
Social Media and Mental Health

Link:

<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-social-media-and-mental-health/>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. In the Today video, Jonathan Haidt said he started noticing differences in his students in 2014 and 2015. To what did he attribute this change?
3. In the Reason video, Aaron Brown said: "...Thomas Sowell sketched out a pattern that many of the crusading movements of the 20th century have followed." What was that pattern?
4. Jonathan Haidt said: "We have overprotected our children in the real world...." What did he mean by this? Do you agree? Why/Why not?
5. Aaron Brown said: "Bad studies tend to be the most newsworthy, and the most policy-relevant." What did he mean by this?
6. In the Today video, Savannah Guthrie said: "You hand your phone to your kid...and you're taking away their childhood." What did she mean by this? Do you agree? Why/Why not?
7. Aaron Brown said that Jonathan Haidt cited 476 studies in his book. What were some of Brown's critiques of the studies?
8. Jonathan Haidt listed four "new norms." What were they?
9. Aaron Brown said: "In fact, I couldn't find any studies in Haidt's compendium that spent substantive time interviewing any depressed teenage girls or heavy social media users." Does this affect your opinion of Haidt's conclusions? Why/Why not?
10. Jonathan Haidt said that social media is "wildly inappropriate for kids." What makes it "wildly inappropriate"?
11. Aaron Brown mentioned a study which found that depression occurs before social media use and not the other way around. Why might that be the case?
12. Jonathan Haidt shared this quote from a Gen Z poet: "We know that it's poison, but we drink anyway." What does this mean?

13. Aaron Brown said: "[T]he purpose of social science research is not to confirm, but to challenge our knee-jerk assumptions, because reality is so complicated." Do you agree with his point of view? Why/Why not?
14. Jonathan Haidt said that the U.S. should have a minimum age requirement for social media, like Australia. Should the government enact laws that restrict the use of social media by young people? Why/Why not?
15. Aaron Brown said: "Even if we knew social media use caused depression, we wouldn't know the effect of policies that restrict social media use." What are some potential negative effects of such policies?
16. Do you use social media? If so, how old were you when you began using it? Was it appropriate for you to start using social media at that age? Why/Why not?
17. What positive experiences have you had on social media?
18. What negative experiences have you had on social media?
19. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
20. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
21. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
22. What else would you like to learn about this topic?