

The Four New Norms

To Free the Anxious Generation



In *The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt lays out four reforms or “new norms” that would provide a foundation upon which a healthier kind of childhood could be forged for the digital age. He hopes that these new norms will reverse the two big (well-intentioned) mistakes we’ve made: **overprotecting children in the real world** (where they need to learn from vast quantities of independent real-world experience) and **under-protecting them online** (where many are being severely harmed, especially during their vulnerable years of early puberty). It is often hard for one family to swim against the tide of ever-increasing screen time, but if we act together we turn the tide.

1

No smartphones before high school

Parents should delay children’s entry into round-the-clock internet access by giving only basic phones (phones with limited apps and no internet browser) before 9th grade (roughly age 14).

2

No social media before 16

Let kids get through the most vulnerable period of brain development before connecting them to a firehose of social comparison and algorithmically chosen influencers.

3

Phone-free schools

In all schools from elementary through high school, students should store their phones, smartwatches, and any other personal devices that can send or receive texts in phone lockers or locked pouches during the school day to free up their attention.

4

More independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world.

That’s the way children naturally develop social skills, overcome anxiety, and become self-governing young adults.

Learn more about how to enact these “new norms” at anxiousgeneration.com