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| Tristan Harris: | Hey everyone, it's Tristan, and in a moment you're going to hear a discussion that I had with the author and social psychologist Jonathan Haidt about his new book, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. And I interviewed Jon in front of a live audience in San Francisco just earlier this month. Towards the end of our talk, John says something kind of profound, that the biggest opponent we face when it comes to turning the social media crisis around is resignation. We've all been so trapped in our reliance on these platforms that that incentive seems so baked in, and everyone is just using it. It seems like it could never change. |

And while it's indeed difficult to change the tide for all of social media, that doesn't mean it would be impossible to change this for kids. So imagine a world where 2024 was the year it all turned around. Imagine that *The Anxious Generation* did to social media what Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* did to catalyze the environmental movement in the 1960s. Imagine a world where hundreds of thousands of schools went phone free and having a flip phone was actually cool. Imagine millions of fed up parents joined Mothers Against Media Addiction, or MAMA, and lobbied their states to pass age-appropriate design codes. Imagine that led to passing the Kids' Online Safety Act in Washington. Imagine a world where parents' lives got simpler and less stressful because the rates of self-harm, depression, and suicide plummeted in kids, the opposite of the trends we're seeing now. Jon and I both agree that there hasn't been a more promising moment that either of us can remember for this vision to become real.

And John has some bold yet simple solutions in his book that we're going to discuss at the end of this conversation.

Now, before we dive in, a quick announcement that the Center for Humane Technology is hiring for an Operations Director, and you can learn more at humantech.com/careers. And with that, here we go.

Thank you so much Ken for hosting all of us here in the Commonwealth Club. It's good to see all of you. We're really honored to have this event. Jon is someone I've admired for a very long time, even before *The Social Dilemma*, which he and I were both in. How many people here have seen *The Social Dilemma*? Wow, I guess this makes sense. It's a higher percentage than normal. How many people here are parents? We can look around the room. This is a lot of parents in the audience. How many people here are teachers or educators? Quite a number of those as well. Regulators or digital policy, tech policy people? I've got some very low hands. I know we have some.

I know because CHT invited our network here of some of the EU policymakers that we are friends with. Any tech company executives in the room? It's okay, you can raise your hand. Okay, good. So I say that because we really care about how we change these issues. It's easy to get caught admiring the problem, and

we really care about how we change this. And the thing that I respect so much about Jon's latest book, *The Anxious Generation*, is it's all about what we can do about it. And we're going to get into that by the end. So I promise we're going to focus a bit on the problems, but we're also going to talk about what we can do about it. And the stakes are high. The health of a civilization depends on the health of the upbringing of its children. And if we have a problem at the foundation of our society, we have to clean that up to have a future.

And I also wanted to say that much like we at the Center for Humane Technology, we focus on incentives. In 2013, when I made this presentation that went viral at Google about how technology was going to be influencing the global climate change of culture, it was all about focusing on the incentives. Charlie Munger, who is Warren Buffett's business partner said, "If you show me the incentive, I will show you the outcome." And I think the key thing that Jon and CHT are both interested in is how do perverse incentives and the lack of coordination to change them create a more problematic outcome for society? Because a race for engagement and the race to the bottom of the brain stem was predictably going to create a more addicted, distracted, lonely, sexualized society, because that's where the incentive takes us.

But what Jon is offering us with his book is a crystal clear case of all of the research that makes it clear where those harms are showing up to make it definitive so we can hopefully make another choice. And before we start supercharging every perverse incentive we have in the world with artificial intelligence, we actually gave our AI Dilemma talk here in this very room about a year ago, it is so important that we are able to spot those perverse incentives before we push double exponential power through those perverse incentives. So with no further ado, I'd like to invite Jon Haidt, a very deep hero of mine and friend, up to the stage to give a presentation on some of that research. Thank you.

Jonathan Haidt:    Well, thank you so much, Tristan. So a question for you. Tristan asked a bunch of questions about who we have in the audience. How many of you feel as though somehow things are spiraling out of control? You have a vague sense that things are getting weirder and weirder. Raise your hand. Okay. So you're right, they are. And if we go back to 2011, 2012, when we were all such techno optimists, at least most of us, the internet had been so amazing. God-like powers of knowledge in the '90s and the fall of the Berlin Wall was just before that. So the internet was like the new age of democracy and it's going to knock down all the dictators. It's going to be amazing, all the way up to 2011, the Arab Spring. So most of us were techno-optimists. I certainly was. The future looked incredibly bright compared to millions of years of war and famine and things like that.

And that's part of the reason why I think we missed what was happening to our kids, because we kind of thought, "This is amazing and the kids are immersing

themselves in it. What could go wrong?" And I'm starting this way because one of the first people to see that this wasn't what was going to happen was Tristan, first when he was working at Google and he gave this internal talk, this internal PowerPoint talk about, "Hey, we're sucking up everybody's attention around the world, and what's going to happen if no one has any more attention to do anything? This is probably not a good thing." And that was 2013. And because he understands the complexity, not just of the technology, which a lot of people do, but Tristan is a really deep abstract thinker who's able to think about the complexity of society as a social scientist or sociologist would as well.

So I'm really grateful to him. It's been really amazing for me to work with him on The Social Dilemma. We met before then. So I was very excited to get this invitation to speak with Tristan to you. What we're going to do first, though, is I think it's very helpful to lay out what has happened to young people, what has happened to people born after 1995. People born after, let's say, 1997 on average have a very different profile from people born, say, in 1993. It changed very, very suddenly. So I'm going to just go through a few slides. Now, I'm aware that my slides and graphs will be great for you here in the room, and they'll be great for those who are going to be watching the video that would be made perhaps on YouTube, and not so good for the people listening on the podcast.

So I'll try to sort of explain the overview of each slide without going into too much detail. I'm going to start, I'll just lay out just the thesis, and then I'm going to start with what has happened to education. So my argument, in brief, is that humans had a play-based childhood for millions of years, because that's what mammals do. All mammals play. They have to play to wire up their brains. But that play-based childhood began to fade out in the 1980s in United States, and it was gone by 2010. And that's because right around 2010 is when the phone-based childhood sweeps in. Our children are now raised largely with a phone at the center of everything. And let's talk about what happened when that change happened. Another way I can summarize my book is by saying we have overprotected our children in the real world and we have underprotected them online. And both of those are mistakes.

So a month or two ago, Derek Thompson, a great data writer, data analyst in The Atlantic had an article when the PISA scores came out. PISA is the one global assessment of how students are doing around the world. 15-year-olds, how are they doing academically? And what Derek pointed out, which people were seeing in this new data, is that scores in math and reading and those were all fairly steady. And then all of a sudden after 2012 they drop. So that's international. Around the world, our young people are, I shouldn't quite say getting stupider, but they're not learning as much as they would have a few years before. I wonder why. And then Derek didn't include this, but this is another dataset we have. This is called the Nation's Report Card, the National

Assessment of Educational Progress. And here, you can track what happened in the United States.

From the '70s to 2012, it's slow. I mean, to raise the intelligence or the academic progress of an entire nation is really, really hard. But we were doing it. We were doing it slow, steady progress in math and reading until 2012, and then it drops. Now everyone says, "Oh, COVID. COVID was so terrible." And it was, and you can see that the drop with COVID is substantial, but the drop didn't begin with COVID. Our students began learning less after 2012. So now I'll transition to what my book is more about, which is the mental health. But my point is across almost any assessment you want to make, Gen Z, born 1996 and later, is doing poorly. And it's very sudden. It happened very suddenly in the early 2010s. So we can see that I first saw this on college campuses. Greg Lukianoff actually was one of the first to spot it. Something was changing about students who arrived in 2014 compared to, say, those who arrived in 2012.

Up through 2012, they were all Millennials. But as we go on in the decade, you see a number of things rise a little bit. ADHD is up a little bit, learning disability up a tiny bit, but it's really this yellow line, which is psychological disorders. That's what rises fast. That's the big difference between Gen Z and the Millennials. Is that Gen Z has very high rates of mental illness, especially depression and anxiety. Now, this is data collected from university health systems, and what we see, so these are US undergraduates with a variety of conditions. And all the graphs that I show, if you track the data up through 2010, you see nothing that is... Even in the '90s, and especially the 2000s, mental health was not getting worse, and on some measures it was getting a little better. The Millennials actually were a little more mentally healthy than Gen X before them.

Gen X is 1965 through 1980. But what you see as we go on into the 2010s is this, everything goes up, but it's especially depression and anxiety. They are now at such high levels it's just a normal part of being a teenager in the United States. These are college students, but it's just a normal part of being a young person now that you are depressed and anxious. It's not that the majority is, but it's almost. I mean, it's around 30 or 40% are depressed and anxious. This graph shows that it's actually just the young people, because as we go on in this period, what you see is that the lines for older people don't really change, but the youngest generation is really where the increase is concentrated. The rise is also gendered in a lot of ways. Boys and girls are doing much worse than they were before, but often the rise is larger for girls.

Now, in this case, the percentage increase is actually slightly higher for boys, but they started a much lower level. So they go from about 5% to 12% had a major depression in the last year, a big increase percentage-wise. But you wouldn't say, "Oh, boys, it's just normal for them to be depressed." They're not. It's 12%.

Whereas for girls, it went from 12% up to nearly 30%, which is a very large portion of our girls have had a major depressive episode in the last year. And I want you to notice, the data for 2022 just came in about two months ago, and I was able to add it to the graph. You can kind of see the COVID effect there if you look closely. See, COVID made things a little bit worse, but it really just... It went right back to the trend line. COVID is trivial compared to whatever happened in the early 2010s.

And it's not just that they're saying that they're depressed and anxious. When we look at measures of behavior, this shows it's actually emergency room visits for self-harm. Again, no trend before 2010. And then after 2010, girls go way, way up, especially pre-teen girls. The CDC divides the data up into two age groups. The younger age group is almost always where you see the biggest percentage increase. Something really, really hit 10 to 14-year-old girls, very hard in this country in the early 2010s. And it's not just self-harm, it's also suicide, which boys commit more suicide than girls. They tend to use lethal means, such as a gun or a tall building. Girls make many more attempts. But when we look at actual deaths, what we see is a very large and sudden increase. I mean, this is quite astonishing. Between 2012 and 2013, the suicide rate for young teen girls went up 67% in a single year.

And it wasn't a blip. It wasn't like an error that it went down the next year. It was the first leg of a rise up to 134% increase. And it's not just us. It's happening in very much the same way in all of English-speaking countries. This is Britain for self-harm. We see the same pattern. And this is Australia's psychiatric emergency department visits. Again, no trend before 2010, and then afterwards, up, way up for boys and for girls. Same in New Zealand, similar data from Scandinavia. It's not all over the world. We don't see this in East Asia, but it is all over Northern Europe and the English-speaking countries and North America. Now why? Why would this pattern be happening in so many countries at the same time? Everyone has a theory. People hit me with all kinds of theories to explain it, and I say, "Fine, that might work for the United States, but why did that cause girls in Australia to start cutting themselves? It doesn't make any sense."

And I think there is really only one theory on the table. I keep waiting for someone to propose another, and nobody has, which is what I call the great rewiring of childhood. It happened in two phases, as I said, the end of the play-based childhood, and then the birth of the phone-based childhood. I'll just show you a few more slides, and then I'll invite Tristan up and we'll continue the conversation. Something I didn't realize until I really got deep into writing the book, you find this graph at Our World in Data, they graph out adoption of various technologies. And for communication technologies, because they're network issues, there's always a brief period where everyone is getting it. You know what? Some people are getting a telephone. You have a point everyone

now is getting a telephone, that sort of thing. And what you see is that the first wave, the personal computer, so many older people like me remember when you got your first IBM PC. Or out here, I guess you would've gotten a Mac, whatever. So that was adopted, and you could do WordStar and other things like that.

But it's not until you get dial-up internet that it really becomes useful. And then that rises very fast in the '90s into the 2000s. And that first wave was wonderful. It was magical. It didn't do anything bad to mental health. It corresponded with the period of the greatest growth in democracy ever. So we were all techno-optimists. This stuff is great, isn't it? But it's the second wave. This is what did in Gen Z, at least in my telling in the book. It was the beginning of social media. Social media, which we used to call social networking systems, because it was a way you would just connect and you'd share your profile. Social networking systems are adopted very, very rapidly, even before the smartphone. But once the smartphone comes out as well, those two together are by far the fastest technological adoption in history. Although I think maybe ChatGPT might've been faster. I don't know. I don't have the data.

But this transformed things just in the blink of an eye. And this is exactly when teen mental health plummets, and also democracy, which democracy reached a high point around 2011, 2012, and now it's been drifting downward, the number of democracies and their quality. So just to illustrate, childhood used to be... Older people, I'm sure your fondest memories are not with your parents and they're not sitting watching TV. They're probably, you're outside playing. You're having adventures. It used to be just for younger people in the audience. If you look at the bottom left picture, it used to just be a thing that you could ride around town in a bicycle with an extraterrestrial in your basket. It's just something that we did. Whereas now, childhood is basically this. If you're a boy and you want to play video games with your friends, you have to go home alone.

You can't go over to your friend's house, you need your headset, your controller, your screen. So childhood now is much more solitary than it ever has been in human history. And the results, I think, are not good. So there are so many different avenues of harm. In fact, in our brief time, I barely have time to just read them. I'll just read them for the audience listening in. Normally, if I had the full hour, I would go through them. I'll just read them. The opportunity costs. Kids are on for nine hours a day, five hours a day of which is social media. Social deprivation, sleep deprivation, attention fragmentation, behavioral addiction. Those affect everyone, boys and girls. Then I have a whole chapter on why social media harms girls more. Girls are more sensitive. Boys and girls are just a little different in their social needs.

And so I'll just list them. Visual social comparison, perfectionism, relational aggression. Girls share emotions more than boys, including anxiety and sadness.

Girls are more susceptible to sociogenic transmission, especially via TikTok. And girls are more subject to sexual predation and harassment. It's just more part of your daily life online, if you're a girl, that you're approached by older men with bad intent. But the boy story is a little more complicated, not quite as obvious, but my research associate, Zach Rausch, and I, I think we worked it out pretty well drawing on Richard Reeve's book, Of Boys and Men, that boys have just been withdrawing from effort in the real world since the '80s, '70s or '80s, and getting lured ever more into the virtual world where they can get their desires for coalitional violence, that is war and sports, pretend. You can get your desires for that sort of play satisfied in video games and your desire for sex from pornography.

So boys are just retreating from the real world. So we get rising levels of porn addiction, multiplayer video games take up a huge amount of time. They're great fun. They're incredibly immersive. And so anyway, the point is boys' lives have been upended too. It doesn't show up as much in depression and anxiety. It shows up as just withdrawing from effort in the real world. Boys are just not really doing the things. They're not making the efforts and experiencing the failures and setbacks that would strengthen them to grow into men. So Tristan and I will talk about this, but there's actually a way out, because almost all the parents hate what's going on. All the teachers hate what's going on. All the principals and heads of school hate what's going on. And guess what? Gen Z hates what's going on. They see it. They're not in denial.

They really see that they're trapped. And you say, "Well, why do you waste your life this way? Why don't you just get off?" I can't because everyone else is on. So it's a social dilemma, it's a collective action problem. And so what I'm proposing as the way out is if we all just agree to adopt four norms, even if Congress never comes to our aid, even if Congress never does a damn thing to fix the mistakes it made in the '90s that set us up for this, including not just requiring no age verification, but saying, "Oh, and by the way, you can't sue the companies either. They have blanket protection from lawsuits for what they do to our kids." So even if Congress never fixes the mistake, and I should say there is real hope for a bill, KOSA, the Kid's Online Safety Act, that is the one thing that Congress might do. State legislatures, including Florida and Utah are actually doing, I think, a great job of trying out approaches that actually will make a difference.

But if we just do these four norms, if nobody gives their kid a smartphone before high school, just give them a flip phone. That's what the Millennials had and they were fine. Okay, some of you may not think so, but in terms of the mental health data, the Millennials were fine. No social media before 16. That's going to be the hardest one to do, and that's where we really could use legislative help, but we can do it even without that. Phone-free schools. This is an absolute, this one is easy. This one is the biggest bang for the buck. This one can be done all over the country by this September. You just buy phone lockers or Yondr

pouches, and you need the phone to get to and from school. I understand that. But anything that can text must be locked up, because if they have anything, including a Chromebook, if they have anything that can text, and some kids are texting, they all have to be texting because nobody wants to be the only one who didn't know about the thing that happened in third period.

So we have to go phone-free schools. And the kids love it once they detox. After a couple of weeks, their brains actually enjoy talking to other kids. And we need much more childhood independence and free play. If we're going to greatly reduce screen time for kids, we have to give them back something fun, something normal, which is play with each other, hanging out with each other, having adventures with each other. Oh, and just a final note, I teamed up with Eric Schmidt, who has a variety of concerns about AI as a technologist, and then me as a social psychologist, we wrote an essay laying out how set aside the risks of whether AI is going to become sentient and wipe us all out. Let's just put all that stuff aside.

Let's just look at what social media is currently doing to children and democracy. What's going to happen as now everybody can use AI to fake everybody else? What's going to happen? It's going to get even worse for kids, even worse for democracy. So that's an argument that we made that Tristan and I, I'm sure we'll be talking about in just a moment. And so that's my presentation to you. My argument is that the play-based childhood was replaced by the phone-based childhood, that we have overprotected our kids in the real world and underprotected them online. We have to reverse that. And that's it. I welcome Tristan, and then we'll talk for a while, and then we welcome your questions. Thank you.

Tristan Harris:     Just a quick personal question, because it's something that I've actually wrestled with in this. When you're with the scale of the stats that you just mentioned, just curious on a personal level in your own nervous system, how do you hold some of the implications of those graphs?

Jonathan Haidt:     Yeah. Well, sometimes... there's a scene in Jurassic Park where they first... They come to the island and then they first see the dinosaurs. And it's a little bit like that. Because I was not supposed to write this book. I had a contract to write a book on what social media was doing to democracy.

Tristan Harris:     I remember.

Jonathan Haidt:     It was going to be called Life After Babel: Adapting To A World We May Never Again Share. And I wrote the first chapter, which was the first chapter of this book. I wrote the first chapter laying out all the graphs. And it was like, "What?" Because once I realized it was not just us, it was international, that's where I felt like, "Wait, there's something really, really big going on here." And how do I

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|  | handle it personally? Well, compared to the concerns you and I have shared about the decline and possible collapse of democracy, the loss of a generation is just kind of more of the same. |
| Tristan Harris: | I think there is something to just the scale of... I'm sharing this because I think for me, and in looking at these issues just like you, I struggle with it. I struggle when I was at Google and I saw that this was going to go to billions of people, these incentives, and I felt in my own nervous system. In fact, my co-founder Aza of the Center for Humane Technology, we used to call it getting pre-TSD, that instead of post-traumatic stress disorder- |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Oh. |
| Tristan Harris: | ... it was like having pre-traumatic. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | This comet is coming. |
| Tristan Harris: | Yeah. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Yeah. |
| Tristan Harris: | Well, and it was just a personal question, because for me, it motivates me to say this has to stop. This has to stop. What more evidence do we really need? And the next question I had for you is, I know you've been getting a bunch of critiques from academics and from other folks who want to question the data, say we've had many moral panics. If you were just to briefly sort of steel man or respond to any of the critiques that are remaining, I can't imagine based on the clarity of what you've presented, but what are people saying? |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Sure. Well, there are two main critiques from other researchers. The main one is this is just another moral panic. The kids are okay. The null hypothesis is true. This is correlation, not causation. That's the standard view. That's what they've said. And you could defend that in 2019, I think, when I really entered this debate. But since then, it's become clear, actually, no, the kids are not all right, and it's true internationally. And most of them acknowledge that. And now there are a lot of experiments. It's not just correlation. It was mostly correlational before.

But now there are... Zach Rausch and I have collected, I think, 25 experiments, 16 of which show significant effects. And the ones that don't, it's because these short time intervals, not enough time to detox the brain. So I think now there's a lot of experimental evidence. And then the other thing just occurred to me recently, because they're right that we should be concerned about a moral panic. And in many ways, I hear myself talking, I look at my writing, and I do sound just like the people that they point to from 50 and 100 and 2,000 years |

ago. So in a sense, yes, there is a moral panic and I am fomenting it. But if it's actually happening, then you would say that I'm an alarm ringer, not an alarmist.

Tristan Harris:    Right, exactly.

Jonathan Haidt:    And then the final point is in every previous moral panic, one of the features is lurid stories about this thing that happened. A kid smoked marijuana and then he chopped off his parent's head or whatever, some thing. And I read it in a newspaper. And, "Oh, my God, this is terrible." And so maybe most of them didn't happen. Maybe some did. This one is entirely different. As I go around, almost every journalist who interviews me, either before the interview or during the interview, they say, "I've seen this in my own kids," or, "I've seen this in my kids' friends." Everyone sees it. This is not lurid examples trumped up to make people afraid. Everyone sees it now. Yeah.

Tristan Harris:    One of the talking points that often comes up in our work very often, especially being friends with people in the tech industry, is that the people who work at these companies don't let their own children use their products. That to me... If you were to imagine solutions, and I love the simplicity of the four solutions that you brought up, and I actually would love for them to eventually bring that back, because I think it's just important for people to dwell on those. But if you think about if there was just the rule that you could only build products that your own children would use for eight hours a day, imagine there's no regulation, there's no regulation, but just imagine that. You can only build products that your own children would use for eight hours a day. I just wonder what percentage of the harms would that clean up?

Jonathan Haidt:    That is great, because I believe, if I remember correctly, Hammurabi in his original code said something like a person who builds a bridge, if it falls down, his own son will be put under a bridge that falls, something like that.

Tristan Harris:    Yeah.

Jonathan Haidt:    You are personally responsible for what happens. You have an obligation, and let's put your children on the line.

Tristan Harris:    Right.

Jonathan Haidt:    Yeah, I love it. I love it. I mean, I can't imagine what law or constitutional provision would allow it, but it's definitely fun to imagine that.

Tristan Harris:    One of the other things that comes up when I think about your work, and I think about the debate about it, is academically studying that there's this object called social media, and it's like an apple. And we look at the apple and we study the apple and we say, "Is the apple good or bad for people?" And then one of the

things that I think brought some of our work together and is visible in The Social Dilemma is when the insiders are coming to you saying that apple isn't that shape by accident, this thing called social media isn't that shaped by accident. There was a bunch of incentives, and every day thousands of people go to work to shape that object in a particular form and way. There's a particular geometry it's moving towards.

I remember my friends from Instagram when they were inventing Instagram, and they were following this design pattern they learned at Twitter, which was if everybody has a new thing called a profile, and you get new followers every day, then suddenly your email inbox is just getting... You got five new followers, and you would click to go back to see who they were. And that was a cool design pattern. It was good at getting people to come back and then fill up this follower bank account. It was like a video game. And I'm saying this because I think when we're trying to get to where a system is going that could potentially prove harmful, if we're using the post facto, let's study it for 10 years and see what the effects are, as we're about to move into AI, we're going to do so much more faster, we have to get good at being able to anticipate those consequences.

Jonathan Haidt:     That's right. And we are terrible at anticipating them. I gave a talk at a bunch of tech companies in January of 2020 just before COVID. And at Twitter, I was invited in to give a talk by the one social psychologist that they had. They had only one psychologist at Twitter. Here they are messing up the world and its people, but they had one psychologist. Facebook had a lot. Facebook was hiring a lot of social psychologists. But it seemed, as we now know from Frances Haugen's revelations and all, they weren't there to design safety for the kids. They were there to design engagement for the kids. So I'll take your very abstract analogy of a thing like an apple that is not really what it seems and it was changed, and I'll add in the law of decay, which is whenever you have a system, it's going to be taken over by viruses and worms and parasites and things like that.

And so most of these platforms, they start off amazing and wonderful. Let's have a platform on which 12-year-old girls dance, what could possibly go wrong with that? Or let's have a platform on which 12-year-old kids can send each other disappearing messages? I mean, who would possibly exploit that for nefarious purposes? So it all seems fun and playful at first, but even if... Look, most people are good. Most people are honest. But what has happened is the digital transformation has meant that it doesn't matter what most people are because they don't count. What matters is the dynamics. And what the dynamics has done is super-duper empowered the extremists on the far left, the far right, foreign intelligence agents, and trolls. Those four groups now are super empowered to do what they want. And the rest of us are like, "What the hell is happening?"

Tristan Harris:    You're making me think a story from someone I know who was involved in the thing that predated what TikTok was, and they were saying, "What's a use case that you could get people to engage?" And they noticed their users were young, and they're like, "Well, what's the use case that young people would engage a lot?" Well, if they're really young, the teenagers, they're going out in the world, they're Instagramming, they're taking photos of their life. But if you're under, I don't even know, 16, if you're not allowed to leave the house, what's something that would get those kids to participate? Well, I know. Dancing in your bedroom. That's something that everybody can do, is dance in their bedroom. So let's build an app where dancing in your bedroom is the thing that everyone's competing on. And then you get this whole new thing called TikTok. And anyway, these incentives are so pernicious, and I think there's this kind of obvious point of, at the end of the day, wouldn't we want this stuff to be designed by people who are asking the question what would be in the best service of children?

Jonathan Haidt:    Right. And that's, of course, the difficulty here, is that we don't live in a society in which everybody is supposed to do what is best for society. I think history has shown that a free market system ends up producing far more benefits, far more vitality. But the key is it has to be an efficient market where you don't have externalities imposed on others, you don't have exploitation of public goods. So I teach in a business school, I used to teach the professional responsibility class, and we'd go through the four major kinds of market failures, and how when you have a market where you don't have any of those failures, there are very few ethical problems. I mean, capitalism ends up... There's one, I think it was a philosopher at Arizona State University said, "A good capitalist society is one in which the only way you can get rich is by making other people better off." And that's true. If we can get the regulation right-

Tristan Harris:    That's right.

Jonathan Haidt:    ... then I'm a huge fan of the free market.

Tristan Harris:    Right.

Jonathan Haidt:    But the companies we're talking about here are operating brilliantly within a space where they get to do all four market failures.

Tristan Harris:    Yeah, yeah. You talk a lot in the book about, it was in one of your slides, the opportunity costs. There's certain things that make up healthy childhood development, which can sound normative. Like you're telling people that there's this certain specific list of things that are healthy. But you mentioned the opportunity cost, and you call social media an experience blocker, because it prevents some of the skills like turn-taking, attunement to others, empathy, play, anti-fragility. Just want to talk about that opportunity cost, because at the end of the day, if we're here in this room because we care about getting to a world

where technology is strengthening those underlying characteristics of what makes healthy children's development, what are those things that we need, the technology we would need to be in service of?

Jonathan Haidt:     Yeah. Well, let's start by just looking at how it affects us. I mean, we adults, we use these tools, variety of things. I use Twitter to get the word out and to learn new things. It has some great uses. And how many of you feel, when you think about what social media has done for your life, how many of you feel that it really has made your life better versus, on net, it's made your life worse? I'm just curious. I don't actually know the answer. I haven't asked this before. Raise your hand if you'd say, overall social media, all the platforms broadly construed, are making your life better. Raise your hand high. Okay, that's a number. And raise your hand if you'd say, no, overall it makes your life worse. Okay, a larger number, although many of you didn't vote. But this is again, a collective action situation.

We all have to do it even though many, on average, feel that it makes life worse. College students when asked, would you rather live in a world in which TikTok or Instagram were never invented? The majority say yes. We'd just like to be liberated from it. Just if we could get rid of it so that nobody's on it, then it would be better. So this is for adults we're talking about. Now let's look at childhood. They don't have networking needs. They don't need these tools. We use these tools for our job, for all sorts of things. 11-year-old kids don't need digital tools for networking or getting the word out. And so if we take a child that they spend some time in school, they have some time with their family, and then play time is the most, it's like the thing they need most, imagine into that child's day.

And those of you who have a kid, let's say in middle or high school, imagine if someone came along and said, "I have this thing your kid has to do for five hours a day, just however busy your kid is. Let's take five hours out of the day to do this thing." Now, that's conservative, because that's just the social media part, not the video games, not anything. Just social media, five hours a day. What's going to happen? Now, they still have to do a lot of other stuff, so they're going to have to do less sleep. They can't sleep as much. There's just not time.

You can't read a book. There are no books. They don't read. Book reading has plummeted. Hobbies, no time for a hobby. Talking with someone, no time for that, because you have to service. You have to like this. You have so much you have to do to manage your digital brand and your network connections. So it kind of pushes out everything else. And imagine, so all of you who are adults, go back to your childhood, think about all the stuff that you did, and now remove 70% of the good stuff. I think that's really sad. Yeah.

Tristan Harris: Yeah. One of the things I really appreciate about your diagnosis, and we think about this as well in our work at Center for Humane Technology, which is these are coordination problems. Tweens need a smartphone because they'll feel they get left behind if they don't. If everybody else has one and I don't, then I'm just literally not going to be able to operate at the same speed that other people are operating at. Parents feel like they have to fall into that trap too, they can't be the one to take their kid off of something if it means that their kid is socially excluded.

If the other journalists, now as adults, are using social media to gain influence and public notoriety on Twitter, and the other journalists know that Twitter is bad, they're just going to lose the game and not have influence if they don't do that thing. And so what I so appreciate about your work, and that is the answer, is it's not about just individual things that I can do for myself. It's how do we solve the coordination problem? So do you want to talk a little about how you see addressing those coordination problems through these solutions?

Jonathan Haidt: Yeah, sure. So yeah, first, almost all the advice to parents is what you can do to make things less toxic for your kid. And they're very hard to do. And most of us are struggling. Actually, I'm curious. Raise your hand if you have a child between the ages of seven and 18, raise your hand high. Okay, just those of you, how many of you would say that conflict over technology, struggles, disagreements, all that is a fairly regular part of your family life? Raise your hand high. And parents who would say, no, we have no problem, raise your hand. I'm sure there are some. Okay, there are a few. So it can happen, but we're all struggling with it. And so my argument is, let's not just accept that they're going to spend 10 hours a day, nine hours on their devices and make that healthier. You can't do that. We have to greatly reduce the time so that they can do other things. And we can't do it unless we all do it, or at least unless most people do it. So let's just talk about the... Oh, yeah, we got them right there.

Tristan Harris: Yeah, we got them.

Jonathan Haidt: Yeah. So no smartphones before high school. So the real transition is when kids get the internet in their pocket available 24/7. And it's not just that they can reach the internet, it's that once you got the app store and push notifications, now millions of companies can reach your child without your knowledge or permission. If your child downloads an app, that company now, by default, they can send notifications, and kids don't seem to know to turn off notifications. My students actually get a notification every time they get an email, they get a notification whenever any app wants to alert them that somebody's getting a divorce in Hollywood.

And so it's really that transition to having internet with you in your pocket. That's what really seems to push kids over the edge. So delay that for as long as

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|  | possible. Nobody before the age of 14 should have that. A flip phone is great, because all you do is text and call. That's it. It's for communication. I'm hearing from a lot of parents who say they're using Apple Watches or a smart watch, because I understand the need. You need to be able to text your kid, "I'm 10 minutes late, just I'll be there." So that's fine. But they don't need a smartphone. |
| Tristan Harris: | Or a flip phone, you mentioned also. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Yeah, but a flip phone is sort of the... The paradigm is a flip phone, because it's not very easy to type, which is good. |
| Tristan Harris: | Yeah, exactly. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | You don't want them to... See you at 3:00. Meet you at the mall. That's all you want. |
| Tristan Harris: | Yeah. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | So that's the first one. So the first one is actually pretty easy. My fear is that I think that this norm is going to get adopted in upscale communities where you've got two full-time parents and they're professional parents, and they're reading all the... So I think we have this huge digital divide. We used to think the digital divide was that all the rich kids had computers and the poor kids didn't. We were wrong. Well, might've been some truth to that back then. Now the digital divide is that kids in wealthy families have two parents trying to put controls on, and they use the stuff a lot less. Whereas kids in single parent families, poor families, African American, and Latino families, they have substantially higher rates of use because there are fewer controls. It's just hard for that family to really do that. So this first norm I think will get adopted, but unevenly. |
| Tristan Harris: | In elite schools. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Unevenly, yeah. And actually, that's why the third norm is so important. The phone-free schools, because that is an equity issue. That is, if everyone has to go six or seven hours a day without these addictive devices, that's going to especially benefit the lower SES kids compared to the upper SES kids who are not quite as addicted. |
| Tristan Harris: | I think of what you're proposing here is as big as the introduction of the weekend or the Sabbath into society. Because if you think about all the problems we have are coordination problems, multipolar traps. If I don't do it, I lose to the guy that will. I want to raise my GDP, but I want to put a carbon tax on my economy, so I don't do climate change. But if China doesn't do the carbon tax and I do, and I just diminish my economy and theirs keeps growing, then I'm |

just going to lose. If I don't use social media to get popular as a journalist, but all the other journalists are using it, then I'm just going to lose and I won't have the influence that I want to have as a journalist.

And if you think about the Sabbath, it's like people had an incentive to marginally eke out more work and advantage over their fellow human being in their society, but we would just all be way better off if we all agreed to just take Saturday and Sunday off. And it just calms down. Or like a restaurant, to use our new executive director, Daniel Barcay, who's sitting over there, everyone starts getting very loud in the restaurant, and we would all just be better off if we went shh just for a moment. So I think what you're doing here is just sort of a soft shh to humanity.

Jonathan Haidt:    Yeah. We're all overwhelmed, and everybody feels that they're overwhelmed. The kids feel they're overwhelmed. So yeah, we need to turn it down, and we can't do it alone. We have to do it together at the same time. And I think we can. You and I, we talk a lot about... Well, anyway, yeah, I think we can do it.

Tristan Harris:    We have to believe that we can.

Jonathan Haidt:    Yeah.

Tristan Harris:    I just wanted to ask a quick question about how AI is going to supercharge the harms before we get to all the solutions that we want to land on and a comprehensive full of society approach to how we would answer this. But just so we understand what we're motivated by, how will AI supercharge some of these harms?

Jonathan Haidt:    So let's just look especially at the boys. There, it's clearest, I think. So the analysis that I offer in the book in chapter seven on boys is that they've been pushed out of the real world. There've been forces increasingly pushing them out of the real world and pulling them into the virtual world. So school is really designed around girls' learning styles. It's not really very good for boys. Boys need to run around more, especially in the earlier grades. So less and less recess, no rough and tumble play, no pushing, no running. So for a lot of ways, boys are dropping out of school. They don't find it as... It's harder for them. They mature more slowly. Richard Reeves says we need to actually red shirt the boys because they're just neurologically behind girls. So for a lot of reasons, boys are just not finding that it makes sense for them to exert themselves in school or in work.

So that's the push out of the real world. And then the pull into the virtual world is that when I was a kid, I remember when Pong came out, it was really amazing. You put on your television, you turn a knob, and you can move the paddle up and down. My son plays Fortnite, we delayed on that. But he plays Fortnite. It's incredible. I mean, it's amazing, these immersive games. And most kids play

video games, certainly almost all boys play video games. They're amazing. So the pull gets better and better. All right, now imagine if now everyone starts walking around with the goggles. I mean, it's bad enough we're all walking around with AirPods, so we never talk to each other anymore. Just imagine when everyone's walking around with goggles so you can see you're in your own world all the time, even when you're out in public.

For boys, I think if we don't act soon, we're just going to basically have to say goodbye to them, because the games are going to be incredible, the sex is going to be incredible. They'll have AI girlfriends, and robotics is advancing so far that soon the girlfriends will be robots. And given that boys and girls are decreasingly having abilities to talk to each other or flirt or seek each other out, now that AI boyfriends and girlfriends are going to be customizable and amazing, it's like how are we ever going to convince them to try the real thing instead?

Tristan Harris:     So I think what you're doing here is maximally scaring us about the sort of [inaudible 00:45:20], which is good because this is the point about AI, is that AI, wherever there's a perverse incentive... Think about what AI is, right? It finds any route. So if there's a pathway to a solution, AI explodes the search base of finding every more and more efficient route to that thing. So if the thing we're moving towards is the thing we don't want, AI is just going to find infinite paths to that thing. So if we want to fix this, we need to change the incentives. If you show me the incentive, I'll show you the outcome. If we want to change to a different outcome, it's also going to involve changing the incentives. And you mentioned the Kids Online Safety Act and COPPA 2.O, the Children's Online Privacy Protections Act. Do you want to just talk about some of these things that can basically create a binding for how we change some of those incentives?

Jonathan Haidt:     Yeah. Well, I think I'm most interested in things that would really just change the game, not make the game a little less toxic. So the most important thing I think we could do, well, phone-free schools, that's incredibly powerful. We can do that this year. We've got to do it this year. If your kid goes to a school that they're all going to tell you, "Oh, yeah, we ban phones, we don't let them use them during instructional time." They have to hide it in a book if they want to use it during class. That's literally the policy at most schools in the country. Or they have to go to the bathroom. Teachers tell me they go to the bathroom a lot more than they used to, once they put in the no phone anyway. So phone-free schools is huge. But even bigger, I think, would be taking the bad law that set the age of internet adulthood to 13, that's COPPA. It was originally supposed to be 16. It was Senator... He was congressman at the time.

Tristan Harris:     Markey.

Jonathan Haidt:     Yeah, Markey. That's right. Congressman Markey at the time. He was tasked with the committee that drew up, if you're going to have all these tech companies

taking data from children, at what age can they just take the data without their parents' knowledge or permission? At what age do we treat children like adults? And he sort of thought maybe 16. So he proposed this bill was 16, but various lobbyists got it pushed down to 13, not for any health reason, just let's get it down to 13. And then they gutted any kind of enforcement. So the law is written so that unless a company has positive knowledge that someone's underage, they're not liable, not responsible. And so Meta used to, when you say, what year were you born? They would suggest 13 as the default, and then you can adjust it from there. So the biggest thing that we could do legislatively, I think, would be to raise the age from 13 to 16 to open an account because this isn't like a free speech issue.

This is like at what age can you do something and give away data without your parents' knowledge or consent? So I think if we focus on that, when can you open an account without parental permission, that would be incredibly powerful. That's why I'm so excited about the Florida law, because it does that. It raises the age to 16. Now, there was a carve out, and I'm willing to go with this, there was a carve out that, because a lot of people say parental rights, "If I want my nine-year-old to be on Instagram, I have that right." A carve out so that if the kid is 14 or 15, they can still open an account, but only with parents' permission. Okay, I can go for that because that'll force the companies to figure out how do we get parents' permission. They've never even thought about it. They didn't want to. So that could be a real game changer, the Florida law, if that passes legal scrutiny, if that spreads around the country.

Tristan Harris: And I know that you and I have had private conversations with some of these tech companies, and one of them would say to us, "We don't want to have 13-year-old users on our platform, but if the other platform doesn't do it, if they keep going for the 13-year-olds, then we have to too." So this is the kind of thing that when you bind the race for all of them, then we can live in a healthier world. And regulation can't get us all the way to that world where technologies plus kids equals stronger, healthier kids, which is what we really want to get to, but they are important. I also want to call out folks on our team, our policy team have been working on these age-appropriate design codes, which are worth mentioning that in Vermont, they just passed the state senate for this age-appropriate design code, which creates a duty of care. Yep. Thank you.

Thank you to all the people who worked so hard on that and the folks that testified and flew into Vermont to make that happen. Creating a duty of care to act in the best interests of kids and teens, requiring all privacy settings default to the highest level, honoring kids' and teens' requests to delete accounts, stop unwanted notifications, turn off recommendations systems, so that when the young boys you're mentioning, when they click on some soft porn and then they go to their explore tab on Instagram and it's just basically porn all day long, because they clicked on a couple of things, you can turn off some of those

recommendations. So just in closing, what do you want people in this room to do as we think about answering this problem comprehensively? If 2024 was the year that in the timeline of human history, we woke up to this complete and avoidable mess that we have created and we said, "We don't want this to happen anymore. We want to turn it around completely." What are some of the things that come to mind that we could be doing right now?

Jonathan Haidt:     So what I imagine, and I think 2024 will be that year. When most people don't like a system, but it's only in place by fear, then the system can fall very, very quickly. And we saw that with communism. Everybody hated communism and the communist in the east bloc countries in the '80s, but they thought, "What can we do? We'll be put in prison." But once some people stood up and they realized, "Wait, we actually can knock this down," then everybody stood up. And in the same way, we're stuck in a set of collective action problems. And we're kept here by fear, but it's the fear of missing out. We don't want to be the only one. We don't want to make our kid be the only one. Since we're in all these traps where we don't want to be here, if we can just bust a hole and get a bunch of people to start going out, I think everyone else will follow.

And the reason why I'm so excited and optimistic that this is going to happen is that it started last month in the UK. In the UK, their kids actually use this stuff even more than ours do. They have terrible problems in the UK, terrible mental health problems, and parents are fed up. And two mothers sort of put a flag up. They started a WhatsApp group for parents. It's called Smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk, I think is the address, but just look up Smartphone Free Childhood. And tens of thousands of parents flocked like, "Yes, yes, let's rally around, rally around this." And they have a functioning legislature, so they actually passed laws. They have passed the original age-appropriate design code, and they're going for phone-free schools. So in Britain, and this really, it all gelled in February. So it can happen very, very quickly. And I think that it's going to happen here this year.

Tristan Harris:     And what if that sets off a race at the top where the countries that start to do this, their scores of all their kids start going way up? And then it's a race for who can actually pass the laws that actually get the most enlightened population, which is really what this race is about anyway, right?

Jonathan Haidt:     Right.

Tristan Harris:     It's not about the race to roll out technology.

Jonathan Haidt:     But actually, yeah, no, that's a good point, because a lot of these terrible policies around recess and the loss of play, all those were motivated in the 1980s by the report, was it A Nation At Risk? We were falling behind. We're falling behind Asian countries and European countries. We've got to crack down on kids and

make them study more in first grade. So a lot of those stupid, and I shouldn't say stupid, those policies that ended up depriving kids of childhood even in the '80s and '90s were motivated by the fear that we were falling behind educationally. As I just showed you, well, we're not falling behind educationally, because everyone's getting stupid all around the world. But the first country to wake up from that and say, "How about if we don't make our kids stupid," would have something to gain. I think competition among the states would actually be quicker and more intense.

So a lot of parents are moving because they just find the situation with their kids is really toxic. And so if there are states that are helping to create a family-friendly environment with more outdoor play... I co-founded a group called Let Grow with Lenore Skenazy, and we haven't mentioned. We focus on the tech side. The other half of it is the decline of the play-based childhood. So if you go to letgrow.org, Lenore Skenazy wrote this great book, Free Range Kids. She and I started this organization to try to encourage basically the fourth norm there. This is actually the hardest of the collective action problems to solve. I think we can get parents to do numbers one and two, we can get schools to do three, but four requires all of us parents to overcome our fear. And if you let your eight or nine-year-old walk three blocks to the store, they're not going to get kidnapped, but you're going to think that they're going to. And that's hard to do.

And so a way out of the collective action problem there, we offer this incredible program. It's so simple. It's a homework assignment. It's called the Let Grow Experience. In a third grade class, let's say you assign all the kids to go home, talk to your parents, figure out something you can do by yourself you've never done before. Maybe it's walk the dog, maybe it's go shopping, get some groceries, maybe it's make dinner. And the kids do it, and then they come back and they talk about it and they put it on a little leaf and they put it on a little tree on the wall in their classroom. And the brilliant thing about it is that while many parents in America would not let their eight-year-old walk three blocks to a store, even though they did it when they were eight or seven or six, if it's a homework assignment and everyone's doing it, well, then it's much less scary.

Tristan Harris:      It's socially validated.

Jonathan Haidt:      It's socially validated. And before you know it, you're seeing eight, nine, ten-year-old kids outside unsupervised. So there are ways out, but this is going to be the hardest one because we're afraid. We're afraid to let go. So it's going to really require just a lot more work. So yeah, talk to the parents of your kids' friends, see if you're on the same page. See if you can do these norms together. That makes it much easier.

Tristan Harris:     I just want to close before we go to questions by saying compared to 2013 or even just a few years ago, it has never been more believable that we could do something about this, I think. We have had, I don't know if you've seen the recent Senate hearings where we had actually our own Julie Scelfo, who's here from Moms Against Media Addiction, was there with many parents of kids who've lost their kids to teen suicides from social media. We had this incredibly compelling Senate hearing, and we have full bipartisan agreement, full bipartisan agreement. You say this is one of the few issues that we actually agree on. We have 40 attorney generals have sued Facebook and Instagram for the toxic effects of their products on kids. This is the beginning of the big tobacco style sort of turnaround. And those 40 attorney generals did that because they had seen The Social Dilemma, and they said, "We've got to do something about this."

Jonathan Haidt:     Amazing.

Tristan Harris:     And so if you see it, this is the beginning of the timeline in which humanity turns this around. This is that point when cigarettes goes from everybody's doing it, I can never imagine a different way to the huge lawsuits, the beginning of regulation. Is social media more toxic than tobacco? Yes. So imagine if The Social Dilemma was curriculum in every high school and your book was read everywhere, you could start to see how a domino cascade of these things could potentially turn this around. And I just want people to anchor into that possibility, because I know that this looks really impossible, but we have to do everything we can.

Jonathan Haidt:     Yeah, that's right. Let me just add the one you asked me, what was the pushback? And I said I'm in debate with some other researchers and the moral panic argument. But by far the biggest opponent that I have is resignation, because wherever I go, the people say, "Yeah, we agree with you that this is really bad, but what are you going to do? This is just the way of the future. We can't change. The train's left the station." To which I say, "If the train really left the station full of kids and it's going someplace where it's going to plunge off of a bridge, I think we'd try to call it back. I would."

Tristan Harris:     Thank you. Totally agree. Thank you. All right, so we're going to take some questions. What do you think about the distinction between social networking and social media? Why was the original optimism for connecting people on the internet misplaced?

Jonathan Haidt:     Well, so in general, I'm a big fan of Robert Wright. He has this book Nonzero, and he looks at the big history of humanity. And when you invent roads and postal systems and anytime you connect people better, you get this big jump up in information, invention, productivity, it's great. And the telephone was an amazing thing. It connected people, but there was long distance charges when I

was a kid. It didn't connect everywhere, it was expensive to call far away. And so the possibility, which came out in 2003, 2004, and a little in the '90s, but especially MySpace and Facebook was, wow, talk to anyone for free. Put up anything you want. It's all free now.

Even video, you can now get video. All that stuff was so amazing. And that's just connecting people. But then you add in the algorithms, the newsfeed, the performance. It's no longer about connecting people. It becomes about performing at people to get the most views and likes, because that's what raises your prestige. And as we know from some of the things that the founders said, that was actually their intent. They hacked that. We know how to keep you on by giving you prestige if you do the thing we want you to do.

Tristan Harris:         Exploiting vulnerability and human psychology.

Jonathan Haidt:        That's it. Yep. That's the phrase.

Tristan Harris:         Someone asked the question, how do we avoid the conversation in society on this topic from getting politicized? This is a very important topic both on this and on AI, because if I'm the tech companies and I want this conversation to not be successful, I'll turn it into a free speech versus censorship issue or something like that. Which is, by the way, how they played all the other issues on social media. They turned it into a free speech versus censorship issue.

Jonathan Haidt:        Well, actually, that's very interesting because my sense is that there isn't really a left-right divide on this. The legislation is generally bipartisan. There are all kinds of initiatives in red states and blue states, but it is becoming a sort of a left-right versus libertarian debate. And I have a lot of sympathies with libertarian ideas. We need dynamic economies. So in general, I like a lot of libertarian ideas. But in this case, and I've had very friendly debates with libertarians, and what I find that I had a debate, it's online, versus Robby Soave, a really great writer at Reason. And my strategy was I'm going to relentlessly focus on kids. Can you at least grant that the government has a role to play in protecting kids? I'm not even going to touch the free speech questions for adults on Twitter. I'm just going to focus on kids.

And actually won the debate, in that this audience, which was mostly libertarians, shifted more towards me than away from me. So if we try to focus it in, not censorship on the internet, but focus it on let's allow parents to have the choice, let's allow parents to be able to have some control of what's happening in their family. So I think there are ways to diffuse it. So far, it is a blessing that the four norms that I proposed, they're bipartisan, they cost nothing, and they're actually not hard to do. And even if I'm wrong, and this isn't why our kids are depressed, they don't really do any harm. So I am actually optimistic that these four norms will be adopted.

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| Tristan Harris: | Well said. Where do people who want to join a movement working on this show up, especially those interested in parents and tech workers? |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Interested in parents and tech workers? |
| Tristan Harris: | Especially interested for parents and for tech workers. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Oh, I see. Yes. |
| Tristan Harris: | People who are from those categories. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Yeah. Well, so the website for my book is anxiousgeneration.com, and there, we have a movement page. We have a take action page where we list, there's like 30 organizations in the country and several in the UK. So there are lots of organizations that are working on this. I also urge everyone to support Let Grow, go to letgrow.org. That supports the play side of things. MAMA is one of the organizations, Mothers Against Media Addiction. |
| Tristan Harris: | Mothers Against Media Addiction. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | But if you go to anxiousgeneration.com, you'll find that we have a lot of resources there. For parents, for teachers, if you want the template of a letter to send to your kids' school requesting phone free. |
| Tristan Harris: | Oh, that's great. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | So we're trying to make it... The book just launched and we just got the website up a couple weeks ago. It's not complete. We have a lot of resources there already, including links to organizations to support. |
| Tristan Harris: | I was thinking about that. If you can challenge a school, how do you challenge a school to go phone free and give them... How do you exert some more power there? |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Yeah. Just if you go to anxiousgeneration.com, at the bottom of that main page, it narrates you through emotionally what's happening. And at the bottom, there's a place to give your email. I have not started a nonprofit organization. I don't want to, I've started too many already, but we are collecting names, and we'll at least notify people about events, something in your state. So please go there and give your email address, and we'll keep in touch with you. Thanks. |
| Tristan Harris: | I also want to add Center for Humane technology has something called a Youth Toolkit. And so for all the teachers and educators out there, we have a little mini free curriculum for you to walk students through persuasive technology, the |

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|                 | incentives, the business model. That also has been very helpful to thousands of teachers out there. Thoughts on the Wait Until 8th pledge? |
| Jonathan Haidt: | So the original idea was brilliant. |
| Tristan Harris: | Yeah. Explain what the Wait Until 8th is. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Oh, yeah. So the idea is this is something, I think she started it when her kid was in first or second grade and she saw what was coming, and she had the insight about the collective action problem and she had the insight that it's hard to do if nobody else is doing it, but it's easy if others are. And so she created a website where you sign up, and once 50 families in your kid's school or school and grade, I forget, once 50 of them take the pledge, then it becomes active, it's live, everyone's notified, and we're all going to agree, the 50 of us in this school, in this grade, we're going to wait until eighth grade. |
|                 | So it was a brilliant idea. Now, the only problem with it is that, my view, is we have to think about this school. Elementary is its own community. Middle school is its own community. High school is its own community. So if you're going to flood phones into eighth grade, which is middle school, that's going to devastate the middle school. So I think it should be waiting until 9th. |
| Tristan Harris: | Oh, I see. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | But she has- |
| Tristan Harris: | If they're 6th and 7th grade that are almost there to 8th, they're going to see it and they're going to- |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Yeah, no, you've got to clear all of this stuff out of middle school. Early puberty is when the greatest damage is done. There's some studies showing that, that the biggest correlations between social media use and mental health problems is between 11 and 13 for girls. And so we got to just get this all out of middle school. Oh, and just to say, and I'm sorry, even though she kept the name Wait Until 8th, it's now clear, it's wait until the end of 8th. So that's at least the right idea. |
| Tristan Harris: | Wait until the end of 8th. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | Wait until the end of 8th. |
| Tristan Harris: | Yeah. Well, I think we got it. |
| Jonathan Haidt: | We got it. We're done. |

Tristan Harris:      I think we got the questions. Thank you all for coming. We're going to be around for book signing?

Jonathan Haidt:      Yes, we'll do the book signing. Thanks everyone.

Tristan Harris:      Just to recap, in his talk, Jon mentioned that you can go to www.anxiousgeneration.com and click on Take Action, and you can generate a petition for your school right now to go phone free and also see templates for memos you can send from parents to school leadership on these topics and many other concrete actions that you can take. Let's make 2024 the year where all of this turned around. And we're going to take a small break after this episode, but we'll be back in less than a month from now with the next one.

*Your Undivided Attention* is produced by the Center for Humane Technology, a nonprofit working to catalyze a humane future. Our senior producer is Julia Scott. Kirsten McMurray is our associate producer. Sasha Fegan is our executive producer. Mixing on this episode by Jeff Sudakin. Original music and sound design by Ryan and Hays Holladay. And a special thanks to the whole Center for Humane Technology team for making this podcast possible. You can find show notes, transcripts, and much more at humanetech.com. If you liked the podcast, we'd be grateful if you could rate it on Apple Podcast, because it helps other people find the show. And if you made it all the way here, let me give one more thank you to you for giving us your undivided attention.