

YOUR TEEN AND ANXIETY

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YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“This kid will have an iPhone at birth. I’m gonna teach this kid how to Snap when they’re born, like, ‘Put your finger here.’”

Spencer Pratt, speaking about expecting his first child with wife Heidi Montag, on the *Allegedly* with Theo Von & Matthew Cole Weiss podcast, August 29, 2017



In her poem describing her constant battle with anxiety, 16-year-old Regan paints a picture of how the perfect storm of the pressures of everyday teenage life create an existence filled with stress that seems to never let up. Sandwiched between identical opening and closing lines (“It’s all just chaos”), Regan describes her experience of anxiety with words like “continuous,” “boundless,” “binding,” “crushing,” and “pressure.” She pleads, “I need a way off, a clearing in the brush, a voice in the rush.”

Sadly, Regan is not alone. Developmental experts, health-care professionals, and kids themselves tell us that today’s children and teens are plagued by a growing wave of angst that we never felt or experienced when we were growing up. What used to be known as “the wonder years” have suddenly become “the worry years.” The perfect storm includes no escape from things like academic pressures, financial uncertainty, curating social media identity, and family breakdown. . . among a multitude of other realities.

While addressing adolescent anxiety is a complex task, there are some basic steps Christian parents can and must take to help their children and teens navigate life in healthy ways that bring honor and glory to God. Here are four initial steps that you can begin to enlist right away.

First, take inventory. Because it’s so easy for us to get swept away in the cultural river that makes us out to be irresponsible parents if we aren’t pushing our kids, we sometimes become the source of pressures, when we should rather

be leading our kids towards resilience. When we pile on the idolatrous expectations of academic, appearance, and athletic perfections, it is our kids’ achievements rather than the best interest of our kids that takes precedence. In addition to too much pressure, we are also encouraged to over-protect our kids. Helicopter parenting and running interference does them no favors at all and even adds to their anxiety by derailing opportunities for them to learn how to handle the normal pressures and consequences of life.

Second, change your inventory. If you’ve piled too much of something on the “shelf” of their lives, remove it. But don’t leave the shelves empty. Instead, nurture them into a deep understanding of the hope of the Gospel, drive them to God, teach biblical priorities, and remind them that in Christ they are able to move towards obedience to the most-repeated command in the Bible: “Fear not.” Remind them that God regularly uses difficulties in the lives of those He loves to drive them to a deeper dependence on and faith in Him.

Third, don’t be quick to medicate. Yes, medication is a good gift from God, but it’s not for all cases. We must realize that in today’s world we are way too quick to medicate and far too quick to under-spiritualize. Medication should only be part of an extended plan to address the root causes of anxiety, rather than a quick-fix cover for physical symptoms.

Finally, get help. If your child’s anxiety issues are not being resolved, increasing, or becoming debilitating, seek the help of a qualified Christian counselor. ★

TOP 10...

Global Brands

1. **Google**
2. **YouTube**
3. **Facebook**
4. **Samsung**
5. **Whatsapp**
6. **Apple iPhone**
7. **Amazon**
8. **Toyota**
9. **Adidas**
10. **Colgate**

SAMSUNG

Source:
YouGov's BrandIndex Global
Brand Health Rankings
(data collected from July 1, 2016
- June 30, 2017)

YouTube

QUICK STATS

Over 45% of New York City teens spend at least 3 hours a day playing computer or video games, that's up from 28% in 2005.

(Youth Risk Behavior Survey)

In the 1980's, roughly 70% of American 16-19 year-olds held summer jobs. That number has declined to about 40% today.

(NPR)

FROM THE NEWS:

SEX-POSITIVE

Once again, it's time to take a look at a two-word phrase that's shown up recently. It's a phrase, like many new words, that offers insight into the cultural beliefs that are informing people's behaviors. The word is "sex-positive" and it's increasingly being used in conversations about sex. Sex positive is defined in this way - "to be comfortable with one's own sexual identity and with the sexual behaviors of others, with the purpose of promoting healthy, smart, safe, and consensual sex." The reality is that sex-positive describes attitudes about sex that have no borders and boundaries outside of personal preferences, unless of course, one crosses over into the forced or non-consensual. As Christians, we can rejoice that God did not leave us to our own desires and opinions regarding how we live out and experience his beautiful and good gift of sexuality. God is sex-positive, desiring that we indulge our sexuality within the boundaries of a committed, monogamous, heterosexual marriage.


TRENDS: PARENTS ON THEIR PHONES

Sometimes the very same negative cultural trends that concern us about our kids are cultural trends that clench us in their grip. That's what's been shown in a recent survey of 2,000 secondary school students. More than a third of the 11 to 18 year-old respondents said they had asked their parents to stop checking their phone devices. One in every eight claimed their parents were online during meals. Eighty-two percent of the students believe that family meal times should be device-free. And 22% said that devices were stopping their family from enjoying each other's company. Parents, there's a strong message here from our kids. They want our time and our attention. This shouldn't surprise us at all, as God made us to be in relationship with one another within our families. What are you doing to grow your relationship with your kids? If your faces are buried in your devices, your eyes and ears can't be on your kids.




LATEST RESEARCH: DECREASE IN VIOLENCE

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peace-makers." His words speak loudly to us as we live in a world that is filled with violence, conflict, and strife. In recent years, experts and educators have worked hard to undermine the growing tide of youth violence that's swept through our culture. Now, new research from Boston University's Christopher Salas-Wright has found that between 2002 and 2014, there has been a 29% decrease in the relative proportion of young people involved in violence in the United States. Salas-Wright says, "There is often the sense that teenagers are out of control and that things are always getting worse. However, our study makes clear that over the last ten to fifteen years, we have seen a meaningful decrease in the number of adolescents involved in fighting and violence." This is good news! But our efforts need to continue. Continue to teach kids how to value others, and to solve conflict in healthy, God-honoring ways.



**SEXUAL INTEGRITY
INITIATIVE**
A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

**The Inevitable
Temptation of
Pornography**
by Walt Mueller



While there are no fool-proof and immediate strategies to protect the kids you know and love from seeing and suffering from pornography, there are steps you can take to prepare them to deal with the inevitable temptation that most – if not all – of them have already faced and indulged. As Martin Luther once advised, we might not be able to stop the birds from flying over our heads, but we can stop them from building nests in our hair.

Here's a list of some of the steps to regularly include in your parenting:

Teach on positive biblical sexuality. Start with the positive. Sex is a good gift from God to be expressed/experienced within the context of a monogamous covenantal marriage between one man and one woman. God does not look down on sex!

Remind them that their sexuality is broken. . . . just like everything else in the world. Their default setting is sin and it's for that reason that they must be "soberminded and watchful" as "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion" who seeks to devour them and their sexuality (1 Peter 5:8&9).

Let them know that Jesus knows what it's like. Yes, he shares in their temptation and he is praying for them! (Hebrews 4:15).

Engage in biblically-based sex education at a young age. The reality is that by the time they arrive in middle-school much of pornography's initial damage will have been done. Raise the awareness of parents and children's ministry people at your church so that they can proactively educate children in age-appropriate ways.

New Podcast

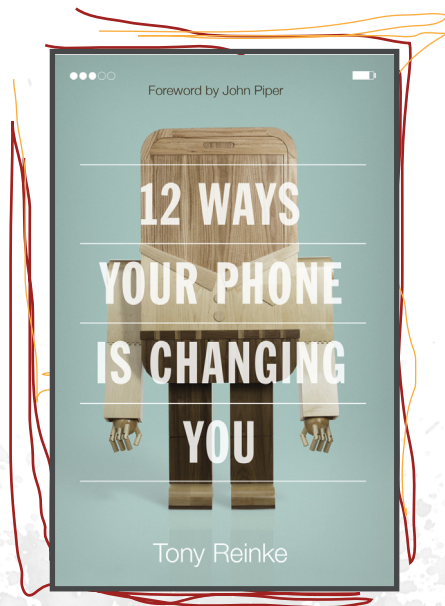
Youth Culture Matters

is a long-format podcast from CPYU. Co-hosted by Walt Mueller and Jason Soucinek.



Listen at
www.cpyu.org/podcast.

Be sure to check out Episode 41 for an interview with Tony Reinke about his book *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*, featured below.



Available in the CPYU Resource Center at www.cpyu.org.



FROM THE WORD

David was no stranger to anxiety and fear. The book of Psalms, from start to finish, is filled with emotionally-charged expressions of lament which poured out of his difficult mix of life circumstances. Some of his difficulties had their source in conflicts that came from outside forces. Others were rooted in his own poor priorities and sinful behavior. David is just like us.

Typically, the Psalms move from anxiety and fear, to God-centered hope as David would remind himself of God's character, promises, and protection. In Psalm 56, David tells us that he feels constantly trampled, oppressed, and attacked. While his enemies may be different from those we face in today's world, the result of their onslaught echoes with our contemporary experience of fear and anxiety.

But we can't stop there. Like David, we must constantly be preaching the truths of God's Word to ourselves. When we do, God blesses us with the resolve of David: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Psalm 56:3). The sufferings, difficulties, and pressures of life lose their perspective when they are not viewed through the lens of eternity, God's character, and God's love. While difficulties are still difficult, they are not our demise. Praise be to God that with David we can say, "I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?"

Parents, lose yourself in the Psalms. And, teach your kids to do the same.

**"WHEN I AM AFRAID,
I PUT MY TRUST IN YOU."
PSALM 56:3**

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Do You Control Your Phone — Or Does Your Phone Control You?

Within a few years of its unveiling, the smartphone had become part of us, fully integrated into the daily patterns of our lives. Never offline, always within reach, we now wield in our hands a magic wand of technological power we have only begun to grasp. But it raises new enigmas, too. Never more connected, we seem to be growing more distant. Never more efficient, we have never been more distracted.

Drawing from the insights of numerous thinkers, published studies, and his own research, writer Tony Reinke identifies twelve potent ways our smartphones have changed us — for good and bad. Reinke calls us to cultivate wise thinking and healthy habits in the digital age, encouraging us to maximize the many blessings, to avoid the various pitfalls, and to wisely wield the most powerful gadget of human connection ever unleashed.

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