

# The Anxious Generation

## Thought and Action Starters for Gen Z

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](http://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 friends.

– Jon Haidt

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## Thought Starters

### Technology:

1. The book says that we have *overprotected you in the real world and underprotected you in the virtual world*. Do you agree? Do you see this happening? Where?
2. What problems do smartphones, social media, and screens solve for your generation, and what problems do they create?
3. Do you have any rules or boundaries around the tech in your life? Do they work? Do you wish you had different ones? Who would you choose to make these?
4. What would you like to change, if anything, about your relationship with smartphones and social media? How about that of your friends? What about other screen-based activities?
5. In what ways do your online activities impact your friendships, your relationship with your family, and your relationships with others?

6. How do/did smartphones influence the way your parents are involved in your life?
7. In what ways would you like to see younger kids' tech use change?
8. How do you feel about the amount of time you spend online? Are there other activities you wish you had more time for? If yes, how can you create more opportunities to engage with the real world as opposed to the virtual one?

### **Play:**

9. 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 do you feel you missed out on?
10. What do you get from having fun with friends in the real world that you don't get from having fun with friends online?

### **Independence:**

11. What are some things you still have others do for you that you could do yourself?
12. What are some things you can start doing for others, such as your parents or other family members or friends?
13. If applicable: What are some things your parents don't let you do that you feel ready to do? What would it take to show them you are ready?
14. What are some things you could start doing for your parents?

### **Overall:**

15. Would you want the next generation of kids to grow up as you grew up? Why or why not? Which aspects of your childhood would you like the next generation to experience, and which do you hope to see change?

16. In what ways can we better prepare future generations to wisely navigate the virtual world?

17. In what ways can we better prepare future generations to wisely navigate the real world?

## **Some Possible Actions You Can Take**

### **Technology:**

1. Do the obvious: Leave your phone outside the bedroom at night.
2. Take a digital sabbath—a day off a month when you don't use any internet-connected devices. You will live.
3. Try a no-phone get-together.
4. Partner with a few friends to advocate for a phone-free space (or school, classroom, or dining hall, depending on your stage of life).
5. Keep the phone in another room the whole time you visit Grandma.

### **Independence:**

6. Learn how to do something that someone else currently does for you. Do it.

**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](http://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](https://designitforus.org)  
[gamequitters.com](https://gamequitters.com)  
[healthygamer.gg](https://healthygamer.gg)  
[logoffmovement.org](https://logoffmovement.org)  
[nosonovember.org](https://nosonovember.org)

**Tech company resources:**

[humanetech.com](https://humanetech.com)  
[reset.tech](https://reset.tech)

**Researcher resources:**

[commonsense.org](https://commonsense.org)  
[aibm.org](https://aibm.org)  
[psychoftech.org](https://psychoftech.org)  
[alltechishuman.org](https://alltechishuman.org)  
[childrenandscreens.org](https://childrenandscreens.org)  
[counterhate.com](https://counterhate.com)

**Speakers:**

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

**See more at [anxiousgeneration.com](https://anxiousgeneration.com)**