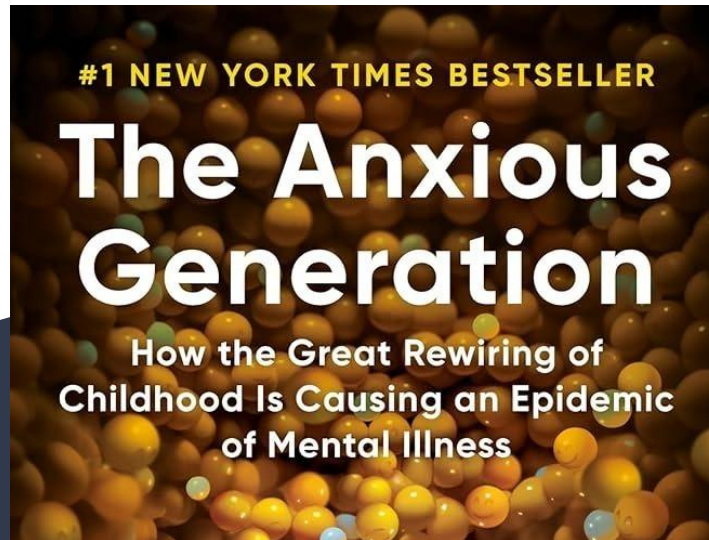




The Anxious Generation Call to Collective Action



May 20, 2025

Why Is This a Priority for Lebanon?



We saw an increase in mental health referrals, treatment, and suicide ideation.

Discipline referrals for fights and bullying that were tied to cell phones and social media.

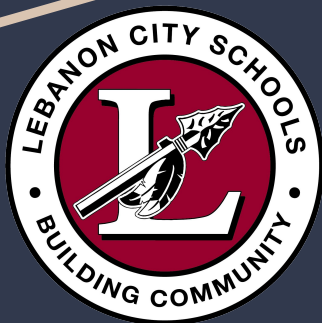
Loss of instructional time spent on policing students on cell phones.

Cell Phones Statewide Discussion

How can we be a resource and a partner for our families?



The Anxious Generation
by Jonathan Haidt
Released March 26, 2024



Four Main Themes

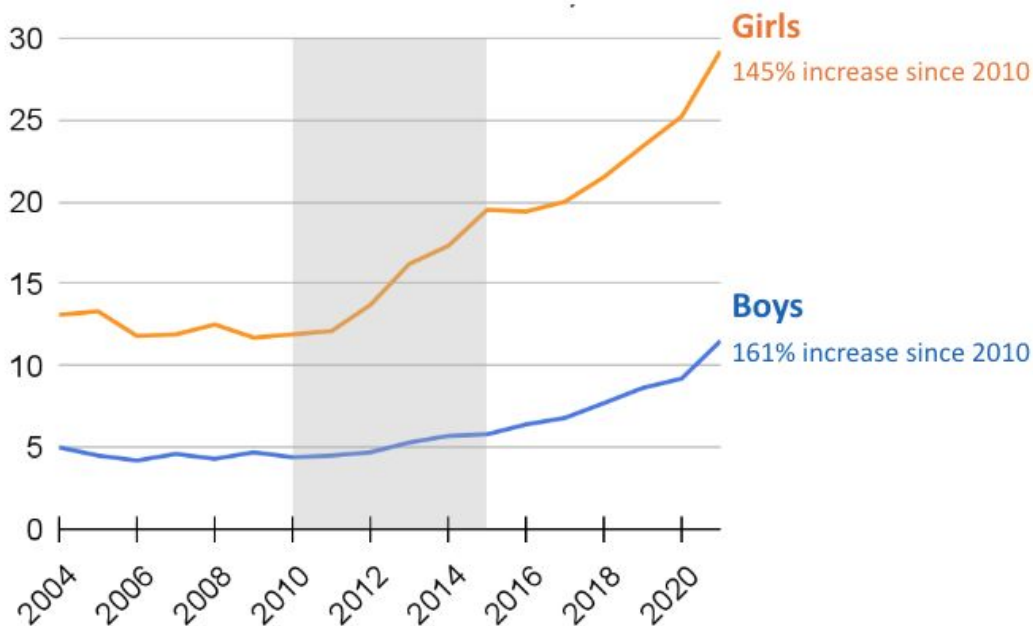
[\(link to supplemental resources\)](#)

1. “The Surge of Suffering” The decline in mental health and wellbeing among children and teens in the 21st Century
2. “The Backstory” How a perfect storm of overprotection and underprotection produced the Anxious Generation
3. “The Great Rewiring” How phone-based childhood disrupts their development
4. “What we can and must do now”

Surge of Suffering– Causation not Correlation

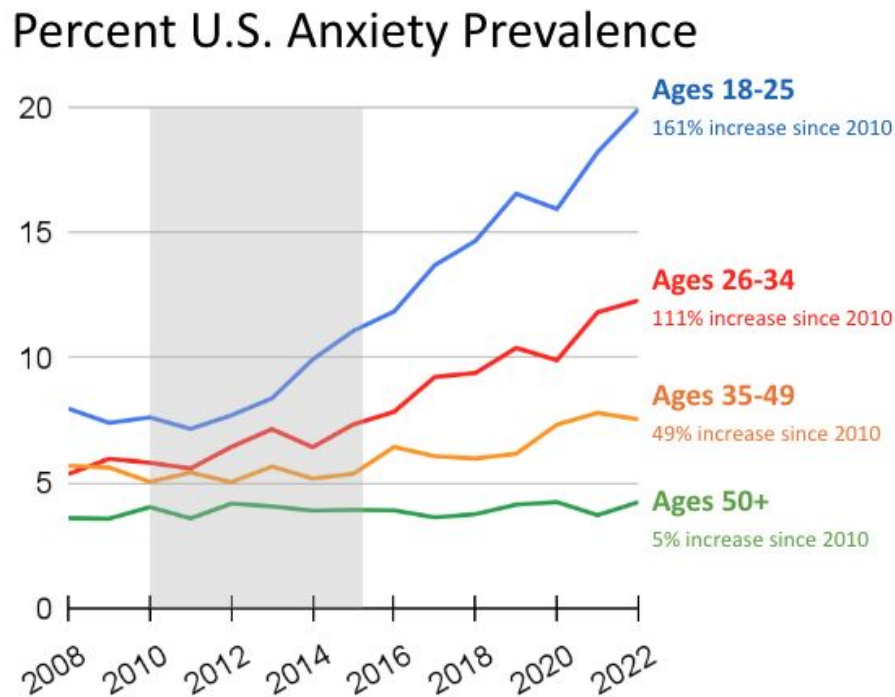
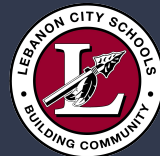


Major Depression Among Teens



SOURCE: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health

Surge of Suffering– Causation not Correlation

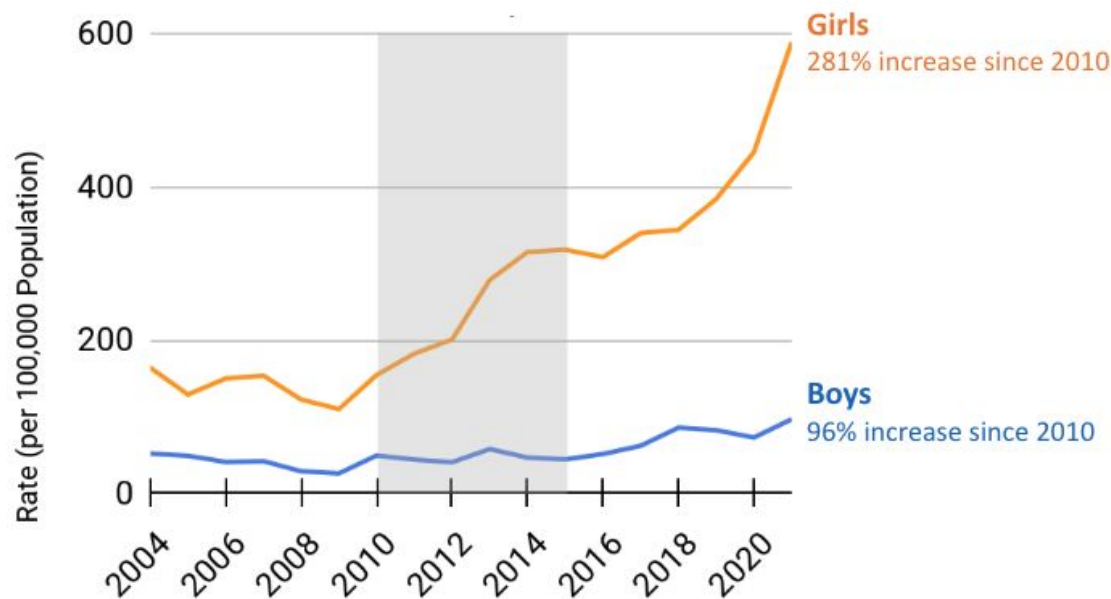


SOURCE: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health

Surge of Suffering– Causation not Correlation



U.S. Teens Admitted to Hospitals for Nonfatal Self-harm (Ages 10-14)

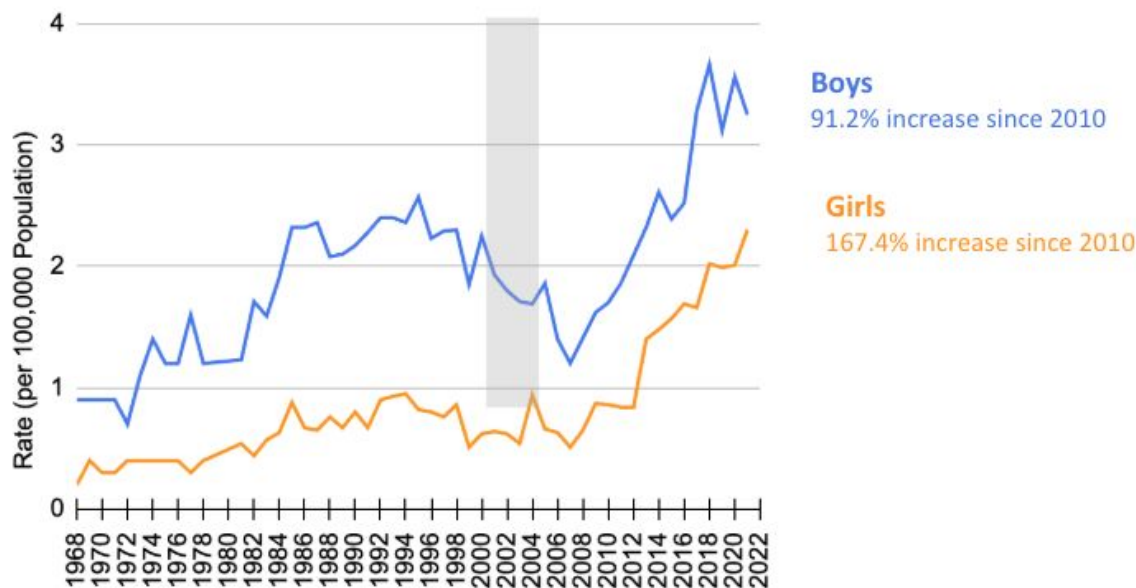


SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Surge of Suffering– Causation not Correlation



U.S. Suicide Rates (Ages 10-14)



SOURCE: CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports

Local Connection:

We partner with Cincinnati Children's Hospital and provide Mental Health Therapy with 7 therapists inside of our buildings.

March 2025 data
344 Referrals
294 in Treatment



LCS 7-11 Student Survey

	Anxious, Nervous, or on edge	Worried	Depressed	Suicide Ideation
Most Days	29%	23%	14%	3%
Some Days	46%	46%	31%	10%
Rarely / Never	19%	26%	50%	81%

Central Theme



*“Parents are overprotective in the real world
and underprotective in the virtual world”*

Parents are increasingly hesitant to allow children independent play and activities, while also failing to adequately protect them from the negative impacts of online experiences.

Real World vs. Virtual World



- Real World - embodied, synchronous, and 1-to-1 or 1-to-several
 - Delayed Independence
 - Fear of Failure
 - Reduced Social Skills
 - Safetyism
- Virtual World - disembodied, asynchronous, and 1-to-many
 - Unsupervised Internet Use
 - Exposure to Online Harm
 - Social Comparison & Pressure
 - Phone-Based Childhood

Discussion:

What were you permitted to do as a child that you do not allow your children to do? What is the reason for your parenting decision? What are the potential impacts of your child not having those experiences?



Discussion:

What rules or controls do you have for your child's use of technology? Do you monitor your child's activity on social media, YouTube, or cell phones?



SAFETYISM- prioritize safety over autonomy



- We played outside with neighborhood kids. Little of our time and few of our activities were organized or even supervised by adults.
- We were allowed to walk or bike alone to school, parks, or friends' homes. As teens, we drove cars, worked part-time jobs, and hung out with their friends in person.
- But starting in the 1980s childhood began to shift gradually away from freedom and toward “safetyism”
- By the early 2000s it was rare for a child of any age to be outside without an adult. Non-school hours were spent more on adult-directed activities in structured environments and less on self-directed activities with friends.



Decline in Play-Based Childhood



Beginning in 2010 there has been a significant shift from a “play-based childhood” to a “phone-based childhood,” and this change has had serious consequences for children’s development.

Impact of Phone-Based Childhood



Phone-Based Childhood has contributed to loss of the following:

1. *Free Play*: self-chosen, self-directed and undertaken for its own sake.
2. *Attunement*: turn-taking, synchronized movement, and shared emotion.
3. *Social learning*: learning by witnessing and copying others. “I notice how Emily is raising her hand.”
4. *Agency*: choosing to face challenges and master new skills.

Four Foundational Harms of Phone-Based

- Social Deprivation
- Sleep Deprivation
- Attention
Fragmentation
- Addiction





Sleep Deprivation (7-12 LCS Students)

- Average hours sleep per night
 - Less than 5 hours: 20%
 - 6-8 hours: 65%
 - More than 8 hours: 11%
- Overnight use of phones
 - Most nights: 35%
 - Some nights: 39%
 - Don't use overnight: 22%

The Great Rewiring Impact on GIRLS

Primary use and greatest impact comes from access to social media

1. Girls are more affected by visual social comparison and perfectionism.
2. Girls aggression is more relational
3. Girls more easily share emotions and disorders
4. Girls are more subject to predation and harassment

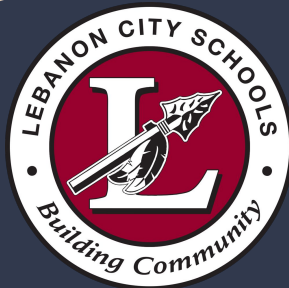
The Great Rewiring Impact on BOYS

Primary use and impact comes from access to video games & pornography

1. Boys and young men have experienced a slow decline on most indicators (school grades, ADHD, graduation, literacy, suspensions/expulsions).
2. Boys are at much greater risk of “failure to launch.”
3. Boys’ risky behavior moved from the real world to the virtual world.
4. Virtual world contains powerful addiction loops for boys in the form of pornography and video games.

What can we do about it?

- No smartphones before high school
- No social media before age 16
- Phone-free schools
- Far more unsupervised play and childhood independence





Parents, Educators, and Communities

1. This is not a problem that individuals can fix alone.
2. We need to restore key elements of a healthy childhood: free play, face-to-face interaction, and independence
3. Four reforms are needed in unison:
 - Delay smartphones: Especially social media, until high school or later.
 - Reclaim in-person childhood: More play, less screen-based interaction.
 - Rebuild adult authority: Parents and educators must reassert boundaries and expectations.
 - Unite for collective action: Parents, schools, and lawmakers must coordinate efforts to protect childhood and mental health.
4. Communities can lead the way through school policies, parent agreements, and public discussions—to model a new norm. If enough people move together, the momentum shifts.

Collective Action





No Smartphones Until High School

- What impacts your decision to allow your child to get a cell phone and when did your children get one?
- Would you consider any alternatives to smartphones?
- Is it too late if your child is younger than high school and already has a smartphone?
- Do you have a cell phone contract or family rules for cell phones?
- Join with a group of like-minded parents to be a unified front with programs like www.waituntil8th.org/



No Social Media Until Sixteen

- What impacts your decision to allow your child to get social media?
- Do you believe that some social media platforms are worse than others?
- What parental controls do you use or processes are in place to monitor your child's social media accounts?
- Common Sense Media parent tools for social media:
www.common sense media.org/parents-ultimate-guides
- Bark is an excellent monitoring tool and they offer resources:
www.bark.us/blog/dangerous-apps-kids



Phone Free Schools

- What feedback do you have on our cell phone policy implemented this year?
- Have you seen any impact in your child as a result of the district-wide cell phone ban?
- In addition to limiting cell phones, would you like the district to consider any other changes to limit students screen time during school or at home?



Increase unsupervised play and experiences

- What ways do you, or can you, work to increase your child's unsupervised play and experiences?
- What are your favorite locations or activities that you take your children for play? Is there something you believe our community is lacking that could foster more of these experiences?
- What can the school, community, or legislature do to support families who wish to build a community that is less phone dependent?



Call to Action!

- Ohio's Parental Notification by Social Media Operators Act was passed a law but recently blocked by judge. It would have required parental consent under age of 16. Federal law (CIPPA) sets the age at 13 but only passive consent.
 - Urge federal lawmakers to increase age to 16 and put the responsibility on phone makers to build in parental controls.
- Make the decision that is right for your family, but also be willing to share with your peers to create a support group for your family.

Call to Action!



Please share your feedback on the following Google Form. We are working to build a list of shared community collective action steps and resources to support families.

