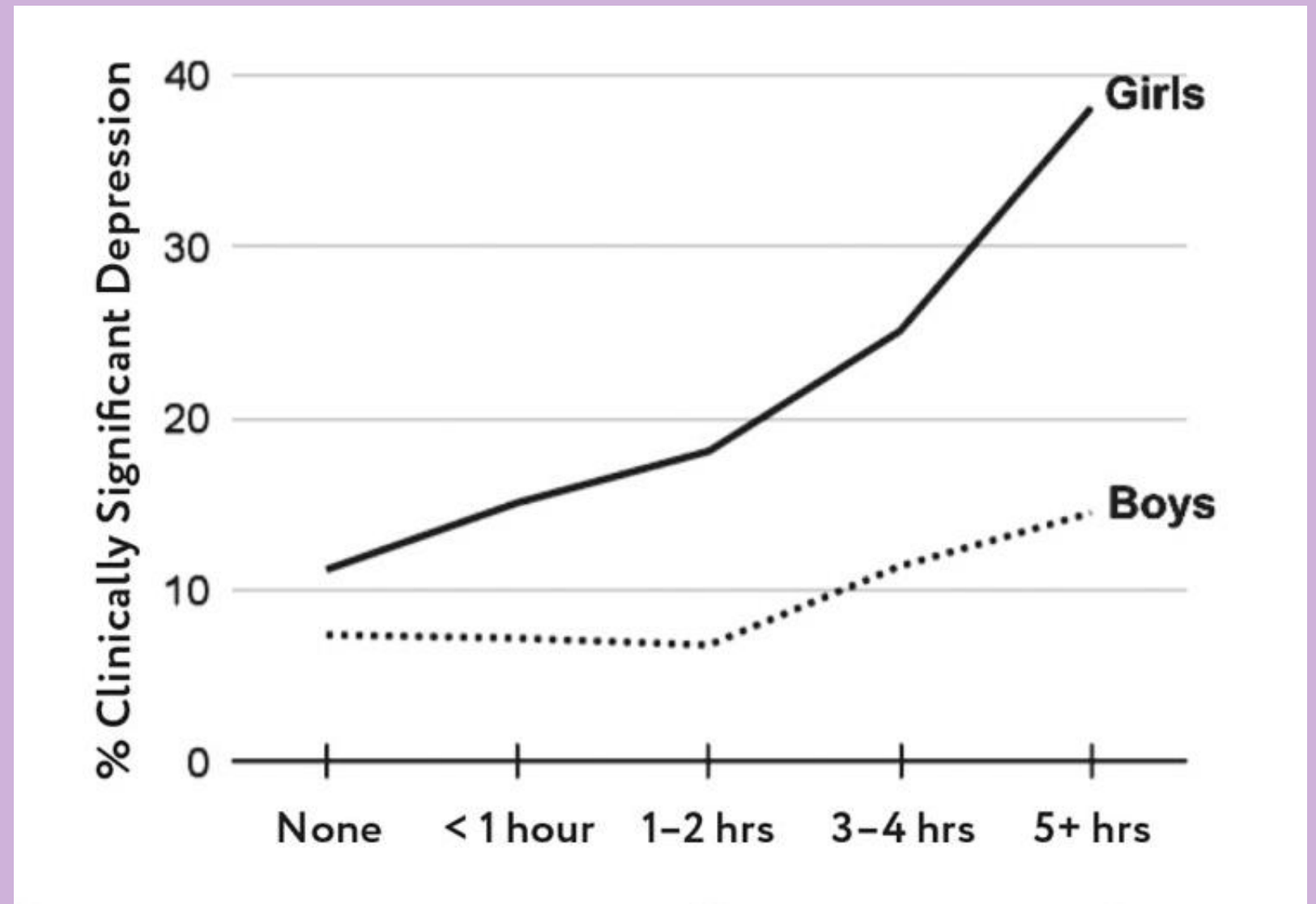
but self-harm has increased:

↑ 93%

Mental health



Depression by social media use, UK



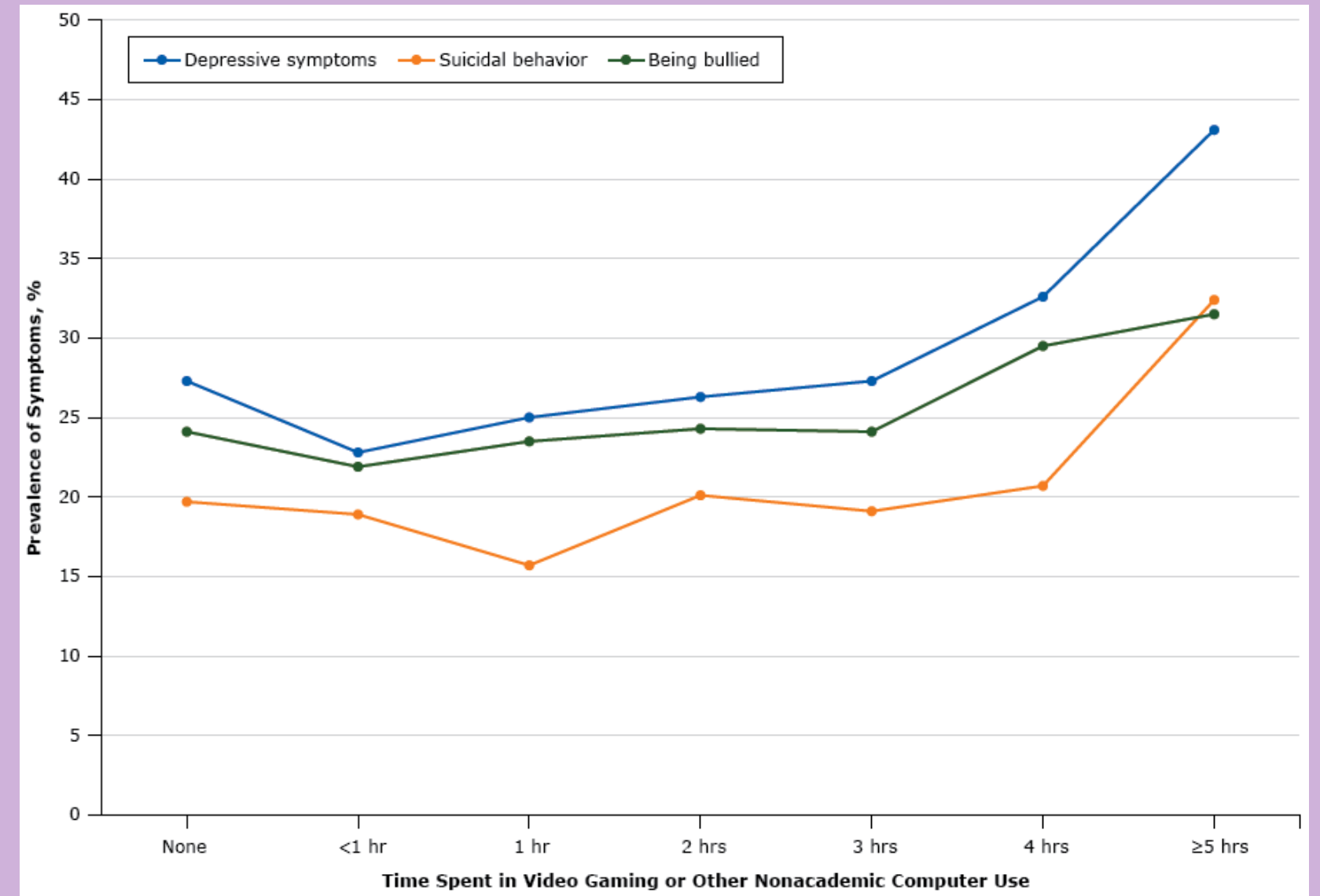
MILLENNIUM COHORT STUDY

Figures from The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt

Mental health



Depression use gaming, USA



aHogan H. Lee¹; Jung Hye Sung, Sc.D.²; Ji-Young Lee, MSPH³; Jae Eun Lee, Differences by Sex in Association of Mental Health With Video Gaming or Other Nonacademic Computer Use Among US Adolescents. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2017;14:170151. DOI:

Why?



Social isolation and loneliness



Cyberbullying, grooming,
inappropriate content



Opportunity costs, loss of
other interests and sleep



Self-esteem



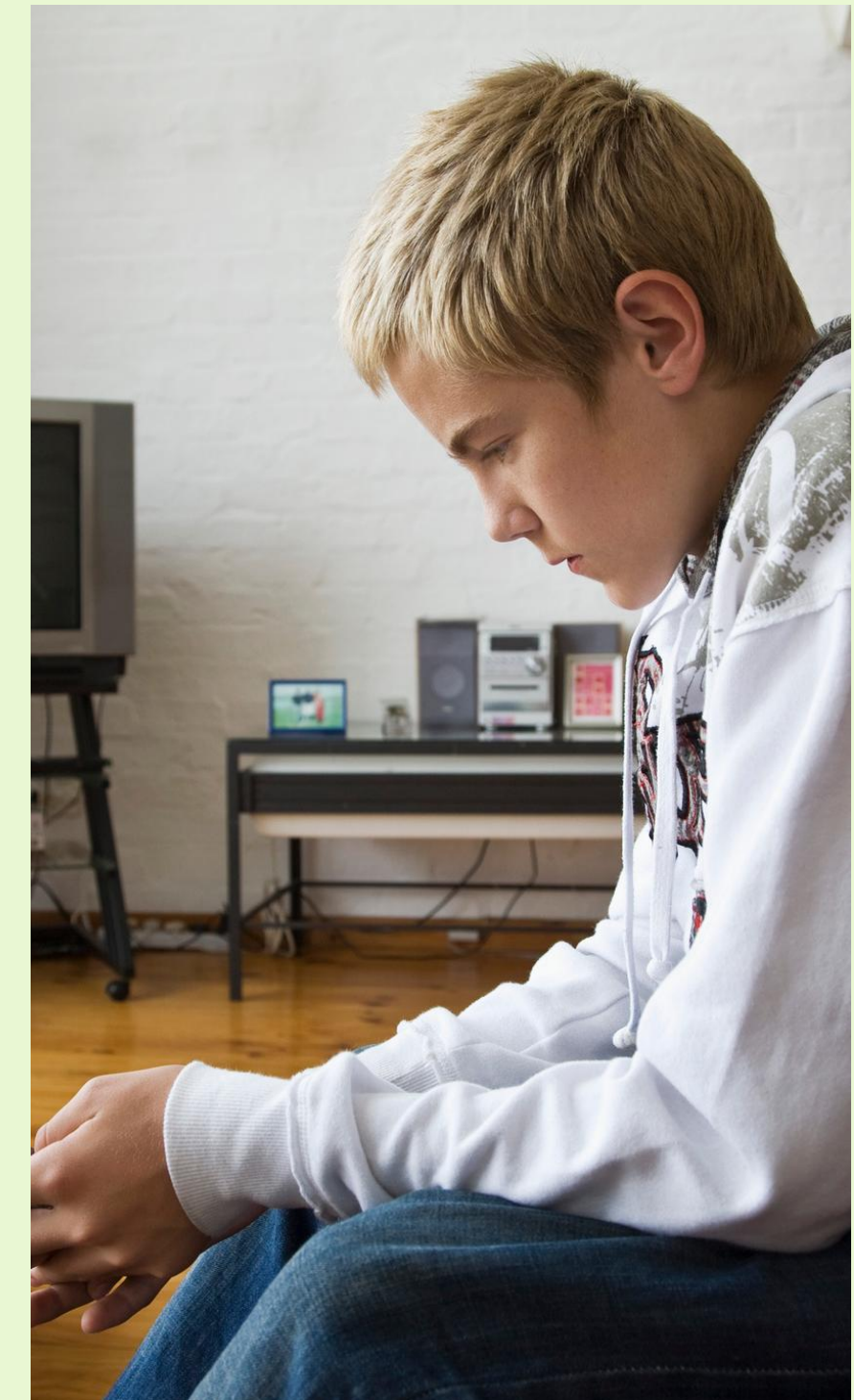
Comparison



Pornography



Gaming

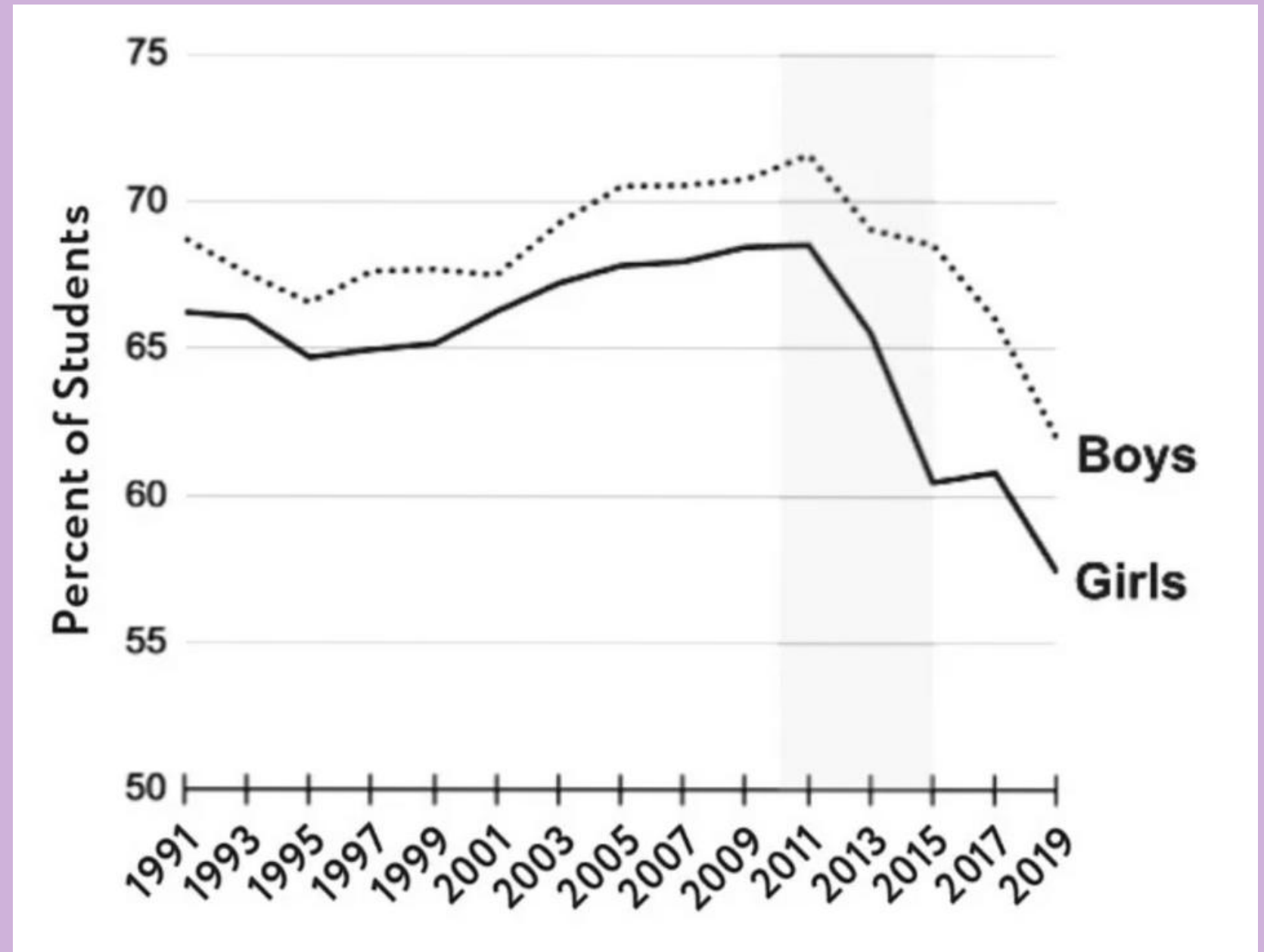


Comparison

“

Young people are comparing their real selves with other peoples' curated images and highlight reels.

Satisfied with Oneself



MONITORING THE FUTURE

Figure from The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt

Loneliness



13-17 year olds
are the loneliest group
in society.

1 in 5 teens
report feeling lonely, with
significant negative
impacts on health,
education and well-being.

*W.H.O., From loneliness to social connection:
charting a path to healthier societies 2025

What are they seeing?

The average first exposure to porn is 12 whilst doing their homework

Rothman, E. F. (2021). Pornography and public health. Oxford University Press

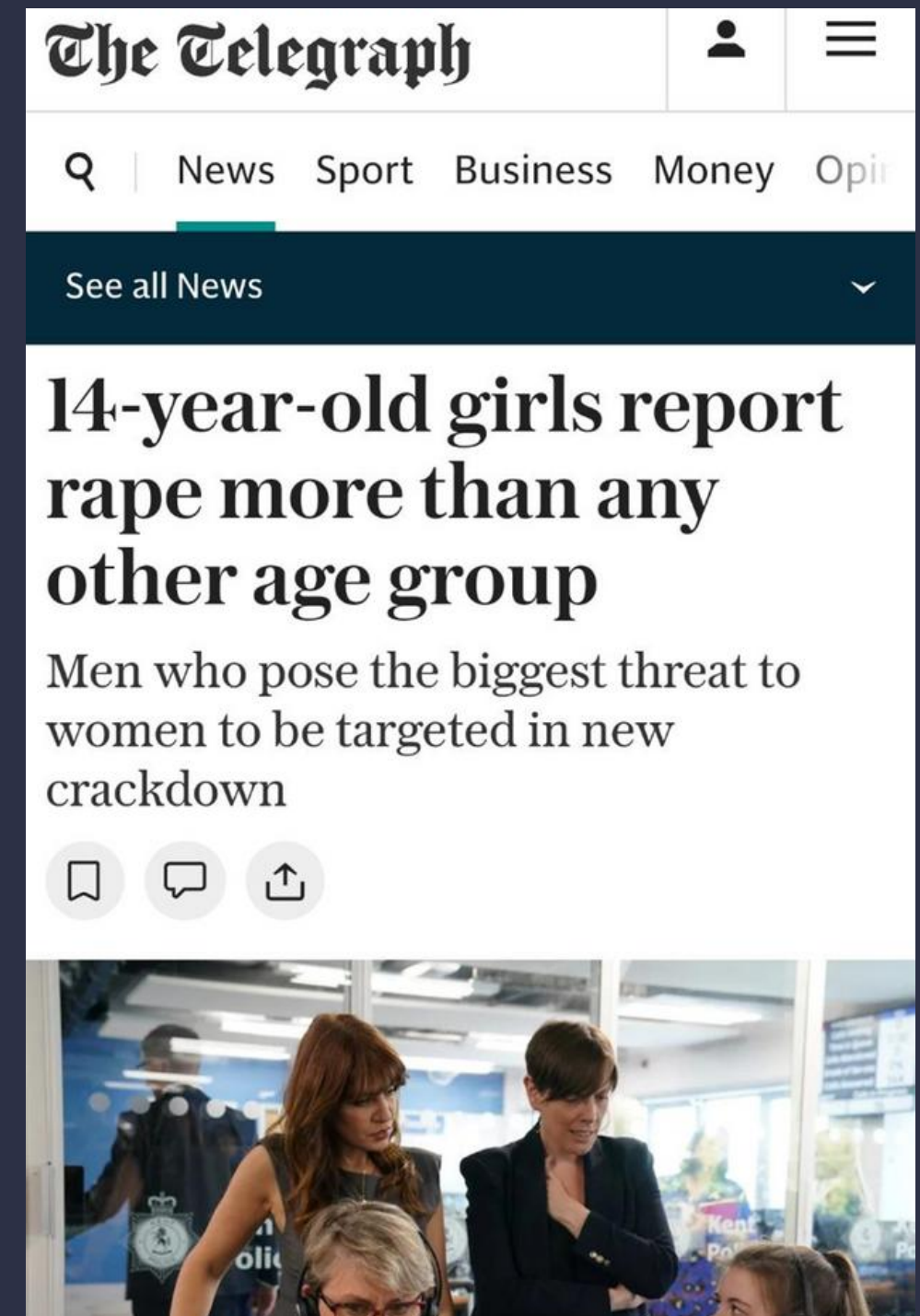
94% of children are exposed to porn by 14.

Middlesex University report for NSPCC and the children's Commissioner

The impact of Extreme Content?

“[The NCA] has seen a six-fold increase in reports of Child Online Abuse-related crimes in the last two years...We've seen thousands of users exchanging millions of messages around physical and sexual abuse online.”

James Babbage, Director General of Threats at the NCA, Sky News, 25 March 2025
Telegraph, 24 September 2024



What are they seeing?

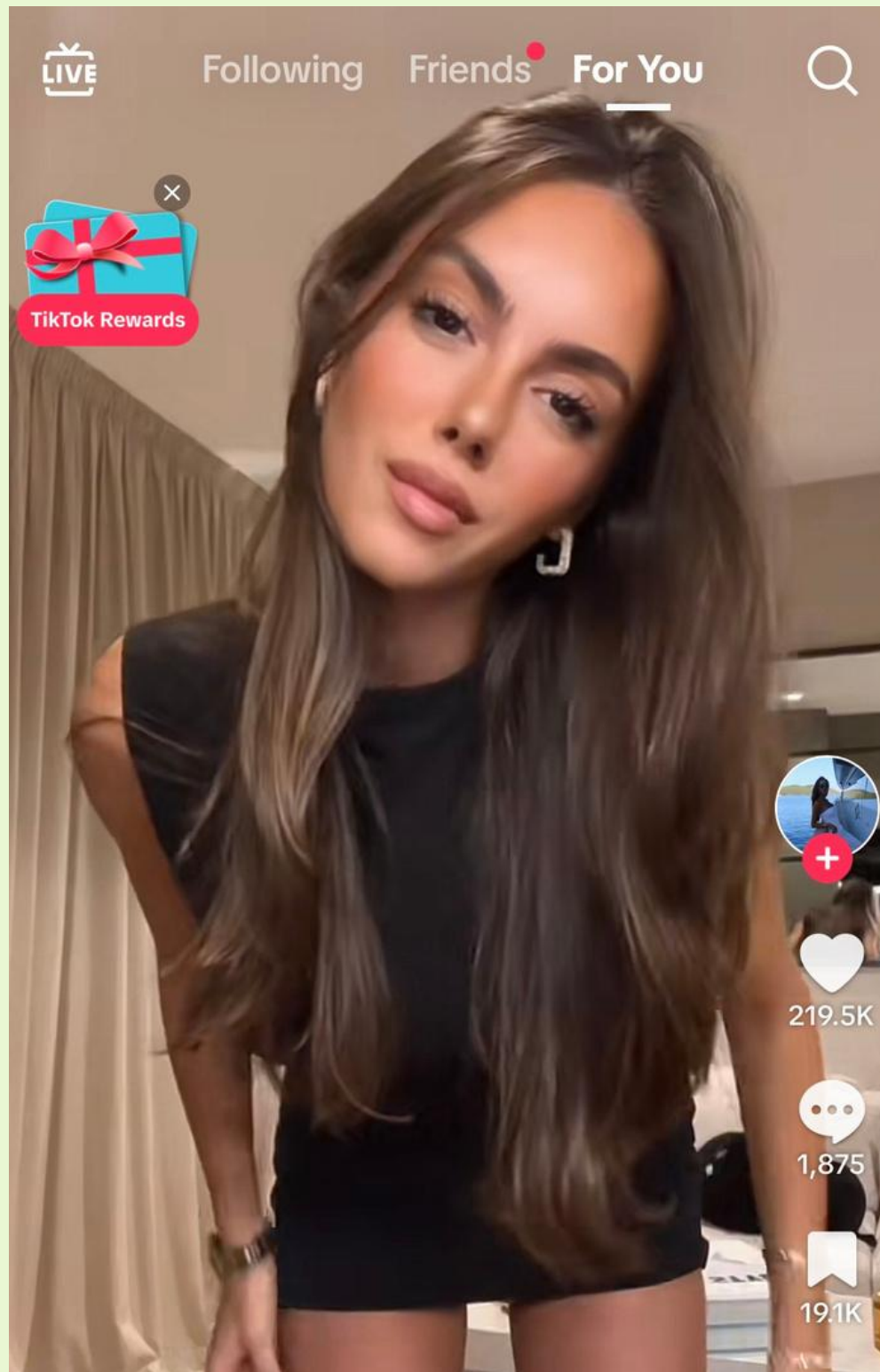
The Children's Commissioner
Rachel de Souza spoke to a
class of 15-year-olds:

75%

Had seen a beheading video

*Digital childhoods: a survey of children and parents – Children's
Commissioner for England, 2022.

The TikTok Experiment



01.
Dummy accounts set up for 13-year-old girls

02.
Content about suicide shown within 3 minutes

03.
Content about eating disorder content
shown within 8 minutes

04.
TikTok's algorithm delivered content
promoting self-harm and eating disorders
every 39 seconds to vulnerable users

CHATBOT 'FRIENDS': DANGER IS TWOFOLD

character.ai



Say Hi to
My AI!



Need someone
to talk to?

I've been
missing you...

1. NATURE OF THE ADVICE

- Exposure to harmful content.
- Encouragement of harmful behaviour.

2. NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP

- Emotional manipulation & grooming.
- Detrimental social & cognitive development.



FRICTIONLESS = FALSE



71%

of vulnerable children use AI chatbots

26%

26% prefer talking to a chatbot over a real person

1 in 5
children
are bullied
online

*Online bullying in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk), 2023.

*Ditch the label, The Wireless report , 2017

Of those bullied:

75%

were adversely affected

24%

Self harm as a result

Gaming

- 01 Reward
 - 02 Purpose
 - 03 Social connection
-

↑100%

Gaming can result in 100% increase in dopamine. Overtime, you can develop dopamine depletion making it harder to enjoy real life.



Gaming

83%

of 12-15 years olds
game online

Uswitch 2024

3-4%

of gamers develop gaming
disorder. 327,600-436,800
UK children.

Online Nation 2021 report ([ofcom.org.uk](https://www.ofcom.org.uk))

Some heavy gamers can develop gaming disorder. This is when a gamer can't stop despite trying, has lost interest in other hobbies, and experiences negative impacts on their life due to gaming.



FRAGMENTATION OF ATTENTION



Our attention and deep contemplation — has become increasingly fragmented, divided across multiple channels, and persistently interrupted.

Attention is the foundation of higher-order cognition—without sustained focus, students cannot engage with complex texts, follow extended arguments, solve difficult problems, or create original work (Wu 2022).

Sleep

Pre-teens lose the equivalent
of a nights sleep per week to
social media

73%

of teenagers take their phone to
bed with them

Physical health

*BMJ, 2023

*British Journal of Ophthalmology 2024

1/3

Almost a third of children who live in the most deprived areas of England have obesity by the time they leave primary school

30%

Childhood myopia has increased from 24% in 1990 to 36% in 2023. 30% higher risk of developing myopia from excessive screen time on smart devices

The opportunity costs

*Oxford Home Schooling and Tuition, 2022

*The Raising the Nation Play Commission, 2025

x2

Children spend
twice as long
looking at screens
as playing outside

↓ 50%

Children's outdoor
playtime has
halved in a
generation

We have overprotected our
children in the real world while
underprotecting them online

JONATHAN HAIDT





LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR KIDS AND THEIR TECH

SOLUTIONS

What can we do?

Top tips



If you can, consider delaying the smartphone for as long as possible

If your child does have a phone, focus on healthy boundaries and staying safer online

Children without smart phones

“
Everyone else
in my class
has
a phone...”

Delay the smartphone

Consider a more basic device

Talk to other parents

This is your superpower! Just because your child says everyone else has x doesn't mean they do

Model good habits

Our relationship with our phones influences children's view of healthy phone use

Harder at first...benefits felt later on



More time

Longer childhood

Better sleep

Better mental health

Better self-esteem

Less comparison with others

Improved concentration and focus

Stronger connections with peers

Less exposure to harmful content

Improved physical health

What are the pros
and cons of smartphones,
social media and gaming?

What do you like or dislike
about how we currently
use technology?

Why do you want
a smartphone?

What do we
value most about
our family?

Young adolescents

My elder son/ daughter
already has a phone...



We know so much more about the
harms now it's ok to do thing differently

We live in a digital age, children need
to be able to use technology...



No child is learning meaningful skills for the
future on social media or group chat

But my child needs a smartphone
for train tickets and bus tickets...



You can still buy tickets in person. Debit cards
for kids: Rooster, Go Henry, etc.

I need a smartphone to track my child...



You can use an air tag (or similar)
to track your child

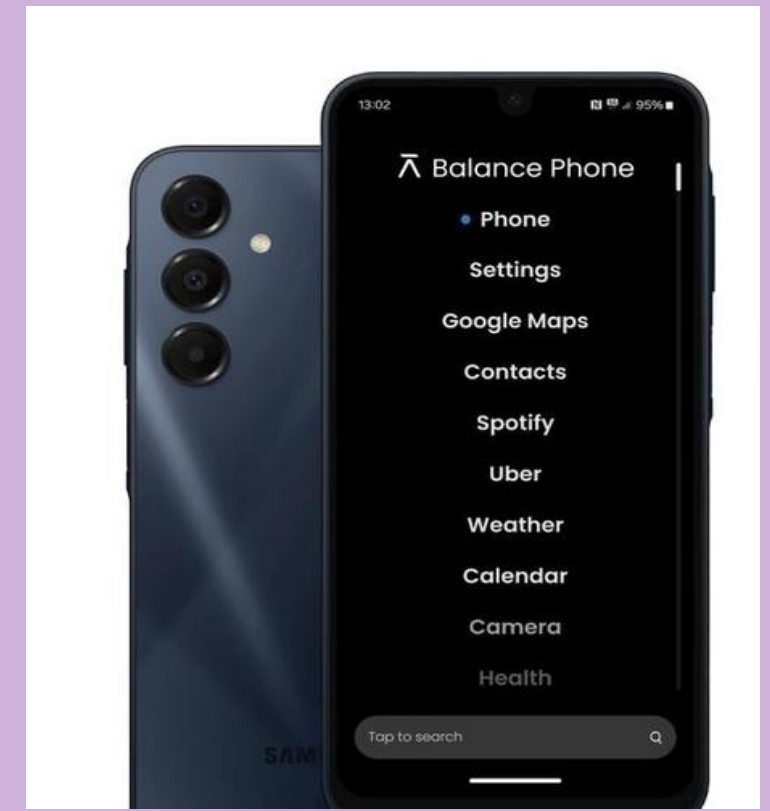
Can't we just use a stripped back
iPhone with parental controls?



You can, but most parental control
settings are easy to bypass

Basic devices allow children to connect with others via text and calls.

New models all the time



Alternatives

Younger kids

Nokia 2660 Flip

Karri Messenger

Xplora kids smartwatch

XploraOne phone

Older Kids

The Phone+ (only calls & text)

Pinwheel phone

Balance Phone

HMD Fusion or Fuse

Light phone II (hipster phone)



AGE APPROPRIATE APPS



What is the age limit for social media apps?

COMING IN 2027:

16!



Kids with smartphones: Reduce exposure



Delay apps & screentime limits

Set app limits and schedule downtime.
Use Do Not Disturb mode.
Try the Forest app.

Reduce distraction

Turn it off and keep it out of sight.
Reduce push notifications, delete or
hide distracting apps.

Create screen-free times & spaces

Keep devices out of bedrooms.
Avoid devices during meals.
AND....

Top tips: Preventative Action



Control downloads & apps

Control software and app downloads with a password. Use [InternetMatters.org](https://www.InternetMatters.org) to review and set up apps. Increase privacy settings.

Block adult content

Turn off explicit material (in apps, broadband, and data plans). Watch out for VPNs, relays, and private browsers.

Parental controls & monitoring

Use parental control software (e.g., Google Family Link, Norton Family, or Qustodio).



LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR KIDS AND THEIR TECH

Parental Control Software

BASIC

The tools you need for core protection.

£39.95/year

SAME AS £3.33/MONTH

Buy now

Basic includes:

✓ Games & apps blocking

✓ Daily time limits

✓ Web filtering

✓ Location monitoring

✓ Pause internet access

COMPLETE

Advanced safety features with full customization.

£69.95/year

SAME AS £5.83/MONTH

Buy now

Complete includes:

✓ Games & apps blocking

✓ Daily time limits

✓ Web filtering

✓ Location monitoring

✓ Pause internet access

✓ AI-powered alerts

✓ Social monitoring

✓ Custom routines

✓ App insights

✓ Games & apps time limits

✓ Calls & messages monitoring*

✓ Unlimited devices*

MOST POPULAR

Free

Apple Screenime
& Google Family Link

Mid

e.g. Norton Family

Expensive

e.g. Qustodio

Qustodio is the premium product using a VPN for extensive controls.



National (UK)

190,483

Children signed up

16,106

Schools covered

Sign the Pact

Find your school

PARENT PACT

Live leaderboards

← Bedfordshire

Linslade Lower School

Leopold Road, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 2QU

32

Children signed up



BEDFORDSHIRE LEADERBOARD

The Hills Academy, MK41 9AT ↗	103	23%
Brookmead School, LU7 9EX ↗	96	30%
Bromham CofE Primary School, MK43 8NR ↗	53	11%
Wootton Primary School, MK43 9JT ↗	46	
Biggleswade Academy, SG18 8JU ↗	42	4%
Castle Newnham School, MK40 3EP ↗	35	
St Andrew's CofE VC Primary School, SG18 OLY ↗	33	4%
Linslade Lower School, LU7 2QU ↗	32	18%

Brookmead School, LU7 9EX ↗	96	30%
The Hills Academy, MK41 9AT ↗	103	23%
Linslade Lower School, LU7 2QU ↗	32	18%
Cheddington Combined School, LU7 ORG ↗	25	12%
Bromham CofE Primary School, MK43 8NR ↗	53	11%
Orchard School & Nursery, MK45 4RB ↗	9	10%
Turvey Primary School, MK43 8DY ↗	9	10%
St Michael's Church of England Combined School, LU7 OHA ↗	19	10%

Year / Age	Pacts
Pre-school (age 2 - 3)	1
Pre-school (age 3 - 4)	5
Reception (age 4 - 5)	3
Year 1 (age 5 - 6)	8
Year 2 (age 6 - 7)	4
Year 3 (age 7 - 8)	5
Year 4 (age 8 - 9)	6

Buy the book!
FREE POSTAGE via
www.thehealthyselfie.co.uk
or the QR code



GREAT
FOR
TEENS &
TWEENS

By Dr Susie Davies, Founder of Papaya



LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR KIDS AND THEIR TECH

Extra Resources

www.papayataalks.com/after

Link to slides, feedback form, chance to donate and smartphone alternatives.



The Anxious Generation
by Jonathan Haidt

The Healthy Selfie
by Dr Susie Davies

papayataalks.com

smartphonefreechildhood.org

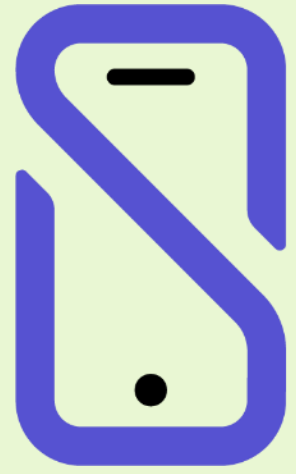
healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org



Encourage your school to register for
the Smartphone Free Schools rating.

smartphonefreerating.org

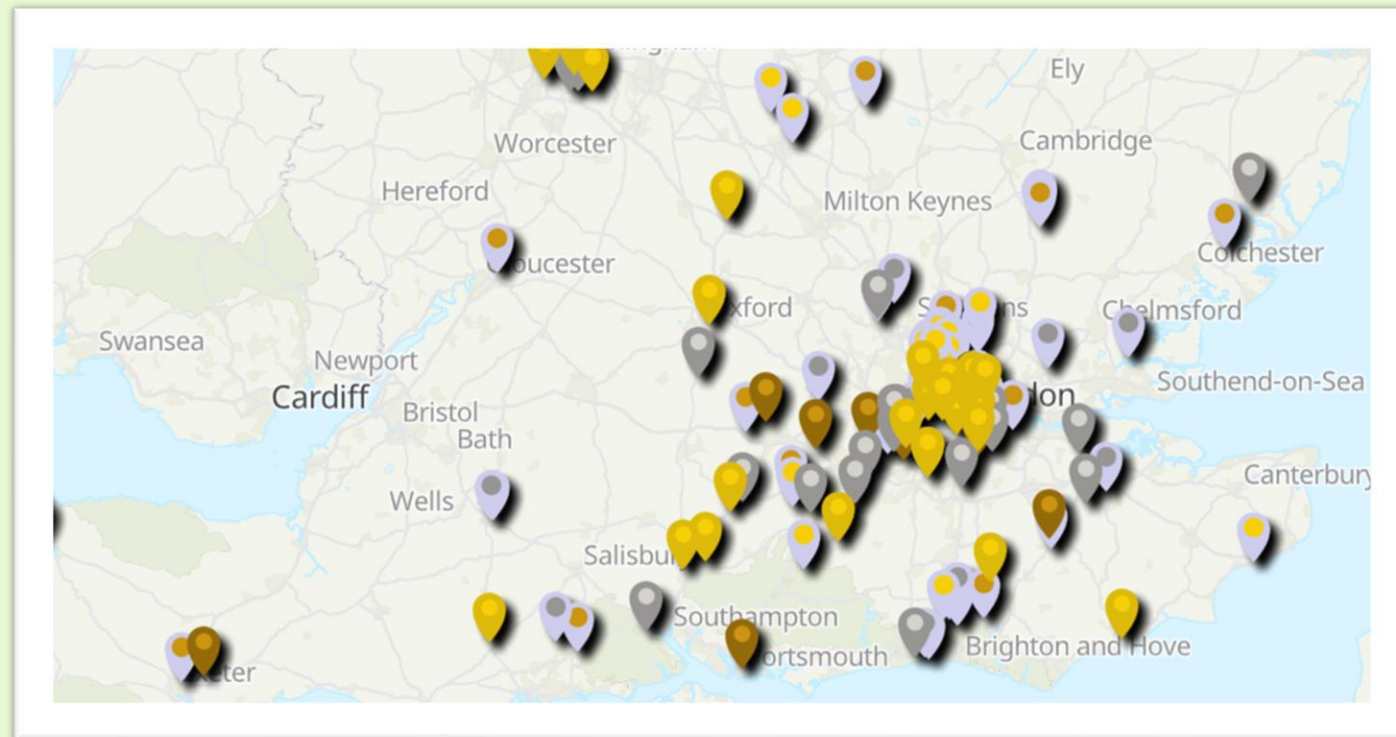
BREAKING NEWS: GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON SCHOOL PHONE POLICY TO BECOME LEGALLY BINDING



SMARTPHONE FREE SCHOOLS RATING

Encourage your school to register – it's free!

smartphonefreerating.org



No smartphones on site
(basic or brick phones may be allowed)



Smartphones are handed in or locked away



Smartphones are never used, but stay with pupil

We have the power



The more of you that decide something, whether that's delaying or which apps to allow, the easier it becomes.

When a minority group pushing change was below 25% of the total group, its efforts failed.

But when the committed minority reached 25%, there was an abrupt change in the group dynamic, and very quickly the majority of the population adopted the new norm.

If your child has a phone

01.

Talk to your child and other parents

02.

Set time and place boundaries (i.e. bedrooms)

03.

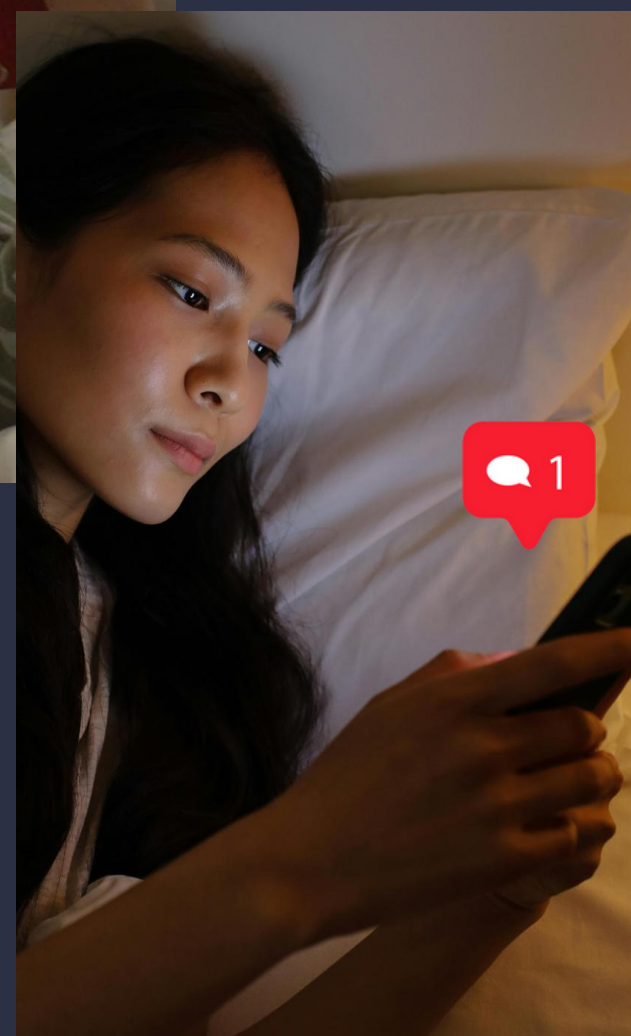
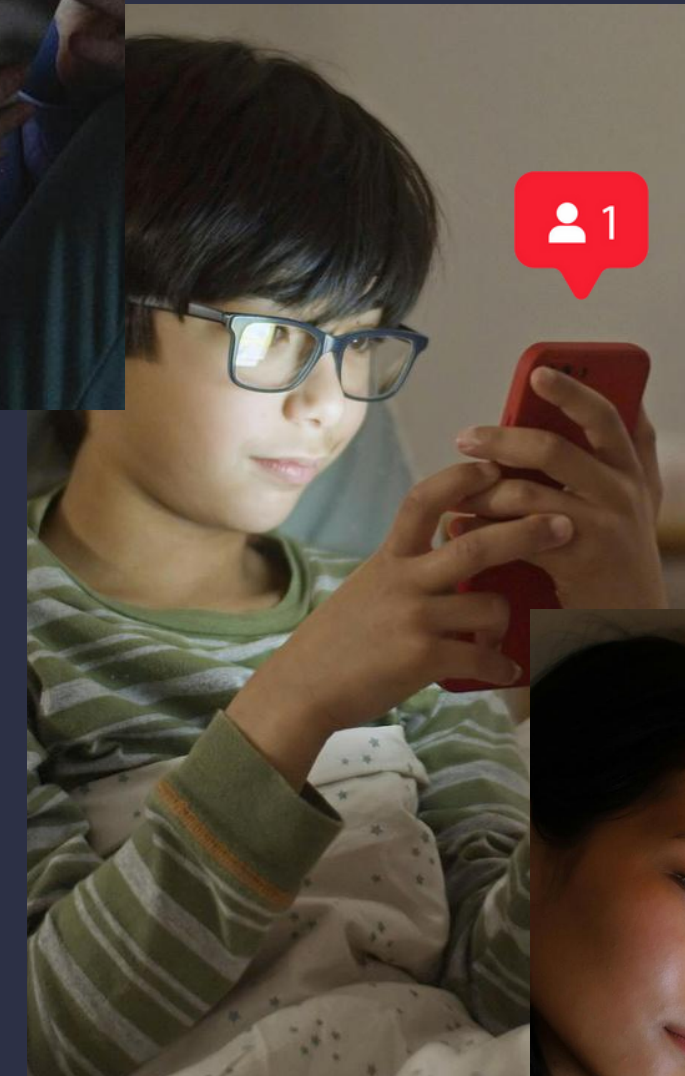
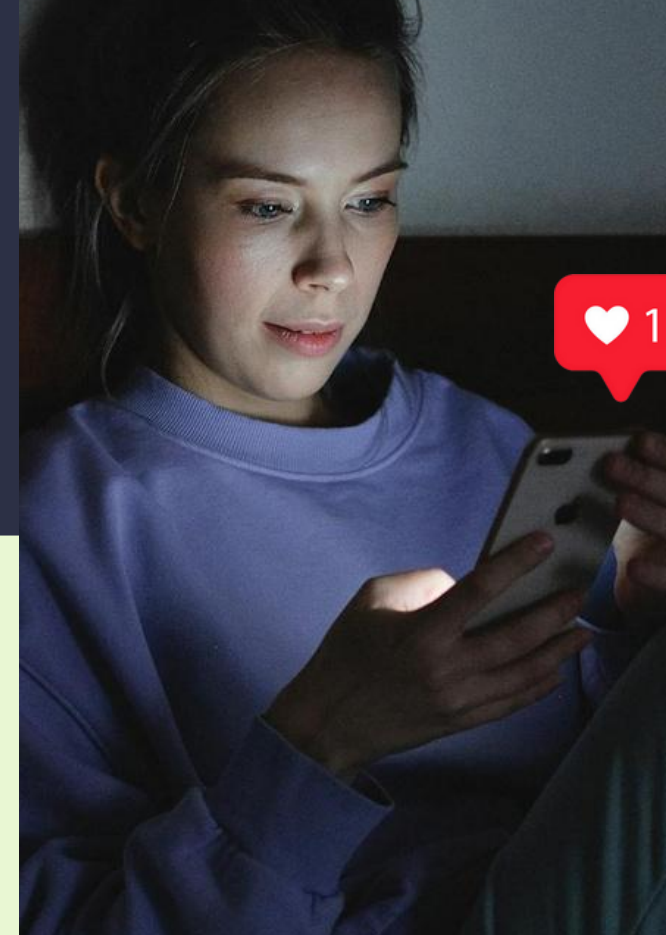
Use filters and parental control apps

04.

Encourage more things that help your child/teen forget about their phone

05.

Consider changing your mind....



Step wise progression



01. Delay the first phone.
Consider a basic device first.

02. 14+ Consider a smartphone
phone with strict controls.

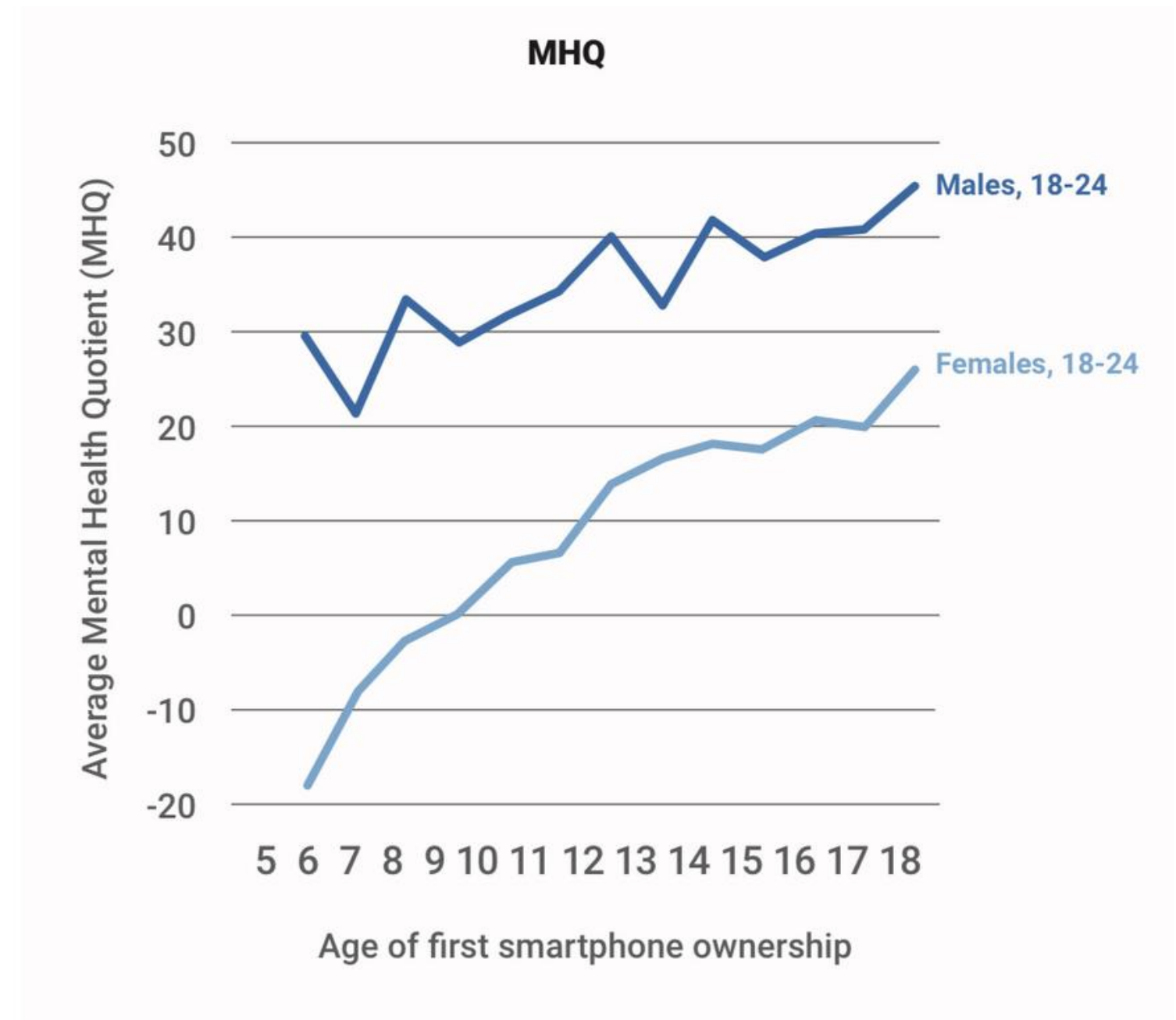
03. 16+ A cautious trial of selected
social media with private
settings and time limits.

04. Greater responsibility
and freedom online.

Mental health

Mental wellbeing improved with the older age of smartphone ownership.

The younger the age of first smartphone ownership the lower the mental health outcomes.



AGE OF FIRST SMARTPHONE/TABLET AND MENTAL WELLBEING OUTCOMES.
Sapien Labs, May 15, 2023

A background image of two children, a boy and a girl, running and playing happily in front of a brick house. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter.

You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.

C.S. LEWIS

Reflect

Are you
going to do
anything
differently
after this
talk?