

## **Powerful Parenting for February 1, 2023**

We hope you find this information useful, inspiring, challenging, helpful, sobering, insightful, etc. If you want to be added or taken off this list, just let us know. If you know someone who could benefit from it, pass it along. If you have any comments, concerns, want to be added or deleted from this list, e-mail [david@claytonbaptistchurch.com](mailto:david@claytonbaptistchurch.com).

### **13 -year-olds Too Young for Social Media Says Surgeon General**

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said he believes 13 is too young for children to be on social media platforms, despite some of the most popular platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, allowing users to be that age. Murthy told CNN on Sunday that he believes being on social media "does a disservice" to kids early in their teen years.

"I, personally, based on the data I've seen, believe that 13 is too early," Murthy said on "CNN Newsroom." "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 did not say if there will be any official guidelines or advisory based on that perspective.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, requires users to be at least 13 years old to use its platforms, according to the company's website. TikTok and Snapchat each also require users to be at least 13-years-old, according to their respective websites. Google, the parent company of YouTube, does not allow kids under age 13 to create their own Google Account. YouTube allows parents to set up a "supervised account" for a child under age 13, for which they can control the content settings, according to its website. In most cases, the social media sites require people to enter their birth dates in order to sign up as users.

Murthy said he would like to see parents "band together" to keep their young teens off social media given they are allowed on the platforms starting at age 13. "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," he told CNN.

Murthy's comments come just over one year after he issued an advisory highlighting a crisis in youth mental health, and said the need to address the issue was "critical." Murthy's advisory noted that technology can have many benefits for youth, but can also expose kids to unhealthy content. It also urged stakeholders throughout society to take action to address youth mental health challenges.

Social media use is linked with symptoms of depression and anxiety, body image issues, and lower life satisfaction for some teens and adolescents, research shows. Heavy social media use around the time adolescents go through puberty is linked with lower life satisfaction one year later, one large study found. But not every teen has those experiences. Researchers are still working to understand who's most at risk of negative effects from social media, and it's not clear yet if there are differences in mental health effects based on when kids first start using social media.

"We still know very little about what age is right for young people to start using social media, especially as social media use is very varied and impacts different people in different ways," Amy Orben, a psychologist who heads the Digital Mental Health program at the University of Cambridge, said in an email to ABC News.

With social media such a prevalent part of daily life, it may seem overwhelming for some parents to try to limit their child's use. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends no more than two hours of screen time or social media use a day for young people. For children under the age of 2, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time at all. For older kids, limits on screen time should be individualized and age-based, according to the AAP. The AAP recommends parents encourage physical activity, set social media and screen time limits for older kids -- such as not going on social media while doing homework -- and create unplugged spaces, like the dinner table, in the home. The organization also recommends parents create a "Family Media Plan" with their kids that can help set priorities and act as a type of contract.

In 2019, ABC News' Diane Sawyer led a special report, that looked at the impact of screen time and social media. In the special, a panel of experts shared tips for parents looking to rein in children and teenagers' use of technology, in their homes and in their day-to-day lives. Here are their seven tips.

1. Children younger than 18 months should avoid screens entirely with the occasional exception of a few minutes of FaceTime with family, according to Dr. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, director of Temple University's Infant Language Lab, and Tracy Dennis-Tiwary, a professor of psychology at New York's Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

2. For children older than the age of 2, limit screen use to one hour with parental supervision, according to Hirsh-Pasek and Dennis-Tiwary.

3. Have an open-ended discussion about screen time in the house and what family members feel they need. Allow everyone to weigh in to the conversation, according to husband-and-wife therapists Don and Carrie Cole of the renowned Gottman Institute in Seattle.

4. Agree on some simple things, like establishing one phone-free hour after dinner so that everyone can do something together, Don and Carrie Cole recommend.

5. Use social media to connect with each other rather than making it the enemy, according to the Coles.

6. If there's conflict or the screen-time plan doesn't seem to be working, take a deep breath, be kind to each other and begin again – without criticism, defensiveness or contempt, according to the Coles.

7. Discuss the consequences for breaking a screen time limit ahead of time so that if your child has a meltdown, the consequence is known, according to Don Cole.

If you're interested in leading your teen on a social media detox, "Good Morning America" technology correspondent Becky Worley shares her tips here after leading a group of 10 girls from Northern California aged 13 and 14 on a two-week detox from all social media.

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### **Faith After the Pandemic**

Amazingly, it has been nearly three years since the COVID-19 pandemic began turning the world upside down. Quite obviously, the world has shifted in many ways. But what about faith? While this is a complex question—that people will likely be discussing for decades—a recent study highlights a few noteworthy trends. Here are two that stand out to me.

First, **religious identity remained largely the same through the pandemic**. There were a lot of questions when the pandemic hit. Would believers abandon their faith amid suffering? Would the suffering draw non-believers to faith? Would people switch faiths? No one really knew. And yet according to the 2022 American Religious Benchmark Survey: “The religious composition of the public in the years before the pandemic and after are nearly identical.” It will be interesting to track this data in the years to come, but the data right now seems to be clear: There was no significant religious shift during the pandemic.

Second, **religious attendance dropped after the pandemic**. This should come as no surprise. After all, churches quickly shifted to online services, and many people became accustomed to watching church from the comforts of home. Specifically, roughly three quarters of people reported attending a church service at least once per year before the pandemic. That number has dropped to about two-thirds after the pandemic. What explains this shift? Attending once a year is a pretty low bar for church attendance. This drop highlights that many people who stopped ever attending church were likely not committed in the first place.

Who left and who stayed? The most likely demographic of people to maintain similar church engagement are those who are conservative, older, married, and college educated. Young, liberal Americans have seen the greatest decline in religious engagement.

Which religious groups saw the least change? Interestingly, Mormons, Jews, and white evangelicals saw the least shift in religious attendance after the pandemic.

What's the bottom line? The American Religious Benchmark Survey offers a helpful summary: "Despite the significant increase in Americans who never attend religious services, most Americans report attending at rates similar to before the pandemic. Most adults attended religious services pre-pandemic and in spring 2022 at the same frequency when looking at changes in religious attendance at the individual level."

This leads me to one important conclusion, which should not be surprising: In terms of faith, young people have been affected most by the pandemic. For those of us who care about the next generation, we must be even more attentive to the needs of younger generations than before.

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