

# What is new in my kid's world?

Health & Wellness

Social Media

Pop Culture

Addiction Issues



A dad and some college students  
trying to help you stay ahead of your kids.

## 1. Vaping

Let's start with some numbers. By 2015 vaping by teenagers had increased 900% in just a few short years. It increased in 2016 and 2017, and in 2018 it doubled again. While cigarettes and smokeless tobacco product use by teenagers has declined for several years, teen vaping has grown and is now called an "epidemic" by the U.S. Surgeon General and the FDA. Just in Pennsylvania 30% of high school seniors self-report they've vaped in the last 30 days.

So, why be worried? Isn't vaping safer than cigarettes?

Yes, it can be. Though maybe it isn't. Research suggests there are some long-term, harmful consequences from vaping, even when teens are just using a flavored, non-nicotine product.

However, many vaping devices are not just flavored glycerin - most have nicotine. The JUUL brand, which is a favorite among teens and has more than 70% of the market, doesn't even have a nicotine-free version. However, it does have really cool flavors such as mint, tutti-frutti and gummy worms. Unfortunately, many teenagers don't even know their JUUL contains nicotine. Therefore, a new generation of nicotine addicts is being created right before our eyes.

What makes these new vape devices so dangerous is they are very easy to hide. A kid/teen can use them just about anywhere. Some are very small and look like a simple thumbdrive or USB drive. Many make a smell that could be mistaken for lip gloss or candy. Plus, the vape cloud doesn't have to be huge. The JUUL makes a very small vape cloud. It's become so popular, teens have created a verb from it - "juuling."

The amount of nicotine in these is not trivial. A single JUUL cartridge can contain as much as 40 mg of nicotine. That's the same as an entire pack of cigarettes.

But it doesn't stop there. THC, the chemical in marijuana that gets people high, is also available in vape cartridges. Students tell me it is easy to get here in Pennsylvania, where the cartridges are technically illegal, at least to teens. (They are available for medical marijuana patients.)

Look at the chart that shows the amount of THC that is currently available in vape cartridges. As you can see there is quite a range, anywhere from just over 10% to just under 70%!

So, why are youth vaping?

The top reason, teenagers have reported, is because a friend or family member vaped (39 percent). The environment around them is teaching kids to vape. Teenagers also say the availability of flavors such as mint, candy, fruit and chocolate helped them get started (31 percent). Some other reasons they cite include; they think e-cigarettes are less harmful, they are easier to get than other tobacco products, they cost less, and they can be used where cigarettes cannot be used.

## 2. Marijuana

There once was a time when humans had to accidentally discover a plant in order to get certain chemicals into their brains. To get high, people had to either smoke the plant or dry out the flower bud and ingest it somehow. For the plant called marijuana, that special chemical is called THC.

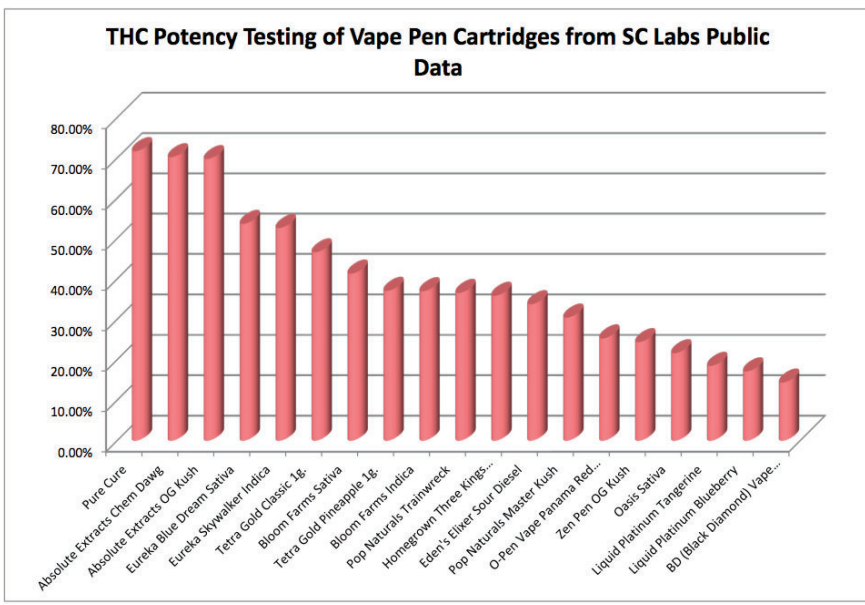
Jump to today: What most people are buying at medical marijuana facilities is THC. Not CBD, that other chemical that also comes from marijuana. CBD may or may not have some beneficial properties. The research is still being done. But data from states that have legalized medical marijuana show people buy mostly THC at medical marijuana facilities. And the potency of marijuana has gone up.

Unfortunately, if you're not a marijuana advocate and you don't like the idea of more and more people getting high, the bad news is chemistry is getting easier. Way easier.

This is happening with gummy bears full of THC, vape pens full of THC, and beer that is infused with THC.

Incidentally, last November, a company announced plans to produce THC by growing it in large yeast vats using a process similar to making beer. There won't be any need to use the slow and expensive process of having to grow the plants and harvest the THC.

But synthetic THC (cannabinoids) have been around for a while. Sometimes they are called "K2" or "spice."



Synthetic THC accounts for thousands of hospital visits a year.

So, is marijuana harmless? If you smoke and are an advocate of marijuana, you won't agree, but the medical community's answer is "no." There is such a thing as "marijuana addiction." Call any doctor. By the way, the chance for dependence or addiction climbs exponentially if someone starts as a kid or teen.

Are more kids smoking? "Yes". Why? In part because they don't think it's harmful. Research shows that somewhere in the early 1990's, fewer and fewer teenagers thought marijuana was harmful. Marijuana use then started to go up.

What's the bottom line? Your kids are going to be exposed to much more marijuana. It is going to be more potent. This means more of them are going to develop a physical and perhaps psychological dependence on the drug.

### 3. Prescription drugs and OTC

According to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the fastest-growing drug problem in the United States is the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs, and it's directly affecting teens. Part of the problem is that teens (and some adults) see prescription drugs as somehow safer or less harmful. "If it's prescribed as medicine, how bad can it be for me?"

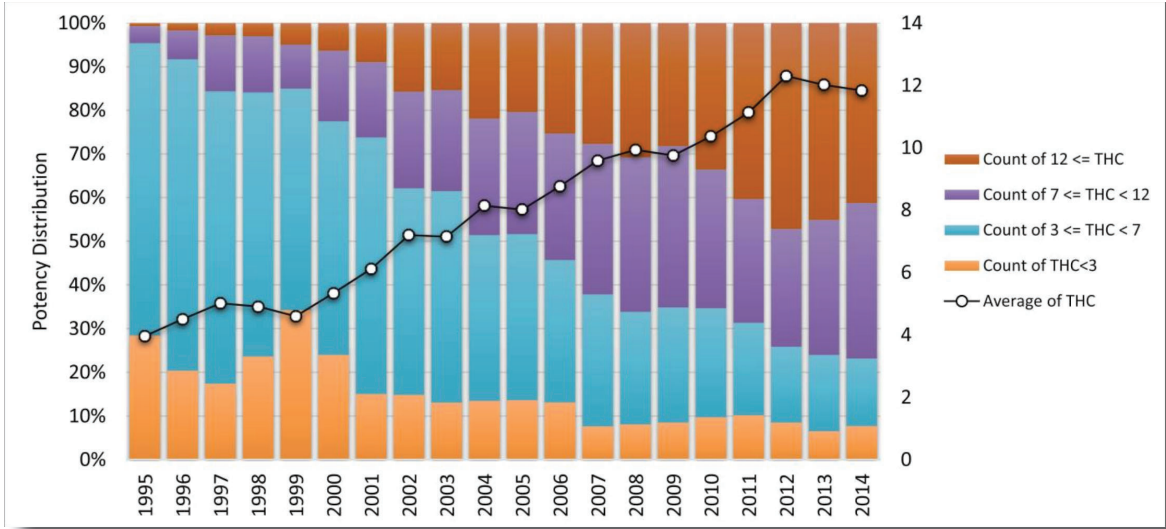
Pretty bad, it turns out. For example, a whole class of drugs called "stimulants" have side effects in common with cocaine. Irregular heartbeat, high body temperature, paranoia... especially if they are taken by snorting or injecting. Some take it for the high, but some kids take it thinking it will help them concentrate and study for or take exams.

Depressants can cause disorientation, fatigue, lack of coordination, shallow breathing, and seizures when withdrawal tarts to kick in.

Opioids, for example, pain killers Oxycontin, Percocet, etc... act like heroin. They cause drowsiness, constipation, nausea, and slowed breathing. Sometimes the breathing stops and people overdose and die.

All of these effects are particularly harmful to a developing brain. Should you be worried about your kid?

"Yes" - this is not the same world you grew up in. There are far more drugs being prescribed than ever before.



They are floating around our kid's school and playground.

For more information about alcohol and drugs visit our Parent-to-Parent online workshop at:

<http://PtPDrugFree.com>

The "poster child" of teenage prescription drug abuse right now is Adderall. It's cousin is Ritalin. Prescribed to treat ADHD or ADD, it can easily be "diverted" to non-patients. It is a stimulant and, in larger than prescribed doses, can cause a high.

Are the percentages huge? Not yet. About 5-10% self-report they are using prescription drugs to get high.

What is particularly scary is that 6th and 8th graders are trying these things. Some kids are using over-the-counter medicines to get high, like cough syrup, cold pills, diet pills, and pain relievers. "Robotripping" is what kids call it when they "trip" on cough syrup (which is frequently the brand "Robotussin").

Did you know that kids will try to get high off of the alcohol in hand sanitizer? From potpourri? From spices such as nutmeg and cinnamon? Bath salts? Some have even smoked the Freon out of air conditioners.

Prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicines are chemicals that will always be around, even if by some miracle we took every illegal drug off the streets.

## 4. Gambling

When I started researching gambling by youth I was quickly surprised by how widespread it is. I don't gamble, so I wasn't familiar with all of the sports betting that kids, and sometimes their families, do. For example, Pennsylvania 12th graders report that more than 40% of them have gambled. More than 20% of those say they have "a compulsive urge to gamble," and more than 5% have lied about their gambling. Regrettably, 22% of 6th graders report they have gambled.

For youth, the most common form of gambling is the lottery – even though I'm pretty sure it's illegal for teens to buy lottery tickets in Pennsylvania. The next most common forms are sports betting and betting on games of skill, such as pool, darts or video games.

Why does this all make me nervous? Because gambling is another form of addiction. And because you can go broke gambling. Recently, the country legalized sports betting. Each student can all tell me a horror story about a friend they knew who lost way more than they could afford sports betting. And, as the laws get looser, gambling goes up.

And, again, this just wasn't as available when you were a kid. A major driver in the growth of the gambling industry, estimated to be at least \$50 billion in U.S. dollars, has been technology. Online betting is the fastest area of growth and is expected to grow above 50% each year for several years in a row.

Online gambling is appealing for several reasons. One, users can lie about their age. Websites have no real way of knowing that a 12-yr-old is sitting at the computer or logging in from their phone. Also, new players can do online tutorials without embarrassment and even begin with "play" money until they are ready to bet. They can also play in the comfort of their home – or at the bus stop – and online winners can become celebrities, thus encouraging younger users. Finally, online gambling is so lucrative that budgets for advertising can be huge.

I predict gambling is going to become a bigger and bigger problem for our youth.

## 5. Inhalants

So, you think your home is drug free. Think again. A growing trend is getting high from common household products. It can be called "huffing," "sniffing," or "whippets." These inhalants can be a variety of products found around the home or workplace – such as cleaning fluids, spray paints, hair spray, butane lighters, whipped cream, glues, and markers. They contain chemicals that are psychoactive, meaning they are mood- and mind-altering substances.

Inhalants are among the first drugs young kids and teens use. In fact, they are one of the only drugs used more by younger kids than older ones. Regrettably, they can become chronic and habitual.

In the recent Monitoring the Future study (2018), nearly 9% of U.S. 8th grade students had tried inhalants to get high. This dropped to 6.5% for 10th graders and 4.4% for 12th graders.

Though some of the chemicals in these products leave the body rather quickly – it is one of the reasons these "highs" don't last very long and users can "huff" again and again in one sitting – other chemicals attach to fat tissue in the body and stick around. This can cause damage to nerve fibers and brain cells and produce long-term harm.

### What can you do?

First, you have to get on the same page as your co-parent. Below we've provided an abbreviated version of our "Parent Discussion Guide on Drugs and Alcohol."

Ask yourself, and each other, these questions:

- 1) Are we communicating the same message to our kid with the same words, same intent, and consistently over time? If not, we need to get on the same page.
- 2) Do we have an open line of communication with our kid on this topic? If not, how will we establish one? Will one parent take the lead?
- 3) Are we involved in our kid's life enough to know if he/she changes friends suddenly? If he/she changes sleep, eating or studying habits dramatically?
- 4) Are we in agreement about our rules, and have we communicated them to our kid?
- 5) Are we prepared to enforce them consistently and without too much anger?
- 6) Are we both being a positive role model for our kids? Are we honest about our own substance use?
- 7) If we have family members who struggle with substances are we prepared to discuss that with our kid? Do we need to warn them that they might be at higher risk than their friends? Are we prepared to protect their home environment even more since they may be at a higher risk?
- 8) Are we able to role model how to discuss substance abuse without using negative stereotypes?
- 9) Do we both agree that addiction is a medical condition caused by a gradual re-wiring of the brain? Do we know the signs and symptoms of a developing problem?

We want your kid to grow up substance free. Feel free to use the resources and links listed at <http://PtPDrugFree.com> Or reach out to us through our website at <http://DecodingTodaysYouth.com>

## 6. Video Games

Back when many of today's parents were children, the world of video games was fresh and exciting. The Nintendo, Sega Genesis and PlayStation 1 were beginning to pave the way for what the fun-filled, electronic games have become today.

Pong, Pac Man and Mario have now expanded from simple 8-bit games into amazing, high quality adventures surrounded by new technology and so many new concepts developing around games such as: esports, streaming, multiplayer games, virtual reality, and consoles that can be used on a television or as a handheld device.

Today, over 64% of US households own a device that is used to play video games and over 60% of Americans play video games daily, according to the Entertainment Software Company. That means more people are playing more video games than ever. That's why it is so important for parents to stay up to date on the latest in gaming, as at some point it will probably be your kids that will be playing.

### Consoles, computers and gaming devices of today

While consoles are still controlling a large portion of the game sphere, the rise of PC and mobile devices is something that can't be taken for granted.

52% of people who consider themselves "gamers" play on a PC, versus 90% who play on mobile and 41% who play on a console, says a survey from Electronic Entertainment Design and Research.

While PC gaming is becoming more and more relevant, especially with the serious gamers, most kids are most likely sticking to console and/or mobile devices.

The big three gaming companies have been constant for more than a century; Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo.

The battle between the Sony's PlayStation 4 (PS4) and Microsoft's Xbox One was interrupted in 2017 when Nintendo released its Switch console, that acts both as a TV play console or a hand-held device.

Nintendo just barely clipped Sony for the best-selling console of last year.

The reason?

While it's tough to tell for sure, Nintendo seems to have found the soft spot that is a winner for both kids and their parents.

While many of the top games for PS4 and Xbox One are a collection of sports and more violent oriented video games, such as GTA V (2) and Call of Duty Black Ops III (9), most of Nintendo's top games include a large amount of games that have been adapted from classics.

While games such as "Super Smash Bros. Ultimate,"

"Mario Odyssey" and "Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild" do have violence integrated into the game, it is a much more cartoon, old-fashioned style of violence.

### The 2019 video game scene

The mainstream flow of online multiplayer games has opened the door tremendously for the industry, but it has also made the games even harder to stop playing.

Today, shooter titles lead the multiplayer scene, controlling 35% of the market. That may not be a positive as more kids are playing games than ever.

In America, 81% of youths play at least once a month, and 8.5% of them are "addicted," according to an older 2014 study done by Vanderbilt's Developmental Psychology Department.

On average 8-12-year-olds alone, play an average of 13 hours of video games a week, while 13-18-year-olds play 14 hours of video games per week.

While there are benefits, including cognitive function skills, improving multitasking, and hand eye coordination, video games also help to contribute to America's growing obesity problem.

And while the rise of esports and streaming video game services like Twitch (that we'll talk about later) gives hopes for a future in competitive gaming, it can still be a huge issue with the possibility of developing an addiction and leading to other health related issues.

## 7. Today's Music

With subscription-based music streaming services such as Apple Music and Spotify allowing members to play their favorite

## 2018's Top Video Games

### Most played games of the year (according to Ranker)

1. Fortnite 
2. GTA V 
3. Minecraft 
4. Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege 
5. Overwatch 
6. League of Legends 
7. PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds
8. Red Dead Redemption II
9. Call of Duty Black Ops III
10. Rocket League

### The Rise of "Battle Royale" Games

Over the last few years, thanks to films from "The Hunger Games" series, Battle Royale games have become the new mainstream of the gaming world.

Players drop into a battle zone with between 60-100 other players and scavenge for weapons and equipment while eliminating all other opponents. The goal is to be the last player or group of players alive.

The craze began with a not-so-popular game called "H1Z1." It lacked in solid graphics and freshly updated content and was quickly replaced by games like "Fortnite" and "Players Unknown Battle Ground" (PUBG).

These games became wildly popular, not just on PCs and consoles, but also on mobile devices. Some professional streamers, such as Ninja, a 27-year old from Grayslake, Illinois, became wildly rich and famous by playing these games.

In fact, last September, Ninja, who has over thirteen million followers on Twitch, became the first Esports player to be featured on ESPN Magazine's cover.

The newest Battle Royale game is "Apex Legends". EA entertainment published this game by Respawn Entertainment. The free-to-play game had 25 million downloads in its first week alone.

music, as well as any music they can think of, Americans are listening to an average of 32 hours of music per week. That means your child is being exposed to over 69 days worth of music per year.

Whether it's in their headphones at school, on their devices at home, or anywhere in between, you're probably wondering "what in the heck are they listening to today?"

### What's trending on today's charts?

Today's popular music is all about rap and hip-hop. That's not Tupac and Biggie.

Today's artists have names like Offset, Gunna, 21 Savage, Cardi B, A Boogie wit da Hoodie, and Migos, just to name a few off of Apple Music's top charts.

Music today still talks about sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll just like when you were a kid. But maybe in a very different way. To find an example, look no farther than the top song on the charts, as we write this: YNW Melly's "Murder on My Mind." If you're worried about gun violence...

The song's chorus goes:

*"I wake up in the morning I got murder on my mind.  
AK47, MAC-11, Glock, and 9's,  
And all these p\*\*\*\* n\*\*\*\*\* hating tryna knock me off my  
grind.  
But I can't let 'em do it,  
I got murder on my mind,  
B\*\*\*\* I got murder on my mind."*

If you're worried about how women/girls are treated, consider how today's top women artists objectify themselves in their music.

Number four on the top chart is once childhood star, Ariana Grande. Her new song is "Break up with your girlfriend, I'm bored." The song tells the story of a woman begging a man to break up with his girlfriend to hook up with her - she's "bored." Google the lyrics.

Number 10 on the charts is Bruno Mars teaming up with female rapper, Cardi B on their new song, "Please Me." After some disturbing sex like noises from Cardi B, Bruno Mars asks her to "just please me baby." Cardi B goes on to sing:

*"Lollipoppin' (Poppin'), twerkin' in some J's.  
On the dance floor (Uh-huh), no panties in the way.  
I take my time with it (Ow), bring you close to me.  
Don't want no young dumb s\*\*\*.  
Better f\*\*\* me like we listenin' to Jodeci."*

Violence and sex are integrated in today's music. And drugs are a major theme, and not just weed. We're talking very dangerous and lethal drugs, like Xanax, Ecstasy and cocaine. They figure prominently. Try it yourself. Type "lyrics...." and then the title of any song.



## B. Streaming services

It's pretty hard to believe that only 10 years ago Netflix was a company that mailed you movies. Today, in addition to being a production company that makes a lot of original shows and movies each year, Netflix is the world's leading streaming platform. It has over 140 million subscribers.

And it's not alone. Hulu has millions of viewers. Amazon Prime has millions. And Disney is about to launch its own, original streaming service.

So, it's not surprising that today's youth can watch a constant stream of content they like and pick themselves.

But researchers are warning parents to be cautious about opening up all of these streaming services to their children. Not only is it possible they may end up spending more time in front of a screen than practically anything else, but no one may be monitoring the violence or sex in the content. For example, the Parent's Television Council suggests that children who watch violent tv shows and movies are exposed to guns or a bladed type weapon every three minutes.

Netflix allows parents to set up a new account for children, so they'll see age appropriate content. Or parents can simply password protect anything that might be too mature of content for their kid. But that doesn't happen automatically. You have to get in there and do it.

Hulu, just like Netflix, also allows parents to set up a separate account for their child. Amazon Prime Video, however, is a little trickier than that. For information on how to turn on Prime parent controls visit: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=201423060>.

## 9. Twitch

Aside from the fact that kids have a world of music, movies and television to stream at their disposal, did you know they can actually stream other people playing video games?

Parents, I present you, “Twitch.TV”

Twitch is a very big deal with teens and kids. One site says they have 15 million daily active users. That’s “DAILY.” They also have 2.2 million broadcasters. You read that right. Anyone can become a “content producer” and broadcast themselves playing a video game. Twitch is currently worth \$3.79 billion, by the way.

Twitch broadcasters make money by having people watch them and send them money. In return, the gamer might call out their “sponsor.” It can be quite rewarding for a teen to have their name called out, online, by a world famous gamer like “Ninja” - who makes at least \$350,000 a month on Twitch.



Twitch can be free to use, but they encourage people to donate because it earns watchers badges and exclusive content.

Is it harmful to watch somebody else play a video game? Maybe not. Unless you’re spending too much time in front of a screen. Or there is foul language.

But what if your kid decides to become a professional gamer? What if Ninja becomes his or her idol? He was featured in a recent Super Bowl ad, by the way. Will your child then decide to practice video gaming all of the time? And is “professional video gamer” a reasonable career goal?

You’ll have to decide that. Work.chron.com says there are only 500 highly paid gamers worldwide, and there are only five positions open to Americans.

## 10. YouTube

Funny to think that only 15 years ago, sharing videos on the web was a painful process. Today, YouTube has over 1.3 billion users. Over 300 hours of content are loaded every minute and over 5 billion videos are watched every day.

It’s probably no surprise then that kids are “going down the rabbit hole” when it comes to YouTube, i.e. they start watching and then continue watching for a long, long time.

Why? Because YouTube is very good at finding something else for you to watch. Their algorithms easily find additional videos you will like. Did your kid just watch a video of a dirt bike stunt? YouTube has hundreds more like it. Interested in photography? You couldn’t possibly watch all of the videos on YouTube about photography. Like to see cats doing stupid things? Holy cow, are there a lot of those videos! You get the point. Over 300 hours of brand new videos are loaded every minute!

If you are at all concerned about screen time, YouTube will be one of your biggest issues.

But what about content? YouTube does have some videos you don’t want your kid to see. Fortunately, there is a Parental Control feature on YouTube. Unfortunately, you have to actually be signed into YouTube to make it work. If you are using the YouTube app on a tablet or cell phone, the Parental Control feature is pretty easy to activate. However, people often just watch YouTube through a browser, like Chrome or Microsoft Edge. In that case, you have to specifically login to use a Parental Control (or your browser can remember your last login).

Aside from screen time and inappropriate content, there are two other things we’re concerned about. One is viral YouTube videos that encourage your kid to do stupid things. We don’t necessarily mean stuff like the ALS challenge where you dump a bucket of water on your head. But how about the “surfing on top of a moving car” craze? Or the “get out and walk alongside a moving car in traffic” thing we’ve seen recently? And do you remember the “Tide Pod” challenge where kids actually swallowed laundry detergent? Those are very dangerous. You’ll have to have some serious conversations with your kid about what is an acceptable “challenge” and what should just be ignored.

The second concern is “influencers.” These are YouTube stars that make money by “endorsing” products. Often these endorsements look innocent, but behind the scene money or products are being given to the influencer. Your kid is a prime target for advertisers, so check things out. That cute kid or teenager might be pretending they’re offering news and opinion, but it might really be just another way to advertise to your kid.

## 11. Cell Phone Apps

Nearly every teen has a cell phone these days. And they use them a lot. The chart below shows just how much.

Aside from sending text messages and pictures, teens are also loading apps on their phones - “app” is short for “application,” a software program downloaded and installed on a phone or tablet.

Is there anything to be concerned about with these apps? Maybe a few things. For example, privacy. Does your kid know how to protect their personal data? Do they know what permissions they are giving these apps when they install them? Do you even know? If not, try typing “how do I learn about privacy on phone apps” into Google.

kids to use their algebraic knowledge to complete each level. At the higher levels, the algebra can become extremely difficult.

Heads Up, an interactive game is the charades game for today. It is easy to play, teaches critical thinking, and is fun for the whole family. Best of all, the game is completely free to download with in app purchases available.

Hopscotch: Make Games teaches kids the basics of game design. For older kids, this is an easy and fun way to learn programming. The app is free to use with optional subscriptions within the app.

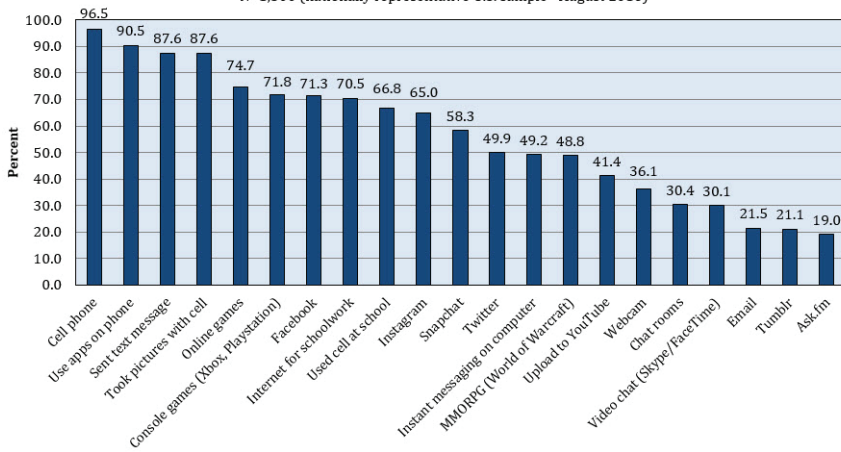
Civilization Revolution 2, is a fun, educational game that teaches kids about history. For kids 12 and up, it is bit higher in price at \$9.99. However, it can make learning history fun and exciting.

For more advice about apps, visit <https://www.lifewire.com/great-apps-for-tweens-4154623>.

Bottom line? Pay attention to what your child is doing on their phone or tablet. Set rules for app purchases, screen time, and content. Have them seek your approval before downloading and using an app. And practice what you preach - are you on your phone all of the time?

### Teens Use of Technology

Weekly Activities (12 to 17-year-olds)  
N=1,500 (nationally representative U.S. sample - August 2016)



Cyberbullying Research Center  
[www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org)

Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin (2016)

Another concern is money. Does your child (or you) know that some apps are free to download, but will cost money somewhere down the road? For example, a very robust business model in gaming is to make the game free but to charge for tokens or costumes. Fortnite made \$3 billion in profits last year. One source says 60% of that came from players buying outfits for their free character.

“In app” purchases are readily available on most apps and can easily be accidentally clicked by your kid, or purchased without your knowledge if they have access to their own online account. (See our blog about Venmo if you haven’t heard of the world of online money.)

Are there good games for your kid? Lifewire.com has a list of the best games for kids/teens. For example, Minecraft, the creative building and playing game, is very popular with teens. It costs \$6.99 but also has in app purchases. Lifewire likes the creative potential the app offers but not the lack of instructions.

DragonBox Algebra costs \$7.99 and challenges older

### Some App Warnings for 2019:

1. BIGO LIVE – Live Stream: This app allows kids to send live stream videos of themselves. They can also send/receive beans that cost real money. The goal here is to become Internet famous. Some concerns are mature content and spending money.
2. BitLife: This is a simulation game. Kids live through a character from birth to death. One concern is kids can engage in simulated risky behavior in the game, such as sex, drugs, and crime.
3. HOLLA: Live Random Video Chat: In this app you can video chat with strangers. Bad idea right there for kids. But also, you could have your location tracked.
4. Lipsi: an anonymous “feedback” app, i.e. you can send and receive text messages without revealing your identity. A major concern with that would be bullying and privacy. And people may ask if you have a webcam.
5. Socratic Math & Homework Help: take a picture of homework and it gives the answers. One concern might be, is it the right answer? More obviously, is this training your kid to cheat?
6. IMUV: 3D Avatar Creator and Chat: In this app you can buy clothes and other items for your character or avatar. Some concerns include virtual sex, chatting with strangers, and spending money. You may get asked if you have a webcam.



## 12. Internet Safety

Kids spend a lot of time on the Internet, as do adults. Is your child surfing the web safely? WebMD has some important things to say about how to be safe on the Internet. They include:

1. Keep your online identity private. Do not share your information with strangers.
2. Only you should know your username and password.
3. Watch what you write and what you do. Everything can be traced back to you.
4. Be cautious when meeting someone in person. Always take someone with you.

Parents, you are responsible for minors online. You have to train your child in all of that common sense stuff you already know. Like, don't send nude pictures of yourself to anyone. And tell your parent if something should scare you or concern you.

More information can be found at: <https://teens.webmd.com/features/teen-internet-safety-tips>.

Mediasmarts.ca also offers internet safety tips in age groups. Check out their website for more information on other age groups. Kids, particularly ages 11-13, are in constant communication with each other because of smart phones. This age group likes to feel in control of what they do. They tend to think they know how to be smart and safe, but they can be vulnerable to bullies, hackers, and strangers.

Some of Mediasmarts advice includes:

- Keep your child's bedroom a technology free zone so you can monitor their activity in a common family area.
- Preview the websites and apps your kid wants to use before allowing them to use them.
- Help your child build a positive digital footprint. Things on the Internet last forever.
- Make rules and adapt and change them with age.
- Check all privacy settings.
- Discuss respecting others online and cyberbullying.
- Discuss healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.
- Build mutual trust with your child.
- Make sure they know about viruses and the consequences of illegal internet activity.
- Have them share financial transactions with you.
- Lastly, provide them with safe options for everything they need.

For more go to:

<http://mediasmarts.ca/tipsheet/internet-safety-tips-age-14-17>.



## 13. Cyberbullying

What can cyberbullying include? Nude photo sharing, blackmailing, catfishing, threats, rumors, doxing, and more. Maybe you don't know all of these terms.

Catfishing someone involves pretending to be someone you're not online. Often the goal is just to make the other person believe the fake persona. But sometimes it is more malicious. This type of cyberbullying can result in heartbreak, misinterpretations, blackmail, police involvement, and, worst-case scenario, suicide.

Doxing includes sharing someone's private information online for revenge and harassment. The word comes from sharing someone's "documents." Doxing's legality is still being worked out, but clearly someone can get into trouble if their doxing is harassment, intimidation, invasion of privacy, or even assault.

It is obviously important to remind your child not to send suggestive photos to anyone. Explain to them how easy it is to share content - even Snapchat content, by the way. See our blog about Snapchat on our website. Photos and other content can be used to blackmail your child if they are not careful.

For more information, visit: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/cyberbullying-tactics/index.html>.

DoSomething.org, a global movement of 6 million young people making positive changes in the world, offers several facts about cyberbullying on its website, including:

1. 43% of children have been cyberbullied. For 1 in 4, it has happened more than one time.
2. 80% of teens use their cell phone habitually, which is why cyberbullying is so common.
3. 81% think they are less likely to get caught bullying online than in person.
4. Only 1 in 10 victims will tell an adult about the abuse.
5. 58% of kids admit someone has said something mean to them online.
6. Victims are 2-9 times more likely to consider suicide.

Cyberbullying is unique. It follows your child home from school. You have to be aware of your child's online activity. And they have to trust you enough that they will feel comfortable reporting any incident to you.

Read more at: <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-cyber-bullying>.

## 14. Mental Health

Today's kids have an increasing rate of mental illness, including depression and anxiety. Not only are more young people experiencing these issues, but more people are talking about them – which is a good thing. They are less stigmatized than when you were young, which means treatment and therapy are also talked about more openly.

Currently, anxiety disorders affect 25% of U.S. teens between 13 and 18 years old. These include separation anxiety disorder, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, selective mutism, social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and specific phobias. (Visit <https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children/childhood-anxiety-disorders>.)

About 3.1 million teens between 12 and 17 have experienced at least one major depressive episode in the previous year. (Visit <https://www.verywellmind.com/depression-statistics-everyone-should-know-4159056>.) It's important to distinguish between depression and being sad. Depression is an overwhelming sadness that can last for an extended period of time. It makes finding motivation to do even the simplest of tasks extremely difficult. Depression is really only diagnosable by a trained professional. But some things to look out for include: sleep issues, either difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much; decreased energy or fatigue almost every day; changes in appetite or significant weight loss; difficulty concentrating, making decisions or thinking clearly; and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.

The reason why you need to get educated about depression is because suicide is the third leading cause of death in people ages 15-24 in the U.S. (unintentional injury and homicide are the top two.)

For more info visit <https://www.verywellmind.com/depression-statistics-everyone-should-know-4159056>.

“fake” account can be problematic. How do you know what they are sharing if you can't see it? Read our blog post about “finstas” (fake Instagram accounts) on our website.

## 15. Stress Reduction

Because your child's mental health is so important, we've put stress reduction as our second highest priority for this category. Stress is part of your kid's life every day. It can be induced by school work, bodily changes, high expectations, fear of failure, problems with family or friends, etc... One of the most important things you can teach them is how to manage stress. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) is a good place to start. We've summarized some of their help, but feel free to visit: <https://bit.ly/2UJh7LM>.

### Set realistic expectations from the get-go

A lot of the pressure kid's feel comes from you, which is understandable since all parents want their children to succeed. It becomes problematic when kids are trying to reach a level that they might not be capable of achieving. Straight A's and flawless records aren't always possible.

Some kids shine more in the arts than in math. Others would rather be in a science lab than on a football field. Each child's strengths are in different areas, so expecting them to be excellent at everything can cause them to feel like failures when they don't attain perfect marks.

Be open with your kids about the expectations you have for them. Be honest with yourself about your child's strengths and weaknesses. Make sure your child knows their own strengths and weaknesses, especially if they are the ones putting the unnecessary pressure on themselves.

### Develop healthy eating and sleeping patterns

Routines come in handy when times get hard. If your child goes through a period in which life feels out of control and there's not enough time in the day to get everything done, routines help make sure the important parts of the day are taken care of.

By getting into the habit of eating breakfast every morning, going to sleep at a certain time, and waking up by a specific time, your child will never have to worry about feeling groggy and drained. They'll also always get enough food to help them feel energized for the day.

Routines also train your body to work with what you give it. If you limit desserts just before bedtime they will be hungry enough in the morning to eat breakfast. And they'll be able to wake up at that designated time because their body has gotten used to waking up early.



**John Doe**



I have so much work this week. Someone please kill me.

### Depression and Social Media

Parents, you don't want to know this, but kids today think it's “cool” to be depressed on social media. It is not uncommon to read “I don't have any motivation today” or “I'd rather die than do (this task).” Fortunately, most of the time they are just exaggerating. But if you see any posts like this from your kid, obviously follow up. Incidentally, this is where your child having a second,

## Find the best relaxation exercise for them

Whether it's a breathing exercise, a walk outside, muscle relaxation techniques, etc... find a way to help them calm themselves down when their body and/or mind feels overwhelmed. Remember, when a body gets stressed, it tries to enter a fight or flight state. This releases stress hormones and can cause long-range problems for the body. Taking a moment to slow their breathing and get their body back to a relaxed state will help them focus and take away the feeling of panic.

By the way, there's an app for that. There are plenty of cell phone and tablet apps that provide meditation sessions and exercises for specific situations. Apps like "Head-space," "Stop, Breathe & Think," and "Calm" are very popular right now.

Other helpful advice from AACAP includes:

Avoid excess caffeine intake

Get a supportive group of friends or family to lean on

Take a break when you get too stressed to focus

Learn to be "good enough"

Avoid drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms

## 16. Encourage Creativity

Fostering creativity in children during their impressionable kid and teen years can help them become more productive, effective members of society as they grow. Creativity is more than just experimenting with crayons and paint as toddlers. It is actually a skill that can be taught. It is also fundamental to all subjects, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, math). It helps kids problem solve and adapt to changing conditions.

The most important resource you can give your children is time. Free, unstructured time. You've probably been scheduling your kid's time for years now. Because they are getting older you may be adding more and more after-school practices and weekend activities. But are you scheduling in some unstructured time?

We think kids are naturally curious. Have you thought about providing books, kits, resources, videos, etc... that will stimulate their mind? Do you praise them when they come up with something new? Are they writing on their own? Drawing? Inventing in the garage? Coming up with new games? There are lots of great resources out there, and many of them give age ranges so you can narrow down your search.

For example, one of our favorite magazines is called "Make" and is located at <http://makezine.com>.

In addition to books and kits and loads of instructions on how to make cool stuff, they even have "Maker Faires" in various cities across the country so like-minded people can gather and share great ideas. We guarantee if you get

your kid deep enough into the Make universe they will find something in there that hooks them.

Allow them to explore their own ideas. You may have a strict set of beliefs that you follow, and you may get upset when your child doesn't follow those footsteps. They just want to be able to form their own opinions, and that's not a bad thing. They're doing their own research and absorbing information from the Internet and their friends. Some of it might be false or gossip, but don't underestimate how much your child can learn on their own. Encourage them to find alternative solutions to problems.

For more about how to encourage creativity in your kid visit: [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/7\\_ways\\_to\\_foster\\_creativity\\_in\\_your\\_kids](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/7_ways_to_foster_creativity_in_your_kids).

## 17. Unhealthy Dieting

Body image can be a big problem for your kid or teen, and eating disorders are on the rise worldwide. As long as there is advertising and distorted perceptions about what is "good looking," there will be young people facing body dysmorphia and poor self-esteem. This can lead to unhealthy dieting.

National research says that 50% of all teenage girls and 25% of teenage boys have tried dieting to lose weight. Unfortunately, about a third of those girls (33%) are already at a healthy weight and dieting can only put them at risk.

But dieting by this age group rarely achieves its goal. Many young people will actually gain weight while trying to diet. A diet can make them feel hungry and preoccupied with food. It can also deprive them of foods they enjoy. Some diets are dangerous because they encourage skipping meals, using weight loss pills or laxatives, or vomiting after eating. But teens are still growing, and they need the right amount of nutrients to be healthy.

### Keep your child away from a fad diet

The Center for Young Women's Health identifies a fad diet as one that sets certain foods off-limits, promises you will lose weight in an unrealistic time period (or lose weight without exercising), is a temporary plan instead of one that can be implemented longterm, and/or has "good" foods and "bad" foods. (<https://youngwomenshealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Mod-3-Handouts-Games.pdf>)

Excessive measures to decrease weight, especially when in most cases it's not needed, starts a pattern that can continue into the extremely impressionable teen/young adult years and into adulthood. If your child is truly overweight or facing health-related problems, consult a doctor before trying anything.

# A dad and some college students trying to help you stay ahead of your kids.



**Erick Lauber, Ph.D.**, is an applied psychologist and faculty at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His most recent parenting articles have appeared in *Parent News*, *Apple Family Works*, *Women's Sourcebook*, *Today's Family Now*, and *Positively ADHD*. Erick and his wife Betsy have been married 27 years and their three kids have all moved out.

**Katie Mest** (left) is a junior at IUP studying journalism/public relations and marketing. **Seth Woolcock** (right) is also a junior studying journalism/public relations, and **Morgan Rihn** (bottom row) is a junior marketing major with a hospitality minor.

The **2020 Parenting** team runs the DecodingTodaysYouth.com blog and produces other educational material for parents of kids and teens. Contact Dr. Lauber at [elauber@iup.edu](mailto:elauber@iup.edu) for more information.

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