

CPYU PARENT PAGE

SEP 24

HELPING PARENTS
UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS
AND THEIR WORLD



REWIRING THE REWIRING

Have you ever heard it said that “a picture is worth a thousand words?” I recently saw two pictures that speak thousands of words about the ways in which childhood has morphed and changed in recent years.

The first was a live “picture” that I witnessed as I pulled into the parking lot at a local strip mall. A mother and two of her children were emerging from the doors of a restaurant and heading to their car. Mom carried her purse in one hand and the cell phone she was focused on in her other. Her pre-teen son and elementary-aged daughter both wore large sets of brightly colored headphones over their ears, which were wired into the iPads they were carrying under their arms. There’s a good chance – a very good chance – that those electronic devices were the focus of their attention as they had eaten their meal. . . together but alone. If that was indeed the case, little or no human interaction had taken place inside, just like I was seeing now. I couldn’t help but think that this picture captured the “new normal” where researchers tell us that our kids are spending an average of over eight hours a day with their eyes locked on screens.

The second picture is one a friend showed me. “Look at this!” he said. “It’s the neighbor’s three kids playing in their driveway!” He took it, he said, because it captured something we see less and less of these days: children playing outside without any electronic devices in sight. Amazed by the rarity of what he was witnessing, he had to document it with a picture.

Those two pictures speak volumes about what social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has called “The Great Rewiring of Childhood.” In his recent book, *The Anxious Generation: How The Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, Haidt makes a compelling case regarding the many negative consequences of the transition from children growing up through a “play-based childhood” of years past, to what has now become a “phone-based childhood.” A growing body of research offers clear evidence that among other negative consequences, this shift has led to a breakdown in relationships, a decline in critical thinking skills, the loss of resilience, and a rapidly rising tide of stress, anxiety, and other mental health disorders.

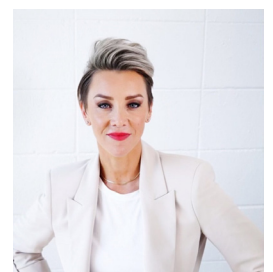
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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Yasmin London, Global Director of Digital Resilience at Qoria, in the research report “Apps Through The Ages: Young Gen Z and Alpha’s experience of a connected world,” July 2024.

“While a lot of parents worry about social media use, it’s important to keep in mind that gaming sites can be equally as dangerous with many adults using platforms designed for children. Be sure to use in-game parental controls in addition to device controls for the safest experience for your child.”



SCHOOLS WHICH ARE ALLOWING PHONES AT LUNCH SHOULD RETHINK THAT POLICY AS WELL. AFTER ALL, THE SCHOOL LUNCH HOUR IS AN IMPORTANT TIME FOR DEVELOPING SOCIALIZATION AND INTERACTIVE SKILLS.



As Christian parents, our greatest desire should be to educate our kids from the time they are born into what it means to live as a faithful follower and disciple of Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul tells the Ephesians, we are to bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). But when we give our kids almost limitless access to smartphones and other electronic devices we are actually bringing them up in the discipline (or lack thereof!) and instruction of whatever the cultural narrative is feeding them through the online world. And because it's their eyes and ears which are focused on the screens and not our own, we have no idea what they might be learning about who they are, and how they are to live in the world.

In *The Anxious Generation*, Haidt not only sounds the alarm, but he offers four concrete reforms which will serve to rewire the rewiring of childhood in healthy ways that he believes will spare our kids and our society from the dangerous fallout of life in this digital age. He doesn't demonize smartphones and other devices, but he does believe in setting limits. I think his suggestions are good ones as they employ common-sense, and if enacted can reverse damaging trends. What are they?

First, no smartphones before high school. For almost 20 years now I've had concerned parents ask me, "At what age should I get my child a smartphone?" None of us want our kids to be left out, but being left out from that which has dangerous short and long-term consequences is a good thing.

Haidt says that only basic phones with limited apps and no internet browser should be available to kids under the age of 14.

Second, no social media before 16. Haidt believes that kids need to get through the most vulnerable periods of brain development before they are connected to "a firehose of social comparison and algorithmically chosen influencers."

Third, phone-free schools. This fall, many schools are adopting this policy. They need to have their attention freed to focus on each other and their teachers. I would add that schools which are allowing phones only at lunch should rethink that policy as well. After all, the school lunch hour is an important time for developing socialization and interactive skills.

Finally, far more unsupervised play and childhood independence. It's those backyard baseball games, hikes in the woods, and driveway activities that are foundational to building resilience and for developing the skills needed to manage interpersonally throughout life.

Enacting these ideas won't cost you a dime. In fact, you'll be saving money. What they *will* cost you is your time. But what a blessing it will be to recover the kind of time that will increase your parental influence as you fulfill this high calling and privilege of nurturing our children in the Christian faith!

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

EROTIC LITERATURE

It's no secret that the arrival of the internet, the smartphone, and social media have made pornography easily accessible to all kids.

Perhaps you've already seen and heard the evidence about the addictive nature of visual pornography, among both our boys and our girls. The folks at defendyoungminds.com are now sounding the warning about the proliferation of pornographic literature among our teenage girls, and what it's not only doing to their minds, but to their beliefs and behaviors regarding God's good gift of sexuality. The exposure to and use of erotic lit and lit porn is a gateway into pornography and the desensitization and sexualization that is taking place in our young girls. Parents, we encourage you to monitor what your kids are reading, along with what they are looking at online. Talk to your kids about the addictive and destructive nature of pornography, along with God's good and glorious design for their sexuality. They are sexual beings, so nurture them properly.

TRENDS:

Smellmaxxing

When you were younger, did you ever pull a stool up to the medicine cabinet in your grandparent's bathroom in order to grab your grandfather's Old Spice decanter or your grandmother's perfume and splash on a healthy dose? Getting away with it was difficult because everyone could smell the evidence of what you had done. In today's world, Old Spice and other cheaper cologne brands like it are now frowned upon by our kids. Thanks to a new viral TikTok trend, what's called *smellmaxxing* has boys as young as 10 spending large amounts of money on designer colognes. Piper Sandler reports that teen boys' annual spending on fragrances jumped 26% last year. The trend is being fueled by people like the young TikTok influencer known as The Cologne Boy who has well over a million followers. And once some kids buy in, peer influence leads others to follow. This new trend offers parents an opportunity to talk about identity, financial stewardship, and the trap of coolness.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Hypertension

Parents, as you help your kids learn how to steward their God-given bodies to His glory by maintaining their health, you need to keep in mind some new research findings from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia regarding our kids and high blood pressure. Hypertension is a health issue here in the U.S., and you might be surprised to learn that it's not

just a problem for adults.

One in seven kids ages 12-19 have hypertension. Traditionally, doctors have blamed being overweight and a lack of physical exercise as causal factors. But now, they are citing an additional cause: lack of adequate sleep. Did you know kids under the age of six need 10-13 hours of sleep per night for healthy

growth and development? Kids ages six to twelve need 9-12 hours a night. Those ages 13-18 need eight to ten hours per night. Take stock of how much sleep your kids are getting, and be sure that their phones are removed from their rooms overnight.

QUICKSTATS

More than 9 out of 10 teens say that they engage with YouTube, with 71% of all teens saying that they engage with YouTube on a daily basis. 16% say they are on YouTube almost constantly, 38% are on it several times and day, and 17% about once a day.

(Pew Research Center)

One school district in Virginia found that about a third of the district's teachers were telling kids to put their phones away 5 to 10 times during a class period. 15% had to do so more than 20 times a class.

(The Northern Virginia Daily)

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MOST POPULAR APPS

1. Roblox
2. YouTube
3. Amazon Shopping
4. Netflix
5. X
6. Disney+
7. Reddit
8. Spotify
9. Minecraft
10. Facebook

Among 7-9 Year-Olds

Source:
Qustodio
July 2024



PARENTAL SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

by WALT MUELLER

I recently read these words from pastor Alistair Begg: "No church of Jesus Christ progresses beyond the spiritual progress of its leaders." While those words are important for those in church leadership, I got to thinking about just how true they also are for leadership in the home. As parents, we can restate Begg's words this way: "No family that hopes to disciple and nurture kids into following Jesus Christ, progresses beyond the spiritual progress of its parents."

As a father and grandfather, these words are not only convicting to me, but they force me into a process of self-examination. Parents, I would encourage us all to take an accounting of how and where we are spending our time. What is it that grabs and holds our focus? Ask yourself this, "Am I investing my time into my own spiritual growth and development?"

The truth is that your kids are watching you and learning from you. Who you are is just as important as what you say. Your growth is a prerequisite to the spiritual growth of your kids.

FROM THE WORD

When you read about the many different characters in the Bible, some of the greatest lessons we can learn are the lessons about our shared human nature. While we might look at the flaws in those we read about and think that “I would never do anything like that!”, the reality is that we are prone to the exact same things, and there but for the grace of God go each one of us. In other words, one aspect of reading these stories is to take them as personal warnings which give insight into our shared human nature.

Take some time to read the story of the Israelites and the golden calf in Exodus 32. Impatient while waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain, they asked Aaron to make them a god to worship. Aaron complied, collecting their gold jewelry to melt down and turn into this golden idol, which the people then worshipped.

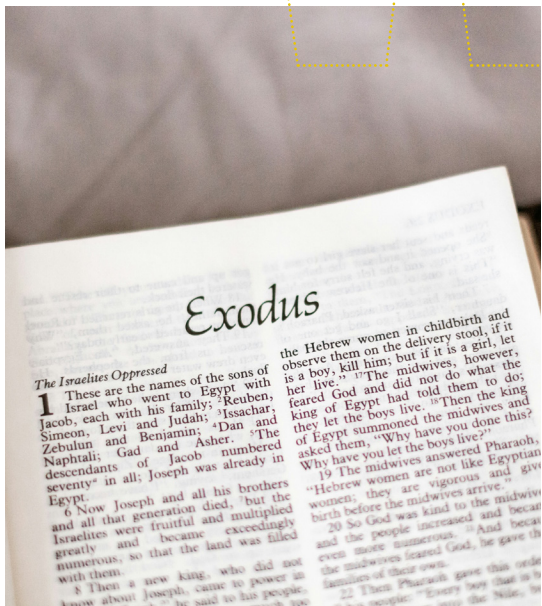
“And Moses said to Aaron, ‘What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?’”

Exodus 32:21

One of the takeaways in this story is found in the frustrated “What have you done?!” response of Moses to Aaron:

“What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?” Specifically, Moses is telling Aaron that compromising that which is right in order to satisfy the sinful desires of those under our care is not an option.

Parents, your kids will push on you, sometimes relentlessly, to have you compromise and cave into their desires. Sometimes it’s easier to give in rather than continue to stand firm. When compromise results in leading them into sin, we have forsaken our responsibility to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Hold your ground in order to keep them from sin.



PODCAST



Youth Culture Today with Walt Mueller is a one-minute daily radio show and podcast from CPYU.

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BROKEN CHILDREN SOVEREIGN GOD

REJOICING IN GOD'S GOODNESS
AMIDST CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES
LESLIE SCHMUCKER

HELPFUL
RESOURCES



BOOK

Mental health disorders have become increasingly prevalent, especially in children and teenagers. Suicide is the 3rd highest cause of death in 15–19 year-olds around the world. This effect of the Fall has left thousands of families in despair, confusion, and impotent desperation. Leslie Schmucker knows this all too well.

In *Broken Children, Sovereign God: Rejoicing in God's Goodness Amidst Childhood Mental Health Struggles*, Leslie encourages other parents who find themselves in a similar situation. She explores different aspects of her and her family's experience with their daughter, Jackie. Through violence and mayhem, joy and hope, intense isolation, shame and confusion, Leslie's honest testimony to the goodness of God is humbling.

Leslie's testimony is split into four sections:

- Comfort from the God who Knows
- Sufficiency in the Fallout
- Guidance in the Storm
- Hope for the Journey

Life in our post-Fall world is not always neat, not every story looks like a success, but Leslie shows us how the gospel is for every situation, the love of God is for everyone, and He can be trusted to write our stories. Whether you are raising a child with a mental health disorder or not, this book will challenge your comfortable Christianity and show you a love beyond measure.