

# Social Media and the Teen Brain

URAM FAMILY THERAPY

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Debra's approach with teens is of a Leadership Counselor Building Skills in Navigating your Best Teen Self.

Debra bridges her experience as a Psychotherapist, School Counselor (K-12) and Substance Abuse Counselor. She is the Executive Director for The Mind Body Institute for Women's Health and serves on the Board of Directors for Greater OC CHADD, past Board of Director for California Marriage Family Therapist Orange County chapter.

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# Debra Introduction

Thank you all for being here tonight, thank you to the PTSA for inviting us to present the movie “Like” by IndieFlix. You’ll have some strong emotions about the challenges our children face using social media.

Michael and I are IUSD parents and we will share with you the latest research and interventions.

The movie is 49 mins, we will address the interventions at the end and if you’d like our written presentation please download the pdf from our website.

Teenage Mental health concerns are at an all time high

- per CHOC, NAMI, WHO report

1 out of 5 suffering from Anxiety

32% of Adolescents show signs of a mental health issue by 14

Social Media is always a topic in our practice - What I’d like for you tonight is to be a SMART social media user so you can go home and talk to your kids.

# SMART

- **Specific** in your intentions on social media, most of the time the addiction and boredom that leads us to pick up the phone.
- **Measure** (0-10) your feeling while on chats, comments, fb, Snapchat
- **Attainable** - can the images and info received be attainable (overwhelming)
- **Responsible** - How are we projecting our brand/image/highlight reels
- **Time Bound** - How much time do you want to invest on these devices

BOOKS - How to break up with your phone

# Interventions

- ▶ Phone charging out of bedroom
- ▶ Parent controls (see apps at end of presentation)
- ▶ Turn off notifications
- ▶ Move icons on the phone to files (not easily access for impulsivity)
- ▶ Social Media online - engage your teen weekly connect
- ▶ Alarm clock not on phone
- ▶ Set morning intention on usage
- ▶ System awareness - you are the product
- ▶ Devalue data and overvalue what you have control over in your life
- ▶ Reason not Restrict with teens
- ▶ Emotion Based Planning (what do I want out of this post, like, chat)
- ▶ Media Free environment at home, schools - never in the bedroom
- ▶ On going communication about online citizenship, social skills awareness and safety
- ▶ How to Break up with your Phone by Catherine Price (7 day challenge)

# Interventions

- ▶ Lead by example
- ▶ Create illusion of privacy
- ▶ Check in on social media apps
- ▶ GPS Tracker (phones, cars)
- ▶ Interface tool for AAP that can be personalized  
[www.healthychildren.org/mediauseplan](http://www.healthychildren.org/mediauseplan)
- ▶ Media time calculator
- ▶ Screen free zones and times
- ▶ Device Curfew
- ▶ Digital Citizenship
  - Digital footprint
  - Privacy settings
  - Discuss family expectations

# Parental Controls

- ▶ OurPact: family locator & screen time management
- ▶ Bark: social media monitoring connects to 24 platforms
- ▶ Life360: cell phones GPS location, including historical tracking
- ▶ iPhone Backup Extactor: reads text messages, including deleted messages, calls, history, photos, videos, voicemails, notes and contacts
- ▶ Webwatcher: keystroke logger
- ▶ Blocksi: for google chromebooks
- ▶ AAP's family media use plan:(see next page)

# Parents Control Apps

Wirecutter (NY Times publication recommendations:

- ▶ Apple Screen time is best for iOS  
The controls build into iOS 12/13 let you set a daily time limit on app and or devices use and give you more information about the control over screen time than a third party app.
- ▶ Google family link for Android Family with kids under 13
- ▶ Qustdio (computer filtering/monitoring/time control: for Android households with kids 13 and under

# Community Resources

- ▶ 211: This is a 24 hour information and referral services about hotlines, food, shelter assistance, help with drug and other health issues.
- ▶ NAMI OC: Online resources for mental health issues
- ▶ Suicide Hotline: 800-273-TALK
- ▶ CAT Team: 866-830-6011 To call when someone is in danger and they come out and assess.

# Smartphones & Video Game Industry

**Smartphones:** 1.5 million daily, checking 150 times a day

**Video Game Industry:** 2.4 billion people play video games annually

(more than NFL, MNA, MLB, NHL, music and film industries combined)

- ▶ Video games are programmed to increase the incentives to keep you playing longer. Psychologists are hired to utilize intermittent reinforcement to keep you playing. Like a rat in experiments to seek the reward/drug/pleasure center of the brain is activated and dopamine is released. When dopamine is numbing the pleasure center, it requires more. Hence the movie LIKE gets you hooked
- ▶ Fortnite - 250 million players, revenue of \$3.9 Billion

# Statistics - Teen Usage

- ▶ 90 % of teens (13-17 years) use social media
- ▶ 75% report having social media profile
- ▶ 51% report visiting a social media sight daily
- ▶ Teens are online almost 9 hours a day
- ▶ 96% of kids under 4 have used devices
- ▶ 75% of teens have their own phones
- ▶ Teens on average have 100 texts a day
- ▶ Teens self report that social media has a negative effect on their lives

[Teen social media habits and experinces; - Pew Research Center](https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/11/28/teens-social-media-habits-and-experiences/)

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# Technology Benefits

- ▶ Connection to family afar, friends
- ▶ New friends
- ▶ Shared interests
- ▶ Expressive exposure
- ▶ Technology skills
- ▶ Webinar training for future job market
- ▶ Learning to self monitor, scan for perspectives (if measured accurately)

# Gaming Addiction

- ▶ Recent Studies show 55/45 % male female ratio
- ▶ More prevalent in Asian countries
- ▶ Excessive conditioning - sitting for 30 hours without stopping, eating, bathroom breaks can cause dehydration, heart attacks, blood clots
- ▶ Virtual Reality Gaming is next to come on the market - likely increase

# Screen Time Deficits

Includes TV, gaming consoles, computers, tablet devices and smartphones

Children in the US ages 8-18 spend on average 7.5 hours a day

Children with a lot of electronic media use are likely to:

- ▶ Have lower grades
- ▶ Read fewer books
- ▶ Exercise Less
- ▶ Sleep Less (Blue light from screens blocks production of melatonin cause issues in sleep)
- ▶ Poor Social Skills
- ▶ Family relationships decline
- ▶ Aggressive thoughts and behaviors

# Risks

- ▶ Self esteem decline
- ▶ Dangerous interactions
- ▶ Cyber Bullying
- ▶ Personal Information exposed to identity theft
- ▶ Sleep, social skills, exercise, academic & family relationship decline
- ▶ Validation that is inaccurate
- ▶ Highlight Reels, Branding (only see the best in others)
- ▶ Economy of Attention (short attention enforced)
- ▶ Self Worth tied to external controls
- ▶ Limitations on Self Regulation
- ▶ Sexting

# Sleep is essential

Sleep affects your memory, retention, mood, cognition, ability to cope, immune system

One hour less sleep per night has proven to increase the risk of car accidents

Reports of DWI - driving while impaired due to lack of sleep

Glymphatic System:

This is a system that is known to support and clean the brain from macroscopic waster. It happens in the brain at sleep

# Gaming Themes

## Negative Themes:

- ▶ Criminal behavior
- ▶ Killing people, animals
- ▶ Drug and alcohol glorification
- ▶ Sexual & Violence against women
- ▶ Racial and gender stereotyping
- ▶ Bad Language
- ▶ Escapism
- ▶ Companies have hijacked and focused on screens tied to revenue
- ▶ Changing business model to subscriptions

# Brains Reward Center & Withdrawal

## Nucleus Accumbens / Amygdala and Frontal Cortex

- ▶ Operant Conditioning (Rat Study)
- ▶ Drug addiction is the same brain center reaction
- ▶ Brain center (nucleus accumbens) - pleasure seeking area releases dopamine
- ▶ Brain limbic system (prefrontal cortex) - feelings/stress from withdrawal symptoms releases cortisol.
- ▶ Rats had stopped eating, obsession with rewards, loss of interest in other activities in life - Life becomes less epic, attention is significantly reduced)
- ▶ Defiant behavior, relationship decline, escapism.

# Rat Studies - Pleasure Center

In the 1930s, the psychologist B. F. Skinner devised the operant conditioning chamber, or "Skinner box," in which a lever press by an animal triggered either a reinforcing stimulus, such as delivery of food or water, or a punishing stimulus, such as a painful foot shock. Rats placed in a Skinner box will rapidly learn to press a lever for a food reward and to avoid pressing a lever that delivers the shock.

Psychologists James Olds and Peter Milner, working at McGill University in Canada, carried out their pioneering experiments which discovered that rats would repeatedly press levers to receive tiny jolts of current injected through electrodes implanted deep within their brains ([Olds and Milner, 1954](#)).

Especially when this brain stimulation was targeted at certain areas of the brain in the region of the septum and nucleus accumbens, the rats would repeatedly press the lever -- even up to 2000 times per hour ([Olds, 1956](#)).

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3008353/>

# American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations on Screen Time

- ▶ **Younger than 18 months:** Avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting.
- ▶ **Parents of children 18 to 24 months** of age who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programming, and watch it with their children to help them understand what they're seeing.
- ▶ **Children ages 2 to 5 years:** Limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.
- ▶ **Children ages 6 and older:** Place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.

Designate media-free times together, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms.

Have ongoing communication about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx>

# Limitations on Usage

- ▶ Usage Contract, set boundaries, time management with limits
- ▶ Monitor online apps
- ▶ Bedrooms are for sleeping (all media devices off and out of room)
- ▶ Homework first then social media
- ▶ Other activities then social media
- ▶ Engaged in video games with them
- ▶ Use the SMART model
  - **Specific** in your intentions on social media, most of the time the addiction and boredom leads us to pick up the phone.
  - **Measure** how you are feeling while on chats, comments, fb, Snapchat
  - **Attainable** - can the images and info received be attainable (overwhelming)
  - **Retain/Reasonable** - How can 7 hours a day be reasonable
  - **Time Bound** - How much time do you want to invest in being overwhelmed on these devices

# Association of Screen Time and Depression in Adolescence

- ▶ **Importance** Increases in screen time have been found to be associated with increases in depressive symptoms. However, longitudinal studies are lacking.
- ▶ **Objective** To repeatedly measure the association between screen time and depression to test 3 explanatory hypotheses: displacement, upward social comparison, and reinforcing spirals.
- ▶ **Design, Setting, and Participants** This secondary analysis used data from a randomized clinical trial assessing the 4-year efficacy of a personality-targeted drug and alcohol prevention intervention. This study assessed screen time and depression throughout 4 years, using an annual survey in a sample of adolescents who entered the seventh grade in 31 schools in the Greater Montreal area. Data were collected from September 2012 to September 2018. Analysis began and ended in December 2018.
- ▶ **Main Outcomes and Measures** Independent variables were social media, television, video gaming, and computer use. Symptoms of depression was the outcome, measured using the Brief Symptoms Inventory. Exercise and self-esteem were assessed to test displacement and upward social comparison hypothesis.

[Elroy Boers, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>](#); [Mohammad H. Afzali, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>](#); [Nicola Newton, PhD<sup>3</sup>](#); [et al](#) [Patricia Conrod, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>](#)

*JAMA Pediatr.* 2019;173(9):853-859. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.1759

# An 80-Year Harvard Study Found the Greatest Predictor of Happiness in Later Life

Self Assessment of children lead to long term happiness.

Good Relationships keep us happy and healthier.

Social Connections, loneliness kills. Isolation is toxic. Decline cognition, shorter live. 1-5 report being lonely. It's not the likes you have but the quality of close relationships. High conflicts are very bad for our health. Happiness is not about Wealth or Work, it's measured in childhood.

Ted Talk: Robert Waldinger (Harvard Study on Adult Development)

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/>

# Discussion Guide from LIKE Movie:

- **What was your big take-away from the film?**

We are in a mental health crisis due to society and social media companies poor adjustment to a new medium. We have never had such a technological progression become so intertwined in our lives for good and bad. We need to think creatively to stem the loss of lives to suicide, the loss of connected families due to distraction, the loss of reasoning due to memes, the loss of truth due to the amplification of deception, the loss of self love due to projecting an ideal self online that we can't live up to in person, the rise of gaming addiction, the rise of social media addiction, and most importantly, we are forgetting what makes us happy, and seeking the easy reward that lets us down over time.

- **Do you view social media differently after watching the film? If yes, how so?**

I view social media as an unnecessary tool to connect us. Between WhatsApp and Messenger, there is no real need to connect with people that we care about. For teenagers, I often find that mental health crisis arise after a person on social media that isn't close to us says something terrible about us, we allow it to ruin our sense of self and feel a need to convince them otherwise. I feel for students who have their private messages shared with others, leading to judgment, their private photos embarrassingly shared, and worst of all, their trust in the world lost...

- **Do you think social media plays a key role in the rise in anxiety?**

The percentage of anxiety in teenagers is more accurately reported now. Anecdotally, I do think that it is tied to not having a break from the stressors of school when you get home. The same stressors that students at boarding schools have had is now widespread. The drama is escalated when done from a distance, the suicidal thoughts escalate when you want so badly to disappear.

- **How is it that being more connected has left us feeling more disconnected?**

We feel disconnected because we are not having connected intimate conversations as much. Best friends are broken apart by increased misunderstandings, we dissociate to cope with all of this stress.

# Discussion Guide from LIKE Movie:

- **What are the most effective ways to create balance in our lives when it comes to social media?**

Emotion based planning has been the most effective strategy that I have seen. If I ask myself what feeling that I would like to have at the end of an activity, I am more likely to experience that emotion. If I devalue the broader groups opinion and trust my own, I am less likely to be swayed by the crowd.

- **What could change in the next few years with regard to social media?**

Backlash by the government, ambivalence by the mental health insurance industry, who has already decided to not fund any relational therapy, stating that it is not a necessary component of medical insurance coverage.

- **Should government have a role?**

Yes, accountability is key. Facebook just had to pay billions of dollars for sharing your information with any company that would pay for it. This is not okay. Your private information should stay public. You are responsible for what you post. A social media company is just as responsible for what you say or do as much as a retailer is responsible for solicitors out front. We allow the responsible ones and restrict the hurtful members of society. There should be equivalency between online and IRL interactions.

- **Should social media platforms be held more accountable?**

Of course, surprisingly, the best way to hold them accountable is to demonstrate to their advertisers how little we are swayed by their advertising or how much of their investment in their platforms is worthless. If we all had the option to pay a fee for using social media and they agreed to not use addictive technology or passively permit the use of influence bots, we would be one step closer to a healthy relationship with social media.

- **The filmmakers wanted the audience to be able to take away some tips or ideas on how to help. What stood out to you?**

Yes, I liked the idea of noticing the distractive effect of Netflix. They have restricted access to how many hours that you have been watching. It is designed to be addicting.

# Resources

## **Neuroanatomy of Pleasure & Happiness**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3008353/>

## **Association of Screen Time and Depression in Adolescence (4 year study)** Jama Pediatrics (Journal of the American Medical Association), July 2019

*JAMA Pediatr.* 2019;173(9):853-859.  
doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.1759

## **Self Reports teens 12-15 with 3+ hours a day correlates with mental health issues.**

Anxiety, depression, aggressive behavior and antisocial behavior.

Jama Psychiatry, September 2019

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/issue/173/9>

## **Teen Social Media Habits and Experience – Pew Research Center**

<https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/11/28/teens-social-media-habits-and-experiences/>

## **Assessment Suicide screening questions:**

<https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/asq-ask-suicide-screening-questions-toolkit>

## **TED TALKS, PODCASTS Available:**

### **Addiction & Stress – Ted Talk**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/johann\\_hari\\_everything\\_you\\_think\\_you\\_know\\_about\\_addiction\\_is\\_wrong?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/johann_hari_everything_you_think_you_know_about_addiction_is_wrong?language=en)

### **Happiness 80 Year Study – Self Assessment Harvard Adult Development (Ted Talk)**

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/>

### **The Happiness Lab Podcast, Dr. Laura Santos – Science of Wellbeing**

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-happiness-lab-with-dr-laurie-santos/id1474245040>

# PEDIATRIC AND YOUNG ADULT MENTAL HEALTH



1 in 5 young people in the U.S. have a diagnosable mental health disorder



Half of people with lifetime mental illness have symptoms by age 14

# #2

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in children ages 10-24

## DOLLARS & SENSE

For every \$1 invested in the treatment of depression, society saves \$7



2 out of 3 children in California would benefit from mental health treatment but don't receive it



## RESEARCH SHOWS

36% of visits to a pediatrician are for purely psychological reasons

# 36%

Visits to an emergency room for psychiatric problems rose 26% between 2001 and 2010, faster than any other diagnosis

# 26%

18% of high school students have considered suicide in the past year

# 18%

## IN ORANGE COUNTY

No psychiatric inpatient beds for children under 12

Only 32 psychiatric acute care beds for adolescents—or 1 bed for every 22,062 teens

Fewer psychiatrists, psychologists and licensed social workers than the state average



## OUR VISION

Every child and young adult in Orange County who needs behavioral health treatment can receive high quality services without stigma or barriers to access.

# YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH: EMOTIONS MATTER

EMOTIONS ARE A BASIC PART OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE—WE’VE ALL GOT THEM—AND MANY OF US STRUGGLE WITH HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM EFFECTIVELY.



The English language has over 400 words for emotions!

Studies show that men and women experience the same amount of emotion,



but women tend to show it more!

Of 11-17 year olds who took MHA’s Youth Screen?

55% 69% 68% 45%



said they often felt irritable or angry

said they often worry a lot

said they often felt sad or unhappy

said they often do not show their feelings

KIDS AND TEENS ARE DEALING WITH REAL PROBLEMS AND THE COMPLICATED EMOTIONS THAT COME WITH THEM.

According to the National Survey of Children’s Health:<sup>6</sup>

2.2 million



children have ever lived with a parent or guardian who has died

5 million



children feel like their family often has a hard time covering “the basics” like food, or housing

7.7 million



children have lived with someone who had a drug or alcohol problem

6.1 million



children have lived with someone who had a mental illness or who was suicidal

2.9 million



children have been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity

5.2 million



children have seen or heard physical abuse between adults in their home

6.2 million



children have been victims of violence or witnessed it in their neighborhood

And it doesn’t stop there...

36%



of children (ages 2-17) have been emotionally bullied or teased in the past year<sup>8</sup>

1.2 million



children (ages 8-18) are estimated to be caregivers<sup>4</sup>

82.9%



of LGBTQ youth (age 11-17) who take a screen at [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) score “at-risk” for a mental health disorder<sup>7</sup>

# WHAT'S HIDING BEHIND THE "MISBEHAVIORS"



## Common Behaviors and What's Really Going On

### WHAT YOU SEE

### WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON

#### SENSITIVE

- Cries over smallest things
- Gets sad when you leave
- Doesn't like being alone
- Can't watch super sad movies

- Child lacks self-regulation
- Child is worried about "new" things and need help gradually being introduced to them
- Child has an inner fear they are unable to verbalize

#### ANGRY

- Yells and screams often
- Throws things and is destructive
- Crosses arms and shuts down
- Shouts "I HATE YOU" or "GO AWAY"

- Child is unable to recognize emotions
- Child does not have appropriate coping strategies
- Child needs help with calming strategies
- Child is worried about "unknown" feelings

#### PERFECTIONIST

- Nervous about breaking rules
- Can't handle getting things wrong
- Doesn't ever want to miss school
- Scared of answering things wrong
- Struggles with Constructive Criticism

- Child is struggling with negative thought patterns
- Child needs help connecting thoughts and actions
- Child has trouble verbalizing their worries
- Child thrives on doing things the right way

#### SHY

- Hides behind your legs
- Scared of "new" people
- Fearful of change
- Doesn't like going new places
- Prefers playing with "familiar" friends

- Child is unable to verbalize big worries and fears
- Child is cautious of anything new and want to understand the situation fully
- Child needs help making plans for "new" adventures

#### OVER-EXCITED

- Becomes "hyper" when guests come over
- Says inappropriate things around others
- Makes jokes at inappropriate times
- Jumps on furniture
- Plays rough with others

- Child is unable to detect their inner "engine"
- Child needs help regulating their excitement
- Child lacks calming strategies for building anticipation

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