

Impact of Social Media & Technology

For the past several years, Staples' Resilience Project has encouraged parents to be aware of the ways that electronic devices and social media usage affects their children's social, emotional and intellectual development. This recent [article](#) from The Atlantic describes alarming research on the impact of social media and technology on our young people. Our teenagers have grown up with smartphones, may have had an Instagram account before they started high school, and don't remember a time before the internet. The arrival of the smartphone has changed every aspect of their social interactions and their mental health. A few takeaways:

- Rates of teen depression and suicide have skyrocketed since 2011. The more time teens spend looking at screens, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression. Recent research suggests that screen time, in particular social-media use, does indeed cause unhappiness.
- Fewer kids are spending time simply hanging out with friends, and they are less interested in the developmentally-appropriate desire to become independent young adults.
- When they do congregate with peers, they document their hangouts relentlessly—on Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook. Those not invited to come along are keenly aware. This trend has been especially steep among girls, with 48% more girls saying they often felt left out in 2015 than in 2010, compared with 27% more boys.

This article is long, but well worth the read. Based on this research, the author reports: "If you were going to give advice for a happy adolescence based on this survey, it would be straightforward: Put down the phone, turn off the laptop, and do something—anything—that does not involve a screen."

The Staples Resilience Project is an ongoing endeavor by the Staples High School Guidance Department.

<http://shs.westportps.org/departments/guidance/staples-resilience-project>