

Addressing the Social Media Nightmare and Its Negative Impact on our Youth

By Dave Young

Introduction:

Proposition: We must address the social media nightmare and its negative impact on our youth.

Interrogative: How do we do it?

Transition: I would make these suggestions:

1. Know the dangers.

1. Mental health is damaged
2. Relationships are damaged
3. Growth is damaged
4. Some one else is raising our children

2. Model good behavior.

1. Limit our dependence on the internet
2. Use the internet as a tool and not a distraction
 1. State out loud what your are doing and why
 2. Shut it down at specific times of the day and on specific days

3. Teach standards.

1. Use only when supervised
2. Limited access
3. Incorporate “rites of passage”
4. Develop a “privilege not a right” mentality
 1. Sign agreements
 2. Write a research paper
 3. Read books
 4. Listen to podcasts

4. Develop “herd” mentalities.

1. Work to get teens to think alike
2. Work to get parents to practice alike

In an era where [nearly 40%](#) of kids aged 8-12 actively engage with social media platforms, we must reevaluate the age of introduction.

Is 13 old enough?

Our stance: We don't think so. **Due to the evolving research, we recommend a *minimum* of 16 years old to begin introducing your child to social media.** Every child is developmentally different, meaning some may benefit from waiting beyond the age of 16, especially for riskier platforms. These include ones with disappearing messages where nudes are easily shared and predators abound.

Our invitation to you is not to take our word for it. The growing body of evidence speaks for itself, and we encourage you to explore the research and make an informed decision that aligns with your family's values.

Here's what we know:

Identity development

Dr. Vivek Murthy, US Surgeon General, meticulously compiled numerous studies in his recent [advisory](#) on social media. He raised alarm bells about the “profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.” In an [interview with CNN](#), he said,

“Early adolescence is a time where kids are developing their identity — their sense of self. It's a time where it's really important for us to be thoughtful about what's going into how they think about their own self-worth and their

relationships, and the skewed and often distorted environment of social media often does a disservice to many of those children.”

Murthy stated that based on the data *the age of 13 is too early.*“ If parents can band together and say you know, as a group, **we’re not going to allow our kids to use social media until 16, or 17, or 18, or whatever age they choose, that’s a much more effective strategy in making sure your kids don’t get exposed to harm early.”**

Related: [Surgeon General's Warning! Social Media Poses "Profound Risk of Harm" to Children and Adolescents](#)

Brain development

Chief science officer for the American Psychological Association, Mitch Prinstein, co-authored a long-term study on adolescents’ neural development and social media use published in [JAMA Pediatrics](#). **The study findings suggest that checking social media repeatedly among young teens ages 12 to 13 may be associated with *changes in how their brains develop.*** The brains of adolescents who checked social media often – more than 15 times per day, became more sensitive to social feedback. The average person [spends 2 hours and 27 minutes on social media every day](#), and [teens get as many as 237 notifications a day on their phone](#).

Prinstein said in [written testimony](#) to the U.S. Senate Committee on Judiciary,

“Developmental neuroscientists have revealed that there are two highly critical periods for adaptive neural development. One of these is the first year of life. The second begins at the outset of puberty and lasts until early

adulthood (i.e., from approximately 10 to 25 years old). This latter period is highly relevant, as this is when a great number of youths are offered relatively unfettered access to devices and unrestricted or unsupervised use of social media and other online platforms.”

He also warned, “Our research demonstrates that checking behaviors on social media could have long-standing and important consequences for adolescents’ neural development, which is critical for parents and policy-makers to consider when understanding the benefits and potential harms associated with teen technology use.”

[Prinstein told CNBC](#), “I certainly don’t think anyone under 13 should be using social media. Unfettered access, without any screen controls or [parental] monitoring, that should probably be delayed for as long as possible — certainly, until at least 16.”

Additional negative impacts:

- **Sleep deprivation:** The addictive nature of social media, combined with its round-the-clock accessibility, can lead to sleep deprivation among young users. This, in turn, can harm their physical and mental health, as sleep is essential for growth and cognitive development.
- **Access to porn:** Nearly every social media platform contains explicit content. Children exposed to such content at a young age may develop distorted views of sexuality and relationships.
- **Harmful content:** Social media feeds are often riddled with cyberbullying, profanity, and hate speech. Young users are not mentally or emotionally equipped to face these harms.
- **Addictive algorithms:** Dr. Murthy points out that social media platforms are designed to be addictive, making it an

unfair battle for children who are pitted against the world's best product designers. Delaying access can help children develop better impulse control.

- **Replacing parental roles:** Officer Gomez, a respected figure in child safety, [warns that social media can replace parental roles](#). Excessive time spent on these platforms can lead to children being influenced by values that may not align with family values. He cautions,

“Social media replaces family values with values parents may or may not agree with. If your teen is on social media 4-10 hours a day, that pretty much means someone else is raising them. Please keep in mind that there are research facilities calculating the best ways to keep teens addicted to social media. **My strong advice is that you wait as long as possible before introducing your kids to what will likely become some level of addiction.**”