

# Jonathan Haidt Wants You to Take Away Your Kid's Phone

The social psychologist discusses the “great rewiring” of children’s brains, why social-media companies are to blame, and how to reverse course.

By [David Remnick](#) April 20, 2024

Jonathan Haidt is a sixty-year-old social psychologist who believes that your child’s smartphone is a threat to mental well-being. His new book, [“The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness,”](#) which hit the No. 1 spot on the New York *Times*’ hardcover nonfiction best-seller list, has struck a chord with parents who have watched their kids sit slack-jawed and stock still for hours, lost in a welter of TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitch, Facebook, and more. Haidt blames the spike in teen-age depression and anxiety on the [rise of smartphones](#) and social media, and he offers a set of prescriptions: no smartphones before high school, no social media before age sixteen.

When Haidt published [“The Coddling of the American Mind,”](#) with Greg Lukianoff, in 2018, he joined the culture wars, arguing that American colleges had come to value emotional safety over rigor; a self-described liberal and “David Brooks sort of meliorist,” he pushed back at the concepts of trigger warnings and microaggressions. But now his concern is not just with what he views as the overprotection of the

young in the real world; it is also with a lack of protection for the young in the virtual world. Tech companies and social-media platforms, Haidt insists, by “designing a firehose of addictive content” and causing kids to forgo the social for the solitary, have “rewired childhood and changed human development on an almost unimaginable scale.”