

PART 2

THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OUR KIDS FACE TODAY

We are going to step into their shoes, look at some science & stats. Consider the common issues I see in my practice and I'm going to share some shock things I've seen and been told too!

TIME TO STEP INTO
THEIR SHOES...

BECAUSE WE DIDN'T
HAVE A CHILDHOOD
OR TEEN YEARS
WITH TECH

AGENDA

DOPAMINE

INFO OVERLOAD

INTERNET ADDICTION

SCARY STATISTICS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR WORLD

OBSERVATIONS IN YOUR OWN HOME

LET'S START WITH SOME SCIENCE

DOPAMINE

Platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram leverage the very same neural circuitry used by slot machines and cocaine to keep us using their products as much as possible.

Dopamine is a chemical produced by our brains that plays a starring role in motivating behaviour. In particular, they reinforce the association between a particular stimulus or sequence of behaviours and the feel-good reward that follows. Every time a response to a stimulus results in a reward, these associations become stronger through a process called long-term potentiation. This process strengthens frequently used connections between brain cells called neurons by increasing the intensity at which they respond to particular stimuli.

<https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2018/dopamine-smartphones-battle-time/>

LET'S START WITH SOME SCIENCE

DOPAMINE

Although not as intense as hit of cocaine, positive social stimuli will similarly result in a release of dopamine, reinforcing whatever behaviour preceded it. Cognitive neuroscientists have shown that rewarding social stimuli—laughing faces, positive recognition by our peers, messages from loved ones—activate the same dopaminergic reward pathways.

(platforms)...takes advantage of our dopamine-driven desire for social validation

<https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2018/dopamine-smartphones-battle-time/>

LET'S START WITH SOME SCIENCE

DOPAMINE

Lembke author of "Dopamine nation", calls the smartphone the "modern-day hypodermic needle": we turn to it for quick hits, seeking attention, validation and distraction with each swipe, like and tweet. Since the turn of the millennium, behavioural (as opposed to substance) addictions have soared. Every spare second is an opportunity to be stimulated.

Rather than giving us pleasure itself, as is commonly thought, dopamine motivates us to do things we think will bring pleasure. Although we have endless founts of fun at our fingertips, "the data shows we're less and less happy," she says. According to a World Happiness Report, people in high-income countries have become more unhappy over the past decade or so"

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2021/aug/22/how-digital-media-turned-us-all-into-dopamine-addicts-and-what-we-can-do-to-break-the-cycle>

LET'S START WITH SOME SCIENCE

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Information overload or stress when people suffer from the fact that the amount of information they are confronted with is greater than their capacity to process

The gigantic mountain of information is of course at the root of the problem of information stress. Because we all have access to the internet, smartphones and social media, all information is always available. We consume a lot of information that previously did not exist or which we did not have access to, but which we now consider to be indispensable. Information stress can exhaust and demoralise us. Cause us to have ADD like symptoms, as well as anxiety and depression

<https://workspace365.net/en/the-dangers-of-information-overload-and-how-to-prevent-it/>

LET'S START WITH SOME SCIENCE

INTERNET ADDICTION AND WITHDRAWAL

Behavioural addictions, including internet addiction, share many similarities with substance use disorders, including tolerance, dependence, withdrawal and neglect of other activities. Withdrawal from internet addiction also shares many symptoms with drug withdrawal like craving for internet use, anxiety and depression. In certain case, internet withdrawal may lead to symptoms of psychosis.

The symptoms of internet addiction withdrawal usually include:

Increased anxiety

Moodiness

Increased negative mood

Depression

Craving for access to the internet (especially when gaming is involved)

Psychosis in certain cases

SOME SCARY STATS

- Half of ten-year olds now own their own smartphone (Ofcom 2019)
- `Nearly half of children five to ten have a phone (Childwise 2020)
- Most children are mobile phone owners by seven (Childwise 2020)
- 70% of 12-15-year olds now have a social media profile, with Snapchat being the most prominent platform in this age group (Ofcom 2019)
- Smart phone sales and smart phone use increased substantially during the pandemic
- Adriana Stacey, Psychiatrist in America, says when checking her teen patients phone use, "it is rarely under 9 hours", they are on their phones more than sleeping. She won't treat kids unless parents tackle smart phone use
- An earlier report by Common Sense Media found that 50 percent of teenagers felt addicted to their smartphones and that 59 percent of their parents thought that was the case. All of this has coincided with a startling increase in mental health challenges among adolescents, which some psychologists believe might be tied to the adverse effects of social media use.
- Kids are losing one to four hours of sleep each night just being on their phones. They're texting, engaging on social media, surfing the web, and who knows what else. 80 percent of teens admitted to being on their phones when their parents thought they were asleep.
- One 2010 study showed that students, sent an average of 34 texts and emails a night after going to bed

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR WORLD (YEAR 6 ONWARDS)

Technology is their 'normal'

Their tech use is not their fault – we actually gave it to them!

Mood zapping morning routines

Phones on first, You tube, Insta, Tik-Tok that kicks off external information and influence – bigger impact if self-esteem issues

RAS filter impact

RAS filter's job is to bring more of what we set it to, to us. Set it well, we feel well, set it badly and we'll feel bad

Sleep & mood zapping evening routines

Phones often used up until bed time, dealing with lots of different pieces of information before sleep. Don't want to miss out with friends.

School stuff all managed on phone

85% of my boys' homework is on an APP. Get notifications from teachers at 8pm!

Music, camera, clock, etc. calculator all on phone

As with adults, this makes us reach for our phone more.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR WORLD

Connected to SO many people on so many platforms

Social media, Whatsaap groups, Gaming APPS, when we compare to 15+ years it is mind-blowing

Unconscious information overload

One client took her daughter's phone away for a week and there were 17,000 Whatsaap notifications!

Unconscious mind mapping

Back of house / front of house incorrect comparison - celebrity life to friends

Pressure to be there for others

One client's 16 year old 'had to' have her phone' switched on at night as friend struggling with mental health / self-harm

Pressure to respond

Delivered, seen, when on; can create guilt & the need to respond now
Stress / upset caused; when others don't

Pressure to do what others do in all different groups

When we think about our school days, it is night and day in comparison

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR WORLD

Human's like to feel special and are noseey!

With the dopamine hit from the likes, connection, winning, looking at others, it feeds a need / joy in us.

Invisible if not on social media

Some teenagers I know would rather not be on social media but in their words "I am unknown if I'm not on social media.

Exclusion rubbed in their faces

Bad enough not being invited to a party but you then get to see it - AND exclusion by not being on tech.

They aren't used to boredom & quiet

Boredom is such a wonderful thing. One 18 year old who gave up her smart phone said "I didn't realise how lovely it was to be bored and have quiet in my life"

FOMO is big

Being in touch with people, products, new things, news... "Fear"

Subliminal messages everywhere

Kids / teens are like sponges. "subliminal" means goes in unconsciously

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR WORLD

Access to SO much

When I was a teen, I had to wait a fortnight to get Just 17! Two pages of fashion a fortnight. If we put that into scrolling context today, their brains are just frazzled.

The impact of so many choices and so many options

672 basic school bags on Sports Direct, thousands of snap chat videos on back to school must haves. Stress, shut down and self-doubt

IN social media

To have an identity within impacts us psychologically.

Many kids think there is nothing wrong with it

They love it, they need it, the dopamine makes them feel good, this is what life is now, we don't understand

To many it is incredible

"You can't possibly have had a good life before the iPhone"

Many simply don't know how to live without it

And they don't like the feeling of not having it in their life

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR WORLD

It hooks them in, but they don't see it

Tech is designed to hook them in – whether Xbox levels, new games released, social media, scrolling / shopping / surfing

They know when others are on it

"My son smashed his dinner plate on the floor at dinner, because I said he had to come off the Xbox, but his WhatsApp group were all on it and he lost it!"

Most kids get "angry or sad" if you want them off it

Withdrawal response & fight or flight that they (and we!) don't fully appreciate

Many don't know how to enjoy reality without being connected to their online world

"I've just come back from a £14k holiday in Dubai and my teens wanted to be on their phones the whole time"

They often don't see dangers despite online safety

Online safety is drummed in at school, but it is incredible how easy they can be pulled into risky situations

OBSERVATION TIME!

THINK ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S CURRENT USE AND CHALLENGES THEY MAY FACE. BOTH BEING ON TECH TOO MUCH - AS WELL AS IF THEY HAD LESS TECH IN THEIR LIFE.

Do you know all the APPS they have, the Whatsaap groups they are in? The games they play? The reasons they like them? What they do in the morning / evening? This is NOT about snooping through their phones! This is about **stepping into their world**. You might want to ask (not interrogate!) what they enjoy, what their favourite things to do are. Anything that stresses them out or overloads them etc. And once we know this, we can start to think about changes