

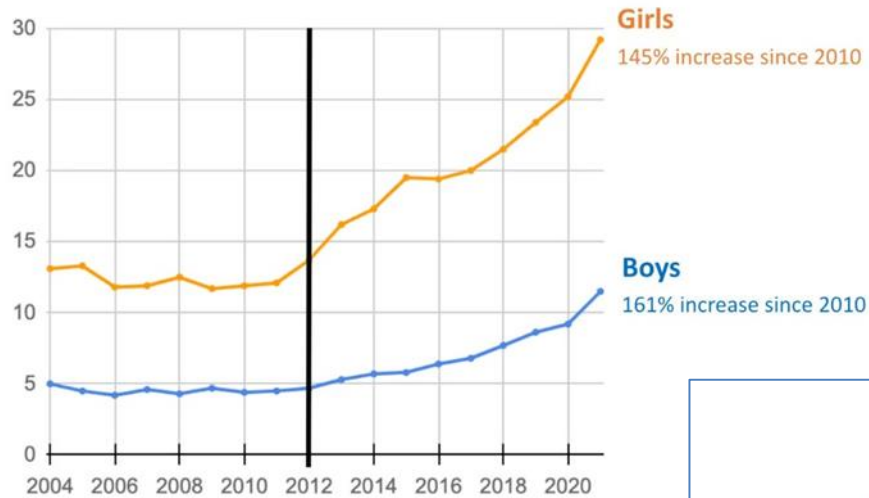


CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Social Media and
Youth Mental Health

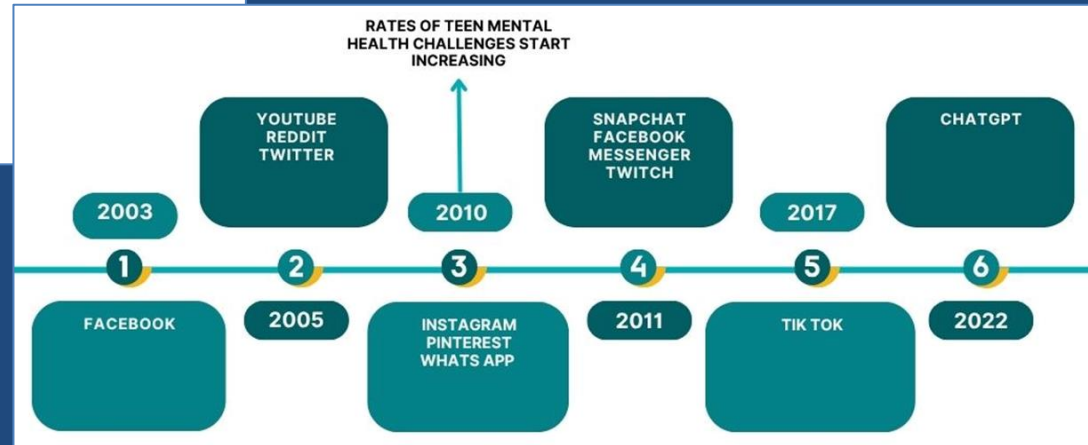
FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

The role of social media and AI: Challenges and opportunities

% US Teens with Major Depression



Major challenge:
Youth mental health crisis



The current narrative



The Atlantic

Sign In [Subscribe](#)



Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?

More comfortable online than out partying, post-Millennials are safer, physically, than adolescents have ever been. But they're on the brink of a mental-health crisis.



LIVE breakyourownnews.c

BREAKING NEWS

SOCIAL MEDIA DESTROYS WORLD

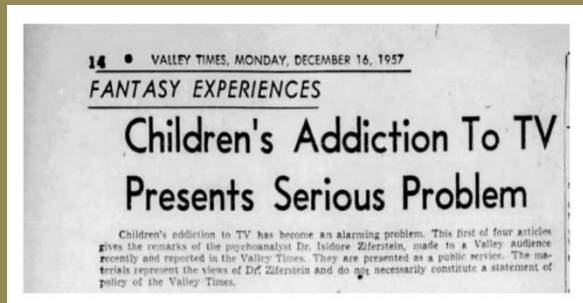
10:52 SAYS EVERYONE, EVERY DAY @JCast

What do kids experience?

- Don't you know that phone is rotting your brain?
- Why don't you go outside and touch grass or something?
- In my day we did worthwhile things with our time

- *"I can honestly say I have never had a positive conversation with an adult about my phone, I don't have anyone to ask who isn't going to tell me about how bad I am for using a phone"*
- *"I feel a lot of shame about using my phone, but I see my mom on her phone throughout dinner and she doesn't really talk to me"*





How did we get here?

- New technologies = societal change and often moral panic
- Clickbait news stories create buzz and noise but not clarity
- COVID
- Increased expectations on adults/parents to be available outside of work (and to parent perfectly around tech)
- Increased stressors and limited time

What is the evidence?

Social media ↔ Mental health

- The majority of evidence is based on cross-sectional studies
 - *Cannot determine direction*
 - *Do not show causality*
 - *For example: There is an association between drinking coffee and putting on shoes*
- Some show a positive association between social media use and depression symptoms
 - When present, the association is weak, estimated to explain less than 5% of the phenomenon being studied
 - This means there is high variation in results (different people have different levels of association) and other variables are key factors
 - *For example: A positive association between Snickers and weight gain*

What is the evidence?

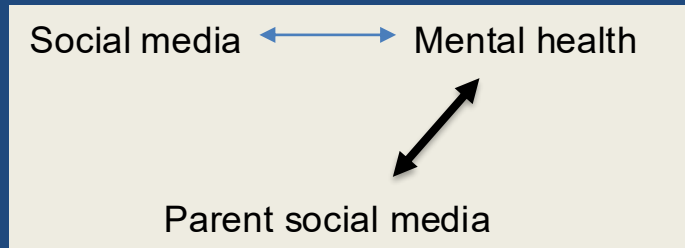
Problematic media use ↔ Mental health

- Studies of *problematic* media use and depression symptoms
 - When present, the association is stronger, estimated to explain around 15% of the phenomenon being studied
- Studies of youth with depression or anxiety and social media use
 - Not many studies with this focus but stronger association in this population
- Other important variables not included in these studies
 - Sleep
 - Physical activity
 - Social context

Media use ↔ Depression/anxiety

What is the evidence?

- Newer evidence is beginning to add other variables to the analyses
- In several studies:
 - Parent social media use was more strongly associated with youth mental health than the youth's own social media use

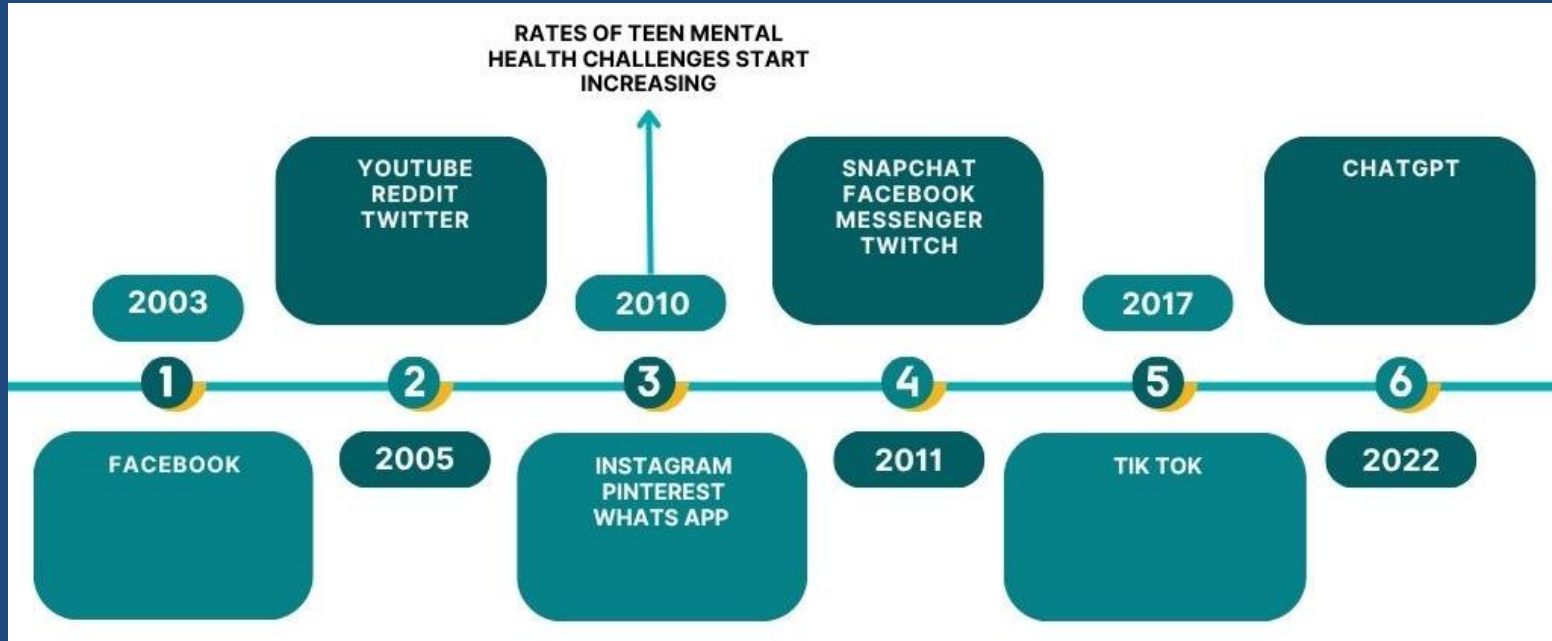


What is the evidence?

- What can we conclude?
 - Not a uniform experience
 - Some kids do well, some have risks and harms
 - Other variables (e.g. parents) are important
- Avoid monocausal determinism and population-level assumptions
- Focus on kids at risk to provide targeted prevention and support
- Consider context and other key variables

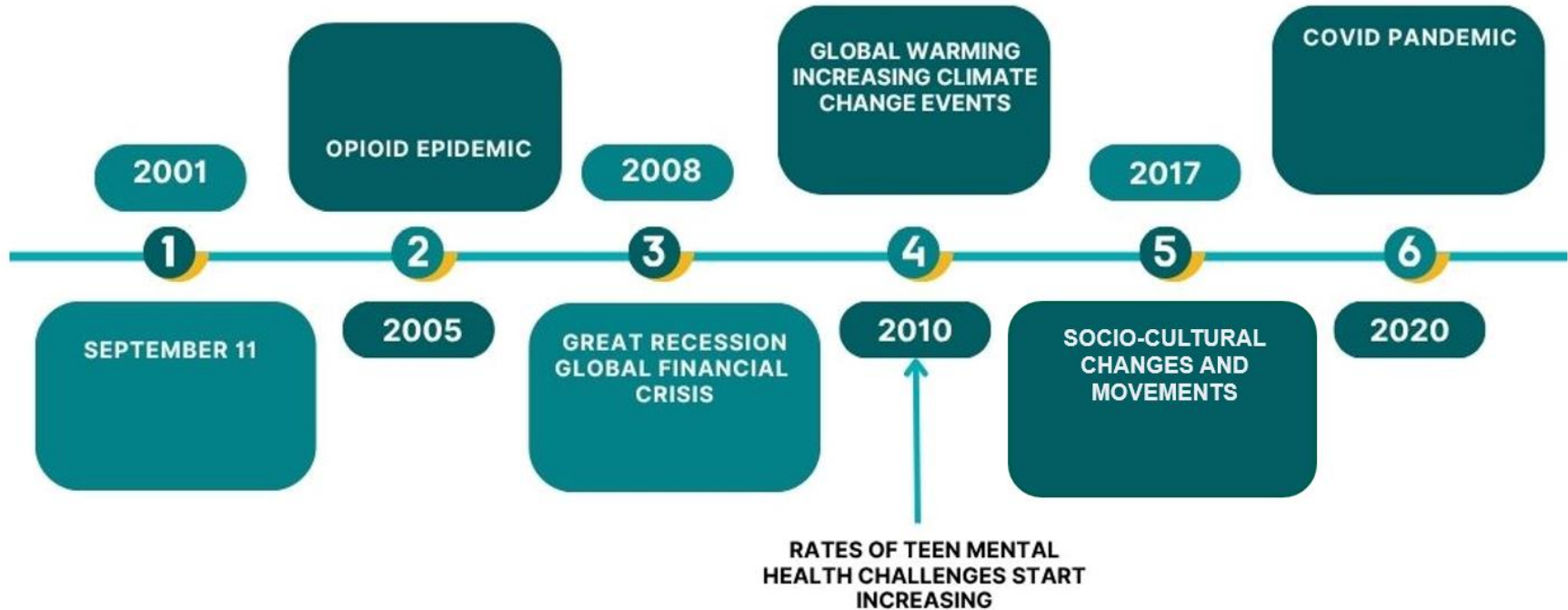
What's the Context?

At the surface, rates of teen mental health challenges coincide with social media boom

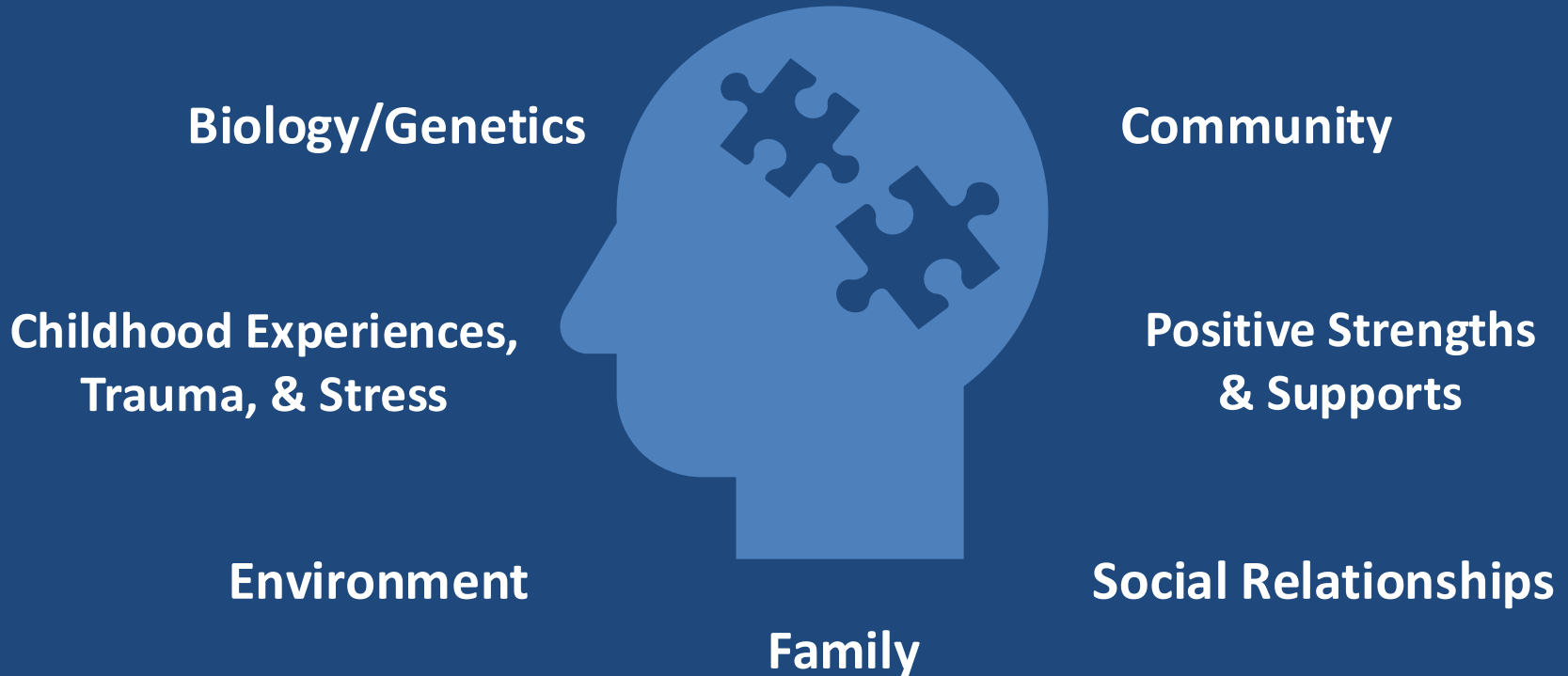


What's the Context?

Teens are growing up in increasingly tumultuous times

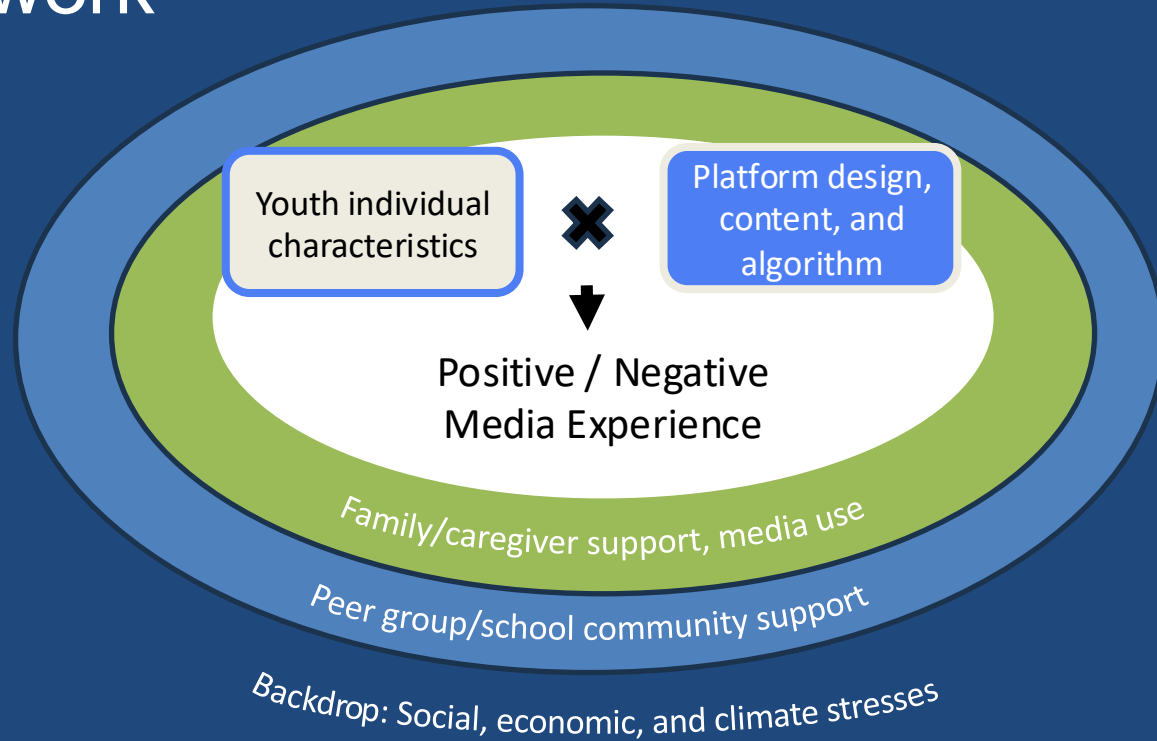


The Big Picture- Many Factors Influence Mental Health



Opportunities

A new narrative: The Center of Excellence Framework



Conversation Starters for Teens

Conversation Starters By Topic

Setting initial boundaries around technology and digital media use



Initial check-ins after setting guidelines and boundaries



Social media specific check-ins



Checking in on unwanted contact



Checking in on unwanted content



Struggles with meeting family expectations around digital media use



Tween/teen gaming too much



Media and technology interfering with sleep



Overheard conversation about social media



Prompts to encourage reflection around relationships with media



Reflecting on other peoples' tech use



Parents talking about their own media use



Media and technology interfering with sleep



“Sleep is really important for everyone. I know you aren’t able to show up to [x] activity/have the energy to do all the things you want to do/etc. when you don’t get enough sleep. Let’s talk about some ideas for how to help you get better sleep.”

Possible Follow-Up Prompts


- “I’ve heard you say you’re feeling really tired this week. How is it going with putting your phone away at [x] time?”
- “Let’s come up with a plan that would help you feel more rested.”
- “What about keeping your phone away from your bed since it can interfere with sleeping? What other ideas do you have to calm down before you go to sleep?”

PDFs available in English and Spanish.

AAP Family Media Plan

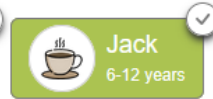
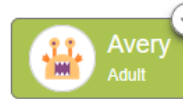



We will create some screen-free zones for our family by:

 Keeping meals screen-free.

Reason / Tips

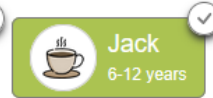
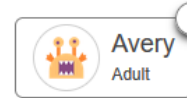
Unselect All



 Not using devices on the way to and from school.

Reason / Tips

Select All



- A list of media priorities to choose from
- Practical tips
- Ability to print or share finished plan
- Option to return to plan and make changes

Q&A Portal on Social Media & Youth Mental Health

Sort By

Topic

- Body Image & Self Conception (1)
- Concerning Technology Use (7)
- Design & Content Quality (0)
- Digital Citizenship (1)
- Emotions (3)

[See More](#)

Role

- Adolescent (8)
- Educator (10)
- Parent/Caregiver (21)
- Pediatrician/Clinician (18)

Age Range

- Early Childhood (Age 2-6) (4)
- Middle Childhood (Age 6-11) (3)
- Early Adolescence (Age 10-13) (18)

Search

Search

Showing 1 - 8 of 18

[How do you identify sources of mis- and disinformation on social media about pediatric health?](#)

12/03/2024

We know that adolescents look online for health information for several reasons including ease of access, for privacy, or to find others with similar lived experience. Algorithmic recommendations on platforms like Instagram and TikTok may also expose adolescents to health information that they were not seeking...

[The issues surrounding social media usage is often referred to as an "addiction." Is social media addiction clinically similar to how we understand addiction to substances like drugs and alcohol?](#)

09/12/2024

Unlike drugs or alcohol, which have no health benefits and are generally harmful, technology itself is not inherently bad or good. While "addiction" terminology has been a common frame for how we talk about the impacts of social media, when it comes to clinical similarities to substances like drugs and alcohol, the short answer is...

Get Your Questions Answered: Our Q&A Portal on Social Media and Youth Mental Health

Whether you're a parent, teen, educator, clinician, policy maker, or otherwise working with youth, our expert staff and physicians are here to answer your questions. Click on a Q&A Portal audience page below to view our [library of submitted questions](#), related educational resources and tools to help build healthy digital habits.

[For Clinicians](#)

[For Educators](#)

[For Parents](#)

[For Teens](#)

Have a question you'd like to ask our expert team? Use the link below to submit your question!

[Ask a Question](#)



School Phone Policies: Resource Guide for Pediatricians

What does the research say?

If you are asked to help plan a school phone policy, what should you focus on?

- Experts recommend that phone policies take into account the views of multiple impacted groups, including caregivers, students, teachers, school mental health providers, school nurses and other school health staff, and school administrators.
- Students with health needs should be able to access their phone or other technology needed to manage their care (e.g. diabetes devices like glucose sensors and insulin pumps).

Helpful Resources

Printable Resources

- The Good & Bad of Social Media: What Research Tells Us
- Family tip sheet
- 5 Cs handouts for each age

The Good and Bad of Social Media: What Research Tells Us

The connection between social media and mental health is complicated and personal. Everyone responds to social media differently. Here are a few ways to think about how social media impacts kids and teens.

Potential Benefits	Potential Risks
<p>Social Connection: Teens can engage with friends and family online.</p>	<p>Cyberbullying: Teens may experience or witness bullying, harassment or aggressive behavior online.</p>
<p>Identity, Self-Expression, and Self-Affirmation: Youth can share their interests and activities through texts, videos and images, which can help them better understand who they are.</p>	<p>Body Image and Disordered Eating: Social comparison is common, especially on image-based platforms. Image-altering filters and profiles that focus on disordered eating or "thinspiration" can lead to negative self-esteem and impact how teens think about their appearance.</p>
<p>Community Support for Young People's Identities: Social media can be used as a safe space to gain social support, learn through each other's stories and find validation through shared experiences.</p>	<p>Harmful Content: Despite platforms' best efforts to prevent it, harmful content like pornography, child sexual abuse material, self-harm depictions, violence, exposure to discriminatory language or accounts selling illegal substances can be found on social media.</p>
<p>Interest-Driven Exploration: Teens, as they develop more independence, can pursue new ideas and hobbies online or follow educational, health-related or inspirational accounts.</p>	<p>Unwanted Contact: Teens may receive unwanted contact from strangers or from companies trying to sell them things.</p>
<p>Empowerment and Civic Engagement: Teens can use social media to learn more about causes they care about, engage in activism and connect with communities on and offline.</p>	<p>Sleep: Sleep is essential and can be negatively impacted when teens postpone bedtime so that they can continue to use social media for entertainment or feel pressure to be responsive to friends. The use of mobile devices during bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep and to get deep, restorative sleep that teens need.</p>
<p>Fun and Entertainment: Whether watching funny videos, playing online games or keeping up with music and pop culture, social media can help teens relax and have fun.</p>	<p>Digital Stress: Constant access to a wide array of social content designed to keep teens online as long as possible can be overwhelming. Teens may get anxious about likes and engagements, have fear of missing out (FOMO) when away from their device or struggle against expectations to always be available.</p>

For more information on what research tells us about the impacts social media has on youth and what teens can do, check out our website: [Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](https://www.aap.org/socialmedia) and browse previously submitted questions on our [Question and Answer Portal](https://www.aap.org/socialmedia).

Social media can...



RESEARCH-BASED TIPS FROM PEDIATRICIANS FOR FAMILIES

When it comes to helping your children build healthy digital habits, you may not know where to start. Here are some small steps that can make a big difference for your family:

- 1. Build a family media plan.**
 - Work together to set rules about social media use so you and your children agree on how devices fit into your lives.
- 2. Balance time with and without devices.**
 - Create screen-free times and places in your home (e.g., meals, bedtime).
 - Set do-not-disturb times and media time limits.
 - Track online activities and talk about which ones may be problematic.
 - Plan regular screen-free activities your family enjoys.
 - Make a habit of turning off media that isn't in use. Try music if you need ambient noise.
- 3. Talk about social media.**
 - Start regular, open-minded conversations with your children (even the youngest one(s)) about their media use, and yours.
 - Ask questions like:
 - » What do you like about social media platforms?
 - » How do you feel when you're on social media? And when I'm on social media?
 - » Have you seen anything concerning?
 - Help children understand:
 - » What's real and what's edited.
 - » How to recognize ads or inappropriate content.
 - » How media and emotions connect.
 - Make sure your kids know they can come to you about their experiences online.
- 4. Set a good example.**
 - Include your own habits in discussions about social media usage.
 - When your attention is on your device, tell your kids what you're doing.
 - Be kind to others online and talk to your kids about how you are using media for good.
- 5. Optimize your family's online experience.**
 - Choose quality content to use together as a family.
 - Know which platforms are age- and content-appropriate for your children.
 - Set and follow safety rules for who we can chat with online.
 - Set privacy settings at the most secure level.
 - Watch for warning signs, like if your child is:
 - » Withdrawing from social interaction and hobbies.
 - » Letting screen time interfere with physical activity, healthy eating or bedtime.
 - If you're concerned about your child's social media usage or mental health, talk with your pediatrician.

Visit [AAP.org/socialmedia](https://www.aap.org/socialmedia) for more resources and to submit your questions.

The 5 Cs of Media Use



YOUNG TEENS: 10-14 YEARS

The early tween and teen years are a time of growing independence, changing bodies, exploring identity, and building a solid sense of self. During this phase, adolescents begin to place increased importance on relationships with peers, which can feel to parents like they are losing connection. Puberty brings changing bodies and strong emotions, comparisons with other kids, and trying to figure out who they are and where they fit. A central question for the early adolescent age range is "Am I normal?" This phase of development is also one in which adolescents can feel that they are "on stage" and that everyone is looking at them, so small social mistakes either online or offline can feel devastating to them. It's an important time to establish regular conversations about their digital lives - who they are and what they interact with online.

ASK YOURSELF THE 5 Cs WHAT YOU CAN DO

PDF

Young Teens (10-14 years)

English

Download

Take home points

- In the setting of the youth mental health crisis
 - Social media plays a role, but not the only role
 - Adults' communication, guidance, role modeling is critical
 - Resources can help

Funding for the Center of Excellence was made possible by Grant No. SM087180 from SAMHSA of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

*The contents are **those** of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, SAMHSA/HHS or the US Government.*