The Anxious Generation

Thought and Action Starters for Educators

I wrote *The Anxious Generation* with a firm belief that the challenges confronting our children and our families are solvable. However, addressing these challenges requires understanding the traps we have fallen into, so we can see the escape routes. The main escape routes are four new norms, four steps that are hard for any one family to do on its own, but they become much easier if we can coordinate and act together. The book and the website (anxiousgeneration.com) are designed to facilitate discussion among friends, family, book clubs, educators, and communities, in order to change norms and reclaim human life for all generations. This guide offers conversation starters as well as some actions you can take on your own or with a few colleagues.

– Jon Haidt

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Thought Starters

Technology:

1. The book says that today we *overprotect children and adolescents in the real world and underprotect them in the virtual world*. Do you see this happening? Where?

2. What problems do smartphones and social media solve in your school/classroom, and what problems do they create? What about screens more broadly (e.g., Chromebooks)?

3. Do you have any tech rules in your school/classroom? Do they work?

4. What school-wide tech rules would you implement if given the opportunity and why?

5. How do students' online activities (outside your classroom) impact what happens inside your classroom?

6. Do smartphones influence the way parents are involved in your school/classroom and your teaching approach? If yes, how?

Play:

7. The book says that one problem with a phone-based childhood is that it replaces the hours children would otherwise spend playing in the real world: "Children are, in a sense, deprived of childhood." Do you agree? What exactly are kids missing out on?

8. What did you get from "just playing" as a kid? What benefits do you think your students would gain if allowed more time to "just play"?

9. "Free play" means kids of different ages playing without adults organizing their activities or even intervening, except in emergencies. What reservations do you have about allowing your students to play this way?

10. How can you give your students more opportunities for mixed-age free play?

Independence:

11. What are some things you do for your students that they could start doing for themselves?

12. What are some things you do for your students or school that your students could start doing for you?

13. How can you give your students more opportunities to be part of the real world as opposed to the virtual one? In what ways could you encourage the parents of your students to do the same?

14. How would an increased sense of responsibility and independence benefit your students?

For You:

15. What problems do smartphones, social media, and screens solve in your own life, and what problems do they create?

16. Do you have any tech rules for yourself? Do they work?

17. What would you like to change, if anything, about your own relationship with smartphones and social media? What about video games and other screen-based activities?

18. How are you different online and offline?

Overall:

19. In what ways can we better prepare our students to wisely navigate the virtual world?

20. In what ways can we better prepare our students to wisely navigate the real world?

21. Would you want to grow up the way today's students are growing up? Why or why not? What are some benefits of growing up today? What would you want to preserve/carry forward from your own upbringing?

22. What actions can you take, alone or with allies, to lessen your students' time spent in the virtual world and increase their opportunities for fun and responsibility in the physical world?

Some Possible Actions You Can Take

Technology:

1. Partner up with a few other colleagues to advocate that your school go phone-free.

2. Consider setting more tech boundaries in your classroom.

- ○ For example, consider updating grade portals only once a week so that parents and students are less likely to spend each day checking and waiting for grades on quizzes and assignments.
- ○ Consider abstaining from posting behavior points and demerits, leaving the topic of a child's behavior for in-person discussions at parent-teacher night, not a daily record.

3. Leave your own smartphone locked away when you are teaching.

Play:

4. Partner up with a few other colleagues to advocate for longer recess and a mixed-age, phone-free Let Grow Play Club before and/or after school.

Independence:

5. Ask your students to start doing one thing inside the classroom that will help you.

6. Assign The Let Grow Experience, a homework assignment that asks kids to start doing something new on their own (with parental permission).

Collective action requires inspiration! If you take any of these actions and would like to share what happened next, please send your story (and/or photo or video) to: anxiousgeneration.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

anxiousgeneration.com

Substacks:
After Babel, Jon Haidt
Designing Tomorrow, The Neely Center
Techno Sapiens, Jacqueline Nesi, PhD
Of Boys and Men, Richard V. Reeves
Generation Tech, Jean M. Twenge
GIRLS, Freya India
Play Makes Us Human, Peter Gray
The Eternally Radical Idea, Greg Lukianoff

Books:
The Coddling of the American Mind, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt
Free-Range Kids, Lenore Skenazy
The Happiness Hypothesis, Jonathan Haidt
The Righteous Mind, Jonathan Haidt
The Canceling of the American Mind, Greg Lukianoff and Rikki Schlott
Awe, Dacher Keltner
Dopamine Nation, Anna Lembke, MD
Generations, Jean M. Twenge, PhD
iGen, Jean M. Twenge, PhD
How to Have a Good Day, Caroline Webb
Indistractable, Nir Eyal with Julie Li
A Nation of Wimps, Hara Estroff Marano
The Opposite of Spoiled, Ron Lieber
Urban Playground, Tim Gill
When Men Behave Badly, David M. Buss
The Age of Addiction, David T. Courtwright
Of Boys and Men, Richard V. Reeves
Unwired, Gaia Berstein
The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, Shoshana Zuboff
The End of Men, Hanna Rosin
Boys Adrift, Leonard Sax, MD, PhD
Free to Learn, Peter Gray
Outrage Machine, Tobias Rose-Stockwell
Untangled, Lisa Damour, PhD
Stolen Focus, Johann Hari
Deep Work, Cal Newport
Digital Minimalism, Cal Newport
The Gardener and the Carpenter, Alison Gopnik
The Disappearance of Childhood, Neil Postman
Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, Marshall McLuhan
Paranoid Parenting, Frank Furedi

Bowling Alone, Robert D. Putnam
Never Enough, Jennifer Breheny Wallace
The Emotional Lives of Teenagers, Lisa Damour, PhD
How to Raise a Healthy Gamer, Alok Kanojia, MD, MPH
The Screen Strong Solution, Melanie Hempe, BSN
Quiet, Susan Cain
The Family Firm, Emily Oster
Mortal Combat, Patrick M. Markey, PhD, and Christopher J. Ferguson, PhD
Unequal Childhoods, Annette Lareau

School resources:
letgrow.org (school programs)
everyschool.org
phonefreeschoolsmovement.org

Parent resources for tech:
screenstrong.org
fairplayforkids.org
gamequitters.com
screentimenetwork.org
waituntil8th.org
healthygamer.gg
protectyoungeyes.com
delaysmartphones.co.uk
lookupnonprofit.com
smart-families.org
oktodelay.org
getmediasavvy.org
smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk
screensanity.org
wearemama.squarespace.com
parentssos.org

Parent resources for play and independence:
letgrow.org
outsideplay.org
montanawildernessschool.org
nifplay.org
nols.edu
onbeing.org
afsusa.org/study-abroad
americanexchangeproject.org
outwardbound.org
wildernessadventures.com
ycamp.org/wilderness-trips
boystomen.org/

Gen Z resources:
designitforus.org
gamequitters.com
healthygamer.gg
logoffmovement.org
nosonovember.org

Tech company resources:
humanetech.com
reset.tech

Researcher resources:
commonsense.org
aibm.org
psychoftech.org
alltechishuman.org
childrenandscreens.org
counterhate.com

Speakers:

Jon Haidt: Washington Speakers Bureau:.wsb.com/speakers/jonathan-haidt
Zach Rausch: zach-rausch.com
Lenore Skenazy: bit.ly/LenoreSpeak

See more at anxiousgeneration.com