

# RESEARCH, ADVICE AND PRACTICAL TIPS

**“I WISH KIDS SPENT MORE  
TIME ON THEIR PHONES.”**

Said no teacher or parent, *ever.*

# WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT



- Overview of some of the latest research on the effects of social media on young people's mental health
- Concrete solutions and resources
- Invite you to continue the conversation on this in order to implement collective action
- No shame, no self-blame, no pressure
- We are not anti-tech. We love it and are deeply appreciative of it!
- Some of the content is upsetting (mentions of suicide, pornography, etc..) when giving some research on the risks and statistics

# IN TWO DECADES, EVERYTHING'S CHANGED

2004



2004

Nokias ruled!



2007

The first  
iPhone  
launches



2008

Apple app  
store opens



2012

4G launches in  
the UK,  
enabling  
internet  
everywhere



2024

89% of 12-year-  
olds own a  
smartphone,  
permanently  
connected to the  
internet via  
4g/5g

# THEY'RE NOT REALLY 'PHONES' AT ALL



## MOBILE PHONE

Make calls, send texts,  
play Snake



## POCKET SUPERCOMPUTER

24/7 access to the internet  
in your pocket

# 'EVERYONE'S GOT ONE BECAUSE EVERYONE'S GOT ONE'



**25%**

of 5-7 year olds  
in the UK own their  
own smartphone

**89%**

of 12 year-olds  
in the UK own their  
own smartphone



*SOURCE: OFCOM Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes April 24*

# PARENTS WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

**94%**

of primary school  
parents think  
smartphones  
are harmful

*Parentkind nationwide  
poll of 2,496 people,  
April 24*

**70%**

of parents believe  
smartphones  
negatives impact  
family life

*HMD poll of 10,000  
parents, June 24*

**33%**

of parents of children  
with smartphones  
have cried over their  
child's phone  
obsession

*HMD poll of 10,000  
parents, June 24*

# YOUNG PEOPLE WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

**67%**

of 16-18 year olds  
think smartphones are  
harmful

*Parentkind poll, 2024*

**1 in 5**

of 16-18 year olds  
have felt “life is not  
worth living” due to  
social media

*Parentkind poll, 2024*

**50%**

of teens say they are  
“addicted” to social  
media

*Millennium Cohort Study, 2024*

***“When kids are on their phones all day, it’s not just what they’re doing on the phone that matters — it’s what they’re not doing. They’re missing out on crucial experiences that help them grow into healthy adults.”***



***Dr Jonathan Haidt***

*Professor of Social Psychology, NYU*

# ARE WE OVERPROTECTING OUR KIDS IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND UNDER PROTECTING THEM IN THE DIGITAL WORLD?

~Susie

In the last decade there have been 70% less outdoor accidents and 93% more incidents of self harm in children... as a GP I can promise you it's much easier to mend a broken bone than a broken mind.

    24

# WE ARE NOT ANTI-PHONES... WE ARE PRO WELLBEING



## SLEEP

Bedtime use of smartphones doubles children's risk of poor sleep



## BULLYING

84% of bullying now takes place on a device



## DISTRACTIONS

On average teens are bombarded by 237 smartphone notifications a day



## ARGUMENTS

55% of parents say their child's smartphone use causes big family arguments



## ROAD SAFETY

Mobile phone distraction is a major cause of road accidents involving children



## CRIME

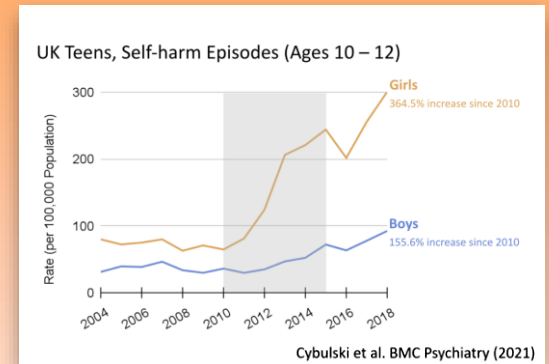
500 children a day were mugged in 2020 in the UK, almost all for smartphones

1: Jama Paediatrics, 2016; 2: Ofcom, 2022; 3: CommonSense Media, 2023; 4: HMD, 2024; 5: LookUp; 6: ONS, 2020

# MENTAL HEALTH

Rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and even suicide among teens have all dramatically spiked globally since 2010 – when children started getting smartphones.

A 2023 global study of 27,969 young adults from Sapiens Labs showed that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health today.



**3x**

Teens with problematic smartphone-use are twice as likely to have anxiety and three times as likely to have depression

King's College London, 2024

**1 in 5**

UK 16 to 18 years olds say that their social media has made them feel that 'life is not worth living'

Parentkind Poll, 2024

**53%**

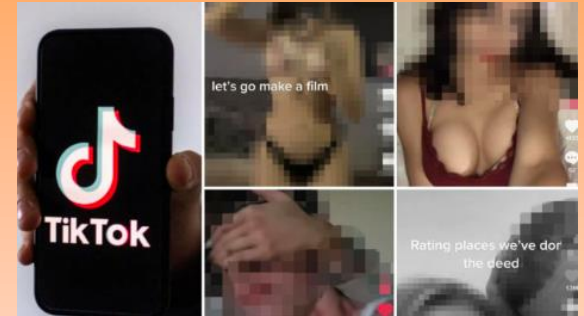
The number of children referred to emergency mental healthcare in England has soared by 53% in three years

Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2024

# WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE SEEING ONLINE?

Having unrestricted access to the internet in your pocket creates a gateway to extreme content and viewpoints that we'd never dream of exposing children to in real life.

Hardcore pornography, extreme political views, sexualised and violent imagery, trolling and material promoting suicide, self-harm and eating disorders have become part of the fabric of modern childhood.



**51%**

of UK 11-13 year-olds  
have seen hardcore  
pornography online

British Board of Film Classification Report, March 2022

**75%**

of UK 15 year olds questioned  
had been  
sent beheading videos

Digital Childhoods, children's commissioner report, 2022

**90%**

of girls and 50% of boys say  
they are sent unwanted explicit  
content

Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools, 2021

# ADDICTION

Tech companies spend billions on making apps and devices as addictive as possible because 'maximising engagement' is the fundamental objective of their business model.

So it's little wonder that many children are routinely 'spending six, seven, eight hours a day on social media – often more' (Ofcom, 2024).



**46%**

of teens say they  
are online  
"almost constantly"

Pew Research Centre, Aug 2022

**35 hours**

per week is the average time  
British teens now spend on their  
smartphone

University of Birmingham, 2025

**2 in 3**

11-17 year olds 'often' or  
'sometimes' find it difficult to  
put down  
their phone

Common Sense Media, 2023

***“Behind every screen on your phone, a thousand engineers have worked to make it maximally addicting. Children are particularly susceptible to this kind of manipulative design.”***



**Aza Raskin**

Co-inventor of ‘infinite scroll’, turned campaigner

# MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO CREATED THIS TECHNOLOGY KEEP IT AWAY FROM THEIR KIDS

STEVE JOBS

“We don’t allow the iPad in the home. We think it’s too dangerous for them”



EVAN SPIEGEL

Grew up without a TV and credits his own success on that tech restriction. Limits his kid to 1.5 hours screen time per week



BILL GATES

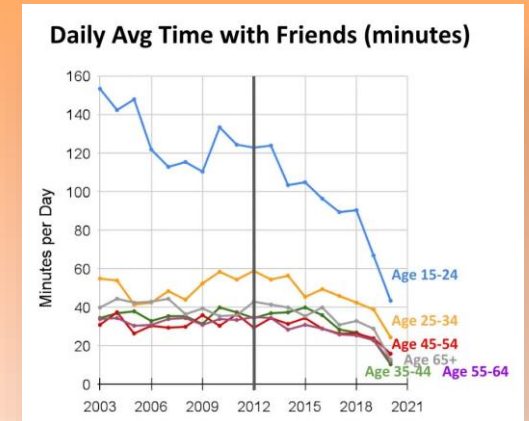
Didn’t allow his 4 children smartphones or their own computers until they were 14



# EXPERIENCE BLOCKERS

Smartphones are experience blockers, distracting children from engaging in the real world activities and connections that are crucial to healthy childhood development.

The opportunity cost to childhood is profound. The average UK 12 year-old now spends over four hours per day on their smartphone, displacing the kinds of activities that have shaped childhood for millennia.



**43%**

of US teenagers waking minutes are spent on screens

Gitnux Marketdata Report, Jan 2024

**30%**

Since 1975, the daily average time children spend playing outdoors has fallen by 30%, while screen-based activities have risen 23%

Zach Rausch - Mullan 2019

**65%**

The daily average time that teenagers spend with friends has plummeted by 65% since 2010

American Time Use Study

# PARENTAL CONTROLS

- Even the most tech-savvy parents struggle to manage parental controls
- Some apps require updates to hundreds of settings to make them age appropriate
- Even if your child's phone has parental controls, their friends may not so they may be sent inappropriate content regardless

**58%**

of teens say they've never had controls put on their phone by parents

(Parentkind poll, May 2024)

**47%**

of teens with controls in place say they have bypassed them

(Parentkind poll, May 2024)

And teens find multiple ways to bypass controls:

Performing a factory reset

Using VPN software

Hacking the WiFi router

Memorising your passcode

# THE SOLUTION



- Parents and schools making collective phone policies
- Families prioritising family time and phone free activities
- Dumb phones for younger kids
- More education for parent, schools and young people on the effects of smartphones (That's where we hope to help! 😊)
- Using our easy, practical screen smart tips!
- Using specialised apps to help track, limit and block distracting apps.
- Using our phones and social media as a tool; to learn, communicate, connect, teach and spread kindness