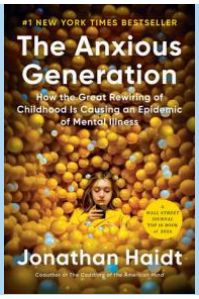
Discussion Guide



The Anxious Generation
Jonathan Haidt

Penguin Random House
2024
400 pages
ISBN: 978-0593655030

Mental Health and Social Media

Summary

In *The Anxious Generation*, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (pronounced “height”) lays out the facts about the epidemic of teen mental illness that hit many countries at the same time. He investigates the nature of childhood, including why children need play and independent exploration to mature into competent, thriving adults. He explains why social media damages girls more than boys and why boys have been withdrawing from the real world into the virtual world, with disastrous consequences for themselves, their families, and their societies.

Questions

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. 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 about this for children in general or your own? What exactly are kids missing out on?
3. Modern technology makes it very easy to track our children’s whereabouts, grades, and even behavior electronically. This can become “the world’s longest umbilical cord.” How is this beneficial? How is this detrimental?
4. What problems do smartphones, social media, and screens solve in your own life and what problems do they create?
5. How are you different online and offline?
6. Do you have any tech rules for yourself? Do they work?
7. 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?

This discussion guide has been funded in whole or in part with Federal funds from the National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH). The content is attributed to Penguin Random House and reformatted by the NNLM Reading Club for educational use and is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). September 2025

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