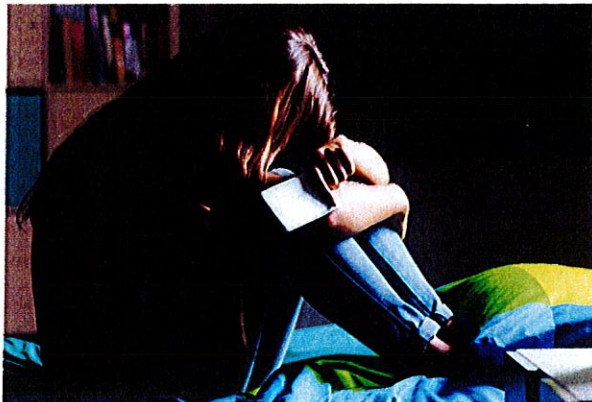


# Electronic Devices and Mental Health



Teenagers in America are reporting high rates of depression. Studies show strong links to electronic device use. The more time teens spend each day using their devices, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression.

- One study found that teens who spent three or more hours a day on electronic devices were 34% more likely to suffer from depression, feel hopeless or seriously consider suicide. That number increases to 48% for teens who used electronic devices five or more hours a day.

Social media apps are very good at pulling in youth and creating device addictions.

- The teen brain is not yet fully developed therefore, the part of the brain that manages impulse control, empathy, judgment, and the ability to plan ahead is more susceptible to disturbing online content, to being distracted, and to becoming addicted to their devices.

Teens are spending less time having face-to-face interactions. They are dating less, driving less, and talking less with their families.

- The number of teens who get together with their friends nearly every day has dropped by more than 40% from 2000 to 2015.

More screen time often means less sleep. Sleep experts say that teens should get about nine hours of sleep per night and that a teen who is getting less than seven hours a night is significantly sleep deprived.

- By 2015, more than 40% of adolescents did not get seven or more hours of sleep on most nights.
- Sleep deprivation is linked to numerous issues including, but not limited to, compromised thinking and reasoning, susceptibility to illness, weight gain, and high blood pressure. Sleep deprivation also affects mood. People who don't sleep enough are prone to depression and anxiety.
- Screens are of special concern in regards to insufficient sleep as they directly displace or delay sleep time by increasing brain arousal which interferes with sleep. They are also easily carried into the bedroom and used in bed before sleep while emitting light that can affect sleep-wake rhythms.

## WHAT CAN ADULTS DO TO HELP?

- Set limits. Set a limit of two hours or less each day for electronic device use. Set a time to turn devices in at bedtime so that your child is able to get an adequate amount of sleep and can take time away from the online world.
- Encourage offline lives. Ensure connections with real people, having real conversations, and participating in real activities that encourage being present in the moment.
- Educate yourself on social media apps that your child may be using: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, YouTube, Tumblr, Secret, Whisper. Help your teens disable locations and enable privacy settings to protect their safety.
- Turn off app notifications and check regularly to ensure that they remain off.
- App notifications are alerts that apps send to let the user know when something new has been posted.

Source: Jean Twenge, author of "iGen" and "The Atlantic"