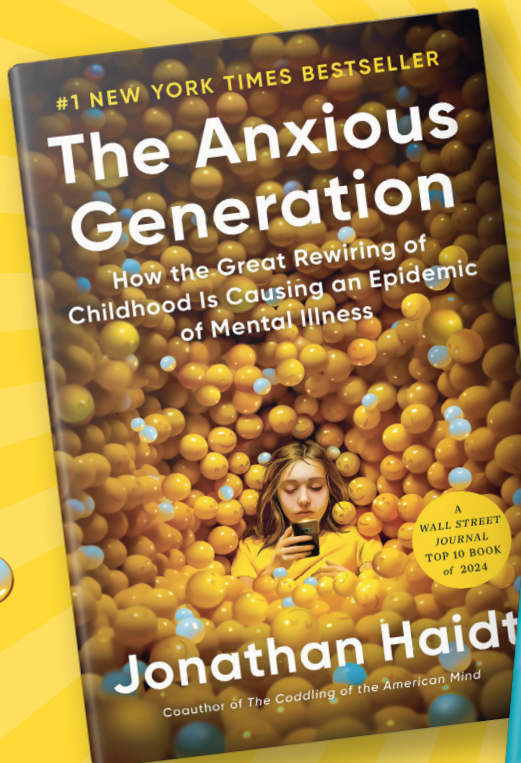
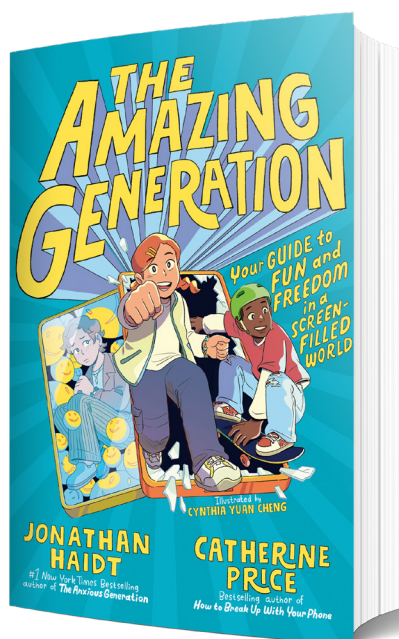




A Community Reads Guide

to Healthier Screen Relationships
in Your Community with





FOR KIDS

JONATHAN HAIDT's blockbuster book *The Anxious Generation* has sparked a global conversation about the effects of smartphones and social media on young people's development and has inspired millions of parents, teachers, and leaders to take action. Now, Haidt and CATHERINE PRICE, author of the bestselling *How to Break Up with Your Phone*, have joined forces to create a new book that speaks directly to kids and tweens. Their goal? To empower young people to stand up for themselves by choosing a life not dominated by screens.

A SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR!

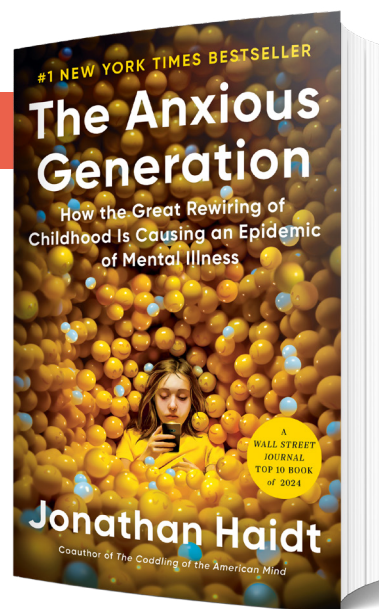
"WILL INSPIRE balanced and thoughtful decision-making in a world where technology is designed to promote impulsivity."

—Kirkus Reviews

FOR ADULTS



In *The Anxious Generation*, social psychologist JONATHAN HAIDT (pronounced "height") lays out the facts about the epidemic of teen mental illness that hit many countries at the same time. He then investigates the nature of childhood, including why children need play and independent exploration to mature into competent, thriving adults. Haidt shows how the "play-based childhood" began to decline in the 1980s, and how it was finally wiped out by the arrival of the "phone-based childhood" in the early 2010s. He presents more than a dozen mechanisms by which this "great rewiring of childhood" has interfered with children's social and neurological development, covering everything from sleep deprivation to attention fragmentation, addiction, loneliness, social contagion, social comparison, and perfectionism. He explains why social media damages girls more than boys and why boys have been withdrawing from the real world into the virtual world, with disastrous consequences for themselves, their families, and their societies. Most important, with *The Anxious Generation*, Haidt issues a clear call to action.



"A practical look at a VITAL topic."

—Booklist

"Not just reasonable but IRREFUTABLY NECESSARY."

—Jessica Winter, *New Yorker*

Why a Community Read?

The Anxious Generation became a bestselling phenomenon in part because it struck a nerve with communities. Parents, educators, caregivers have all seen the impacts of social media and phone use with young people. *The Anxious Generation* alone has been brought into book groups, all-staff reads at schools, and community reads for adults. With the publication of the companion for kids and tweens, the momentum, excitement, and conversations from the adult book can now incorporate the audience most impacted by social media and screen time: young people. *The Amazing Generation* provides not just an opportunity for young people to see the facts about how and why screens and social media are made to make them addicted, but they also get to see a path forward that isn't dominated by a screen. What better way to bring these two reading experiences from different generations together to discuss the path forward than with a community read of both books.

In this guide, you'll get discussion questions for all the participating readers of both books. Questions for young readers, questions for adults, questions for family/groups reading together, **PLUS**, you'll get ideas and tips on how to bring this book to life in your community and at home, and more!

Click the below items on the table of contents to jump to the section you're interested in.

- ★ Community Reads Starting Tips
- ★ Discussion Questions for Young Readers Reading *The Amazing Generation*
- ★ Discussion Questions for Adult Readers Reading *The Anxious Generation*
- ★ Discussion Questions for Families/Groups (Adults and Kids) Reading Both Books
- ★ Extension Ideas for Community Reads
- ★ Read More: Suggested Booklists for Adults and Kids



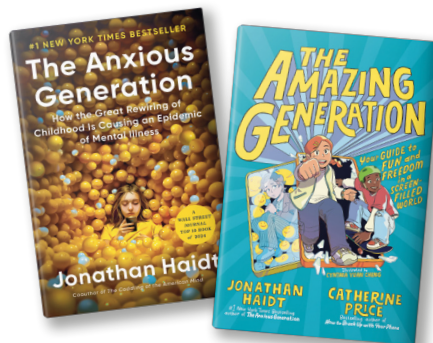
This guide was written by Elisabeth Gattullo Marrocolla. Elisabeth is the Deputy Director of Darien Library (CT). She received her master's degree from Pratt Institute in 2011 and began working at Darien Library shortly after, first in the Children's Library as a Children's Collector, then as the Head of Children and Teen Services. In 2019, Elisabeth moved up to administration, where her ability to juggle multiple projects and priorities, first honed in youth services, comes in handy! When she's not with her two young children, you can find her reading fantasy books with skilled heroines and romance novels with a lot of smolder.

Community Reads Starting Tips

Share this book as a **book group discussion**! This is a great pick if your family, community, or school district are considering implementing a phone-free school policy during school hours. Even if your school has already implemented a phone-free policy during the day, this universal topic affects every person living in the world. You can use these books to kick-start a discussion about smartphone use, depression, healthy teen habits, or successful relationships with smart devices in your community.

1. First time hosting a book discussion? Contact your local library or bookstore to see if they support book groups. You may be able to get multiple copies of the book for your group to read and then return to the library when you're done! Some libraries even offer space to book groups to meet for free.
2. Give everyone at least a month to read the book, but remind everyone that if they can't finish the whole book in time, they can still come and share their thoughts.
3. Start with the positive—ask people what they liked about the book before you ask what they didn't like. Book discussions that start with negative opinions fizzle out faster than those that start with what readers enjoyed!
4. Are you a librarian? Consider hosting a joint adult-tween book group. Ask the adults to read *The Anxious Generation* and the younger readers to read *The Amazing Generation* (or have adults read *The Amazing Generation* alongside their kids). You can host separate book groups for the adults and the young readers on different days, then bring those groups together to share what they've learned. Or, you can have the adults and young readers meet at the same time and use the discussion questions in the back of the book, swapping back and forth between the adult questions and the questions for youth. How are the answers the same? How are they different?
5. Remember, food brings everyone together. Considering offering snacks at your book discussion. Hungry people are less likely to be generous with their thoughts and feelings!

For more info, inspiration, and tips about Community Reads, [check out these great resources from Penguin Random House.](#)



Discussion Questions for Young Readers Reading *The Amazing Generation*



1. What do you think makes friendship, freedom, and fun “real”? Do you think you have any *real* friendships, freedom, and fun in your life right now? Which of the three do you have the most of? What would you like to improve?
2. Who do you have the strongest connection to in your life? Who do you spend the most time with in real life? How about online? If you had to pick one person to share a secret with, who would it be and why?
3. In the graphic novel that accompanies the book, which characters get better at their hobbies? Which group looks like they’re having more fun?
4. There is scientific evidence that spending a lot of time on social media apps can make you feel sadder. Have you ever spent time scrolling through social media? How did you feel while you were doing so—and how did you feel after you were done?
5. Have you ever felt the pressure to be perfect? Where did that feeling come from? Ask a trusted adult if they’ve felt that same pressure—and where it came from for them.
6. On page 41, the authors discuss “defend mode” versus “discover mode.” Have you ever found yourself in defend mode? What helped you get out of it? What helps you get into discover mode?
7. Do you have privacy in your life? As defined on page 64, have you thought about privacy prior to reading this book?
8. “Phubbing” is defined on page 75 as phone-snubbing, or half-listening to someone while you pay attention to your phone. Have you ever been phubbed? Has a friend or family member ever phubbed you? How did this make you feel?
9. Dopamine is described on page 86 as a chemical in our brains that helps us form habits. What in your life brings you dopamine? How does it feel in your brain? How does it feel in your body? How often does it happen?

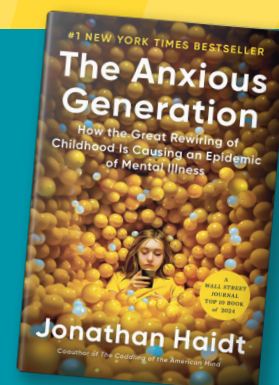


Discussion Questions for Young Readers Reading *The Amazing Generation* (continued)



10. When was the last time you were bored? How did that make you feel physically? What emotions did you feel while you were bored? What did you do to alleviate your boredom?
11. The authors encourage you to let your parents protect you from smartphones and social media while they can. What does that look like to you? Do you want your parents to protect you? Do you think they already do?
12. On page 160, the authors encourage you to do things for yourself—they say “it’s important to do things for yourself because they’re hard.” Do the adults in your life let you do hard things? Do they let you go places without them? Are you allowed to use the stove, make a snack, visit a friend, or go to the store or park without an adult? If something is hard, do your parents encourage you to keep trying or help you do it? How does that make you feel?
13. Have you ever been contacted by a stranger on the internet, via chat or an app? Was that person a friend? How did you feel after chatting with them?
14. If you already have a smartphone or device, can you do a “rebel reset” and stop using the internet and apps for three weeks? How can you ask an adult to help you with this reset? How can you ask your friends?
15. The authors talk about the difference between friends you know in real life (IRL) and friends you know from the internet and apps. Do you have more online friends or IRL friends? Did that change as you got older?
16. What does freedom mean to you? Have you ever felt free? When did you have that feeling? Is it something you can feel again?
17. If the best way to find out about yourself is to go out and do lots of different things, do you have the opportunity to do that? What new things would you like to try, if you were able? Have you spoken to your family about trying some of those things? Do you think they’ll let you?
18. Toward the end of the book, the authors discuss the pressure to perform and to be perfect, and they tell the reader that they have the right to make mistakes. Do you feel pressure to perform and/or to be perfect? Where does that feeling come from? Are you allowed to make mistakes?

Discussion Questions for Adult Readers Reading *The Anxious Generation*



These questions were pulled from the guide created by Jon Haidt, Zach Rausch, and Lenore Skenazy, with assistance from McKenzie Love, Nicole Kitten, and Ashley Fisher-Tranese. [Click here](#) for the full readers guide.

TECHNOLOGY:

1. The book says that today we overprotect children and adolescents in the real world and underprotect them in the virtual world. Do you see this happening? Where?
2. What problems do smartphones, social media, and screens solve in your family, and what problems do they create?
3. Do you have any tech rules in your home? Do they work? Are there some that you have heard of or would like to try?
4. What would you like to change, if anything, about your kids' relationship with smartphones and social media? What about video games and other screen-based activities?
5. How are your kids different online and offline?
7. Think back on your own childhood. What are your most thrilling memories? Could your child have a similar experience today?
8. What did you get from "just playing" as a kid?
9. "Free play" means playing without adults organizing or even supervising. What reservations do you have about allowing your own children more unsupervised time?
10. Jon and Lenore suggest a few ways to give your kids more unstructured, unsupervised opportunities for free play, such as keeping Fridays open so neighborhood kids can get together. What small steps could you take toward adding more free play to your children's lives?

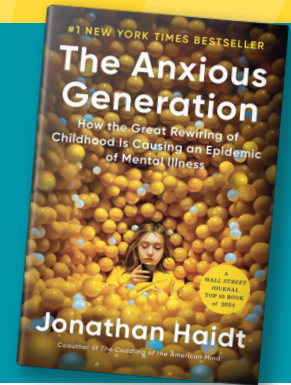
PLAY:

6. 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 about this for children in general or your own children? What exactly are kids missing out on?

INDEPENDENCE:

11. When you were your child(ren)'s age, what did your parents trust you to do on your own? How did that make you feel?
12. What are some things you do for your children that they could start doing for themselves?
13. What are some things you do for your family that your children could start doing for you?

Discussion Questions for Adult Readers Reading *The Anxious Generation* (continued)



14. Think about a time when you were a child and something went wrong when no adult was around. How did you solve the problem?
15. How can you give your kids more opportunities to be part of the real world rather than the virtual one?
16. Modern technology makes it very easy to track our children's whereabouts, grades, and even behavior electronically. This can become "the world's longest umbilical cord." Could you cut down on the ways in which you electronically track or watch your child in the real world? How?
22. In what ways can we better prepare our kids to wisely navigate the real world?
23. Would you want to grow up the way today's kids are growing up? Why or why not? What are some benefits of growing up today? What would you want to preserve/carry forward from your own upbringing?
24. What actions can you take, on your own and with like-minded parents, to lessen your kids' time spent in the virtual world and increase their opportunities for fun and responsibility in the physical world?

FOR YOU:

17. What problems do smartphones, social media, and screens solve in your own life and what problems do they create?
18. Do you have any tech rules for yourself? Do they work?
19. What would you like to change, if anything, about your own relationship with smartphones and social media? What about video games and other screen-based activities?
20. How are you different online and offline?

OVERALL:

21. In what ways can we better prepare our kids to wisely navigate the virtual world?

The Four New Norms:

In *The Anxious Generation* Jonathan Haidt suggests four new norms that, if we adopted them as a society, would roll back the phone-based childhood and reclaim the play-based childhood.

1. No smartphones before high school
2. No social media before 16
3. Phone-free schools
4. More independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world

What steps have you or your community already taken to implement these four norms? What are the biggest challenges? How could you work together to overcome them?

Discussion Questions for Families/Groups (Adults and Kids) Reading Both Books

This section has questions for both adults/grown-ups (caregivers, parents, grandparents) and kids reading these books.



1. **TOGETHER:** Discuss the role screens have in your nightly routines. Has a screen ever prevented you from falling asleep? What can you change about your routine to get an hour of screen-free time before bed?
2. Discuss how you express freedom and fun with friends and without screens.
 - ★ **ADULTS:** What were your childhood experiences with friendship, freedom, and fun? How do they differ from the experiences of the children in your life? In your community?
 - ★ **KIDS:** How do you spend your time after school?
 - ★ **TOGETHER:** What is different and what is similar about these experiences? What do you think it says about screen time in your lives then and now? What changes can you make?
3. The authors of *THE AMAZING GENERATION* encourage kids to let their parents protect them from smartphones and social media while they can.
 - ★ **KIDS:** What does that look like to you? Do you want your parents to protect you? Do you think they already do?
 - ★ **ADULTS:** What do you think about that?
 - ★ **TOGETHER:** What is a possible solution?
4. "Phubbing" is defined on page 75 in *The Amazing Generation* as phone-snubbing, or half-listening to someone while you pay attention to your phone.
 - ★ **ADULTS:** Do you recognize phubbing as a behavior you've engaged in? If so, whom have you phubbed and in what contexts?
 - ★ **KIDS:** Have you recognized when the grown-ups or friends in your life are "phubbing" you? How did it make you feel?
 - ★ **TOGETHER:** What are some ways you can work on not "phubbing" other people?
5. **TOGETHER:** Was it surprising to learn that many Big Tech leaders do not let their own children use their creations? Why do you think they do this? Why do they want *your* children to use their technology, but not their own?



Discussion Questions for Families/Groups (Adults and Kids)

Reading Both Books

(continued)



6. On page 160 of *THE AMAZING GENERATION*, the authors encourage kids to do things for themselves—they say “it’s important to do things for yourself *because they’re hard.*”
 - ★ **KIDS:** Do the adults in your life let you do hard things? Do they let you go places without them? Are you allowed to use the stove, make a snack, visit a friend, or go to the store or park without an adult? If something is hard, do your parents encourage you to keep trying or help you do it? How does that make you feel?
 - ★ **TOGETHER:** What are some ways you can work on letting kids do more things for themselves? (See page 201 of *The Amazing Generation* for instructions on how to do the Let Grow Experience, an activity designed to do just that!)
7. **TOGETHER:** What does freedom mean to you? Have you ever felt free? When’s the last time you felt truly free? What were you doing? Who were you with? Were any screens involved?
8. **TOGETHER:** After reading these books, what changes are you considering implementing in your life? In your family’s lives? What big-picture changes would you be interested in bringing to your community or friend groups?

THE REBELS’ CODE

- Use **TECHNOLOGY** as a **TOOL**—**DON’T LET technology use YOU**
- **FILL your LIFE with REAL FRIENDSHIP, FREEDOM, and FUN**

Extension Ideas for Community Reads (or Bringing the Conversation Home)

- ★ **FOCUS ON SMALL CHANGES.** When discussing, try and focus on small changes you can make in your life now. Can you and your friends do a Rebel Reset? Can your parents?
- ★ **REDUCE YOUR SCREEN USE!** Use the calculator on page 71 in *The Amazing Generation* to calculate how much of your life is spent on screens. Did this number surprise you? Do you want to reduce it, increase it, or keep it the same?
- ★ Sit down with a trusted adult and answer the questions on page 197 and 198 in *The Amazing Generation* about **FIGURING OUT WHO YOU ARE**. Ask your parents or caregivers to answer the questions with you. What did you learn? What answers did you have in common? What answers were different?
- ★ The authors tell us to pay attention to the things we're paying attention to. Go on a **"PAY ATTENTION" WALK** around your neighborhood. Bring a small notebook, and pay attention to what you notice. When you get back, share with your class, friends, or a trusted adult. What did you pay attention to? What does that mean? If someone was with you on the walk, what did they pay attention to? Was it the same as you, or different?
- ★ Have a **LET GROW EXPERIENCE** (see page 201 for instructions)! Pick a new thing you've never done before in the real world. Follow the Let Grow steps and have a full experience that you plan from start to finish. How did you feel while you were doing this? How did your parents feel while you were growing?
- ★ **ADVOCATE TO YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT.** Attend a board meeting and ask questions. Can your schools commit to a phone-free learning environment? If they already have, what further steps can they take to reduce screen use and increase opportunities for in-person socialization in school?
- ★ **DO SOMETHING THAT MATTERS!** Have you ever volunteered in your community before? Has someone you know volunteered? Can you tag along with them the next time they go? Organize a school or neighborhood cleanup, start a food donation drive, or help out at a community organization. Visit <https://www.volunteer.gov/s/> to apply for volunteer opportunities around the country.

Read More!

A Suggested Booklist for Adults

- ★ *How to Break Up with Your Phone, Revised Edition: The 30-Day Digital Detox Plan* – Catherine Price, Ten Speed Press, 2025
- ★ *The Power of Fun: How to Feel Alive Again* – Catherine Price, Dial Press, 2021
- ★ *Free-Range Kids: How Parents and Teachers Can Let Go and Let Grow Second Edition* – Lenore Skenazy, Jossey-Bass, 2021
- ★ *The Tech Exit: A Practical Guide to Freeing Kids and Teens from Smartphones* – Clare Morell, Forum Books, 2025
- ★ *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children* – Angela J. Hanscom, New Harbinger Publications 2016
- ★ *The Opt-Out Family: How to Give Your Kids What Technology Can't* – Erin Loechner, Zondervan Books, 2024
- ★ *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* – Richard Louv, Algonquin Books, 2008
- ★ *There's No Such Thing as Bad Weather: A Scandinavian Mom's Secrets for Raising Healthy, Resilient, and Confident Kids (from Friluftsliv to Hygge)* – Linda Åkeson McGurk, Touchstone, 2017
- ★ *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World* – Cal Newport, Portfolio, 2019
- ★ *2, 4, 6, 8 This Is How We Regulate: 75 Play Therapy Activities to Increase Mindfulness in Children* – Tracy Turner-Bumberry, PESI Publishing, 2018
- ★ *How to Raise a Wild Child: The Art and Science of Falling in Love with Nature* – Scott D. Sampson, Mariner Books, 2016
- ★ *50 Dangerous Things (You Should Let Your Children Do)* – Gever Tulley and Julie Spiegler, Berkley, 2011
- ★ *Until the Streetlights Come On: How a Return to Play Brightens Our Present and Prepares Kids for an Uncertain Future* – Ginny Yurich, Baker Books, 2023



Read More!

A Suggested Booklist for Kids

- ★ *Can We Help?: Kids Volunteering to Help Their Communities* – George Ancona, Candlewick Press, 2019
- ★ *Stories for Kids Who Dare to Be Different: True Tales of Amazing People Who Stood Up and Stood Out (The Dare to Be Different Series)* – Ben Brooks, Running Press Kids, 2019
- ★ *Brain Games: Big Book of Boredom Busters* – Stephanie Warren Drimmer, National Geographic Kids, 2018
- ★ *The Complete Baking Book for Young Chefs: 100+ Sweet and Savory Recipes that You'll Love to Bake, Share and Eat!* – America's Test Kitchen Kids, Sourcebooks Explore, 2019
- ★ *The Highlights Book of Things to Do (Highlights Books of Doing): Ultimate Kids Activity Book with Over 500 Screen-Free Activities, Brain Teasers, Recipes, Crafts and More for Endless Imaginative Play* – Highlights Press, 2020
- ★ *Gigantic Fantastic All-in-One Road Trip Activity Book: Preventing Boredom 1 Mile at a Time! For ages 6-16* – Ollie Oakley, Ollie Kind: Be Kind, Do Kind, 2025
- ★ *Big Ideas for Curious Minds: An Introduction to Philosophy* – The School of Life, 2019
- ★ *Rethink the Internet: How to Make the Digital World a Lot Less Sucky* – Trisha Prabhu, 2022

