

**Let's be:**

**Smart about phones**

# Part of life and here to stay



# Why the focus on smartphones?

**THEY'RE NOT REALLY 'PHONES' AT ALL**



**MOBILE PHONE**

Make calls, send texts, play Snake

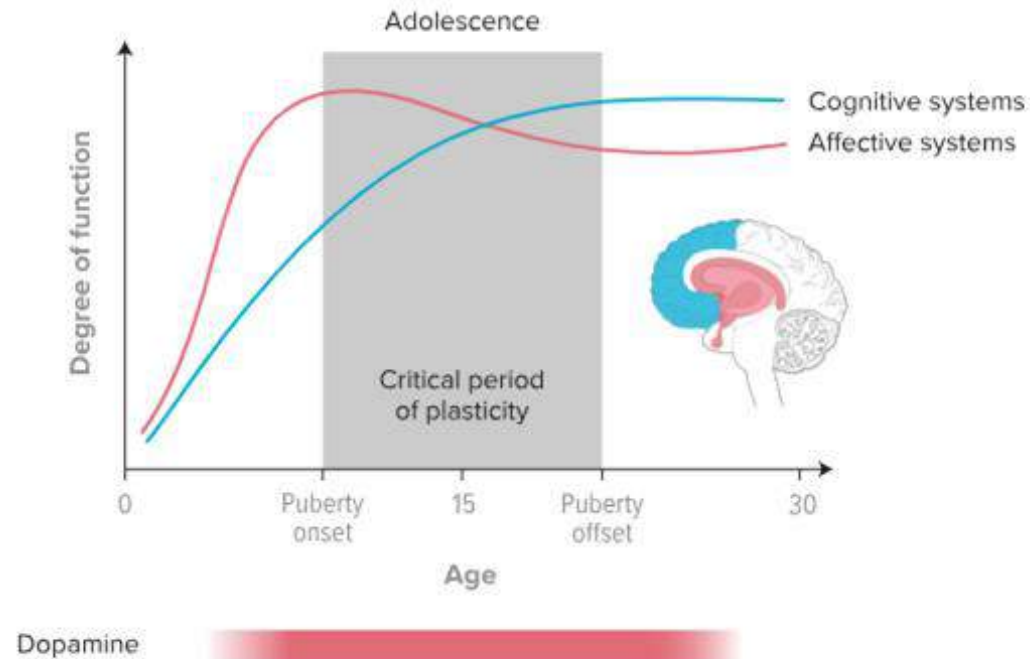


**POCKET SUPERCOMPUTER**

24/7 access to the internet in your pocket

# Why the focus on young people?

The brain's reward and cognitive control systems change with age



SOURCE: ASHLEY PARR / UNIV OF PITTSBURGH

KNOWABLE MAGAZINE

Although the brain systems needed for executive function and cognitive control (shown in blue) are up and running in teenagers, research by Beatriz Luna, Ashley Parr and colleagues suggests that the brain's reward systems — involved in both positive and negative emotions — still dominate (shown in red). This parallels an early surge in levels of dopamine — a neurotransmitter associated with reward and motivation — which declines as teens get older.



That promise to keep them safe

Discuss – What concerns you most about smartphone use in young people today?



## Some facts and figures

**90%**

of girls and 50% of boys  
say they are sent  
unwanted explicit  
content

Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools, 2021

**75%**

of UK 15 year olds  
questioned had been  
sent beheading videos

Digital Childhoods, children's commissioner report, 2022

**51%**

of UK 11-13 year-olds  
have seen hardcore  
pornography online

British Board of Film Classification Report, March 2022

**29 hours**

Per week is the average  
British 12-year-old now  
spends on their smartphone

Childwise Monitor Report, 2021

**1 in 5**

UK 16 to 18 years olds say  
that their social media has  
made them feel that 'life is  
not worth living'

Parentkind Poll, 2024



~Susie

In the last decade there have been 70% less outdoor accidents and 93% more incidents of self harm in children... as a GP I can promise you it's much easier to mend a broken bone than a broken mind.



24

Dr Susie Davies, founder of Papaya Parents, citing NHS DATA



# SMARTPHONES ARE FUELLING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

**1 in 5**

UK 16 to 18 years olds say  
that their social media has  
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not worth living'

Parentkind Poll, 2024

Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2024



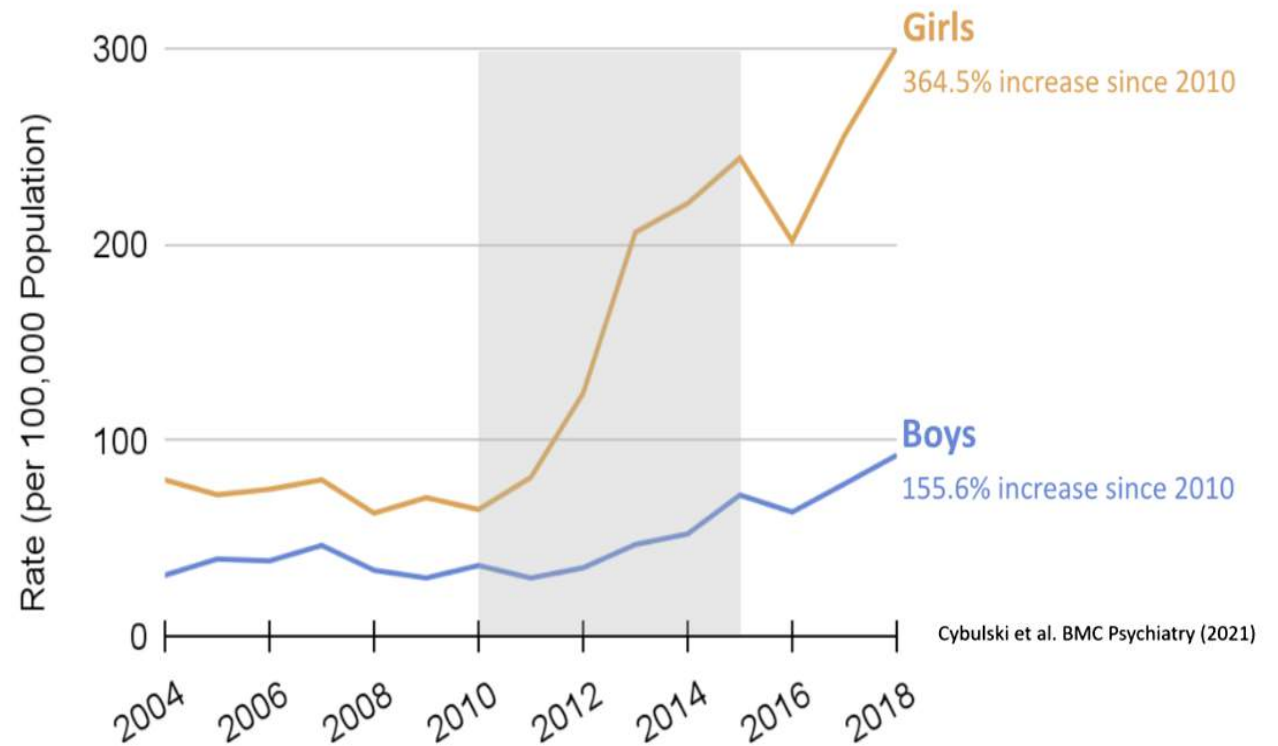


# SMARTPHONES ARE FUELLING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and even suicide among teens have all dramatically spiked globally since 2010 – when children started getting smartphones.

A 2023 global study of 27,969 young adults from Sapiens Labs showed that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health today.

UK Teens, Self-harm Episodes (Ages 10 – 12)





## **SMARTPHONES EXPOSE KIDS TO HARMFUL CONTENT**

Having unrestricted access to the internet in your pocket creates a gateway to extreme content and viewpoints that we'd never dream of exposing children to in real life.

Hardcore pornography, extreme political views, sexualised and violent imagery, trolling and material promoting suicide, self-harm and eating disorders have become part of the fabric of modern childhood.

Sadly, parental controls do not protect against most of these as they are often sent directly via messaging apps..

# Why does your teen have trouble sleeping?

Percent of parents reporting their teen has trouble  
falling asleep or staying asleep

Won't get off electronics/social media/phone

56%

Irregular sleep schedule due to  
homework/activities

43%

Worry about school

31%

Worry about social life

23%

Health problem/  
medication

10%

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital  
National Poll on Children's Health, 2018



## YOUNG PEOPLE WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

**67%**

of 16-18 year olds  
think smartphones  
are harmful

Parentkind poll, 2024

**1 in 5**

of 16-18 year olds  
have felt “life is not  
worth living” due to  
social media

Parentkind poll, 2024

**50%**

of teens say they are  
“addicted” to social  
media

Millennium Cohort Study, 2024





## PARENTS WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

**94%**

of primary school  
parents think  
smartphones  
are harmful

Parentkind nationwide poll of 2,496  
people, April 24

**70%**

of parents believe  
smartphones  
negatively impact  
family life

HMD poll of 10,000 parents, June 24

**33%**

of parents of children  
with smartphones have  
cried over their child's  
phone obsession

HMD poll of 10,000 parents, June 24

# SMARTPHONES APPS ARE ADDICTIVE BY DESIGN

Tech companies spend billions on making apps and devices as addictive as possible because ‘maximising engagement’ is the fundamental objective of their business model.

So it’s little wonder that many children are routinely ‘spending six, seven, eight hours a day on social media – often more’ (Ofcom, 2024).



**46%**

of teens say they  
use the their phones  
“almost constantly”

Pew Research Centre, Aug 2022

**29 hours**

Per week is the average  
British 12-year-old now  
spends on their smartphone

Childwise Monitor Report, 2021

**2 in 3**

of 11-17 year olds ‘often’  
or ‘sometimes’ find it  
difficult to put down  
their phone

Common Sense Media, 2023



**“Behind every screen on your phone, a thousand engineers have worked to make it maximally addicting. Children are particularly susceptible to this kind of manipulative design.”**



**Aza Raskin**

Co-inventor of ‘infinite scroll’, turned campaigner



## SADLY, WE COULD GO ON



### SLEEP

Bedtime use of smartphones doubles children's risk of poor sleep



### BULLYING

84% of bullying now takes place on a device



### DISTRACTIONS

On average teens are bombarded by 237 smartphone notifications a day



### ARGUMENTS

55% of parents say their child's smartphone use causes big family arguments



### ROAD SAFETY

Mobile phone distraction is a major cause of road accidents involving children



### CRIME

500 children a day were mugged in 2020 in the UK, almost all for smartphones





**“When kids are on their phones all day, it’s not just what they’re doing on the phone that matters — it’s what they’re not doing. They’re missing out on crucial experiences that help them grow into healthy adults.”**



**Dr Jonathan Haidt**

Professor of Social Psychology, NYU



# It's little wonder that many of the people who created this technology keep it away from their kids

STEVE JOBS

“We don’t allow the iPad in the home. We think it’s too dangerous for them”



EVAN SPIEGEL

Grew up without a TV and credits his own success on that tech restriction. Limits his kid to 1.5 hours screen time per week



BILL GATES

Didn’t allow his 4 children smartphones or their own computers until they were 14



I saw a quote that said,  
“give a kid a smart phone  
when you are ready for  
their childhood to end.”







You are invited to a

# CHILD'S BIRTHDAY SLEEPOVER

75% chance of seeing violent content



1 in 4 children have received  
a sexual message



Average age of exposure  
to pornography is 12



2 in 3 children report seeing  
harmful content online

You wouldn't send them here –  
so why give them a smartphone?







**The solution is to  
work together**

# **Discussion point:**

**Children need a smartphone for safety. We want them to be able to contact us.**

Things to consider:

- How safe are smartphones?
- What are we trying to keep children safe from?
- How else might our children be able to contact us?



## TikTok sued by parents of UK teens after alleged challenge deaths



Hollie Dance and her son Archie

**Liv McMahon & Graham Fraser**  
Technology reporters

**7<sup>th</sup> February 2025 - TikTok is being sued by the parents of four British teenagers who believe their children died after taking part in viral trends that circulated on the video-sharing platform in 2022.**

# Safety?

Molly Russell inquest: Schoolgirl, 14, died by self-harm while suffering 'negative effects of online content', coroner finds

UK mother of boy who killed himself seeks right to access his social media

Ellen Roome says firms should be required to hand over data in case it can help parents understand why their child died

'Suicide website users encouraged our teen son to drink'

Instagram actively helping spread of

## Posts encouraging eating disorders were recommended to X users

X is just the latest platform to struggle with user groups creating eating disorder content, where teens can fall down a rabbit hole that promotes extreme thinness.



FAMILY PHOTO

Vlad Nikolin-Caisley died on 7 May 2024 after swallowing poison he bought online

**Nikki Mitchell**  
BBC South Home Affairs Correspondent  
@BBCNikkim >

6 February 2025

"I saw my son fighting for his last breath," says Anna Nikolin-Caisley. "He went in agony."

## Catfishing vic

## Autistic teenager attempt after social media sit down viral video

The video was shared thousands of times over a few weeks



The research group say there is inadequate moderation on Instagram. Photograph: miljko/Getty Images

## Global: TikTok's 'For You' feed risks pushing children and young people towards harmful mental health content



s have powers to get help from Ofcom to access social media data but parents are not do this themselves. Photograph: Getty Images

n whose 14-year-old son killed himself is calling for parents to be e legal right to access their child's social media accounts to help and why they died



ELLIE DANCE

Ellie Dance and her son Archie

McMahon & Graham Fraser



# And it happens here in Newquay



# A quick word on Roblox

## New Roblox warning issued to parents



ELOISE HILL  
Content writer

PUBLISHED: 12:37, 26 OCT 2022  
UPDATED: 12:37, 26 OCT 2022

Popular online gaming platform Roblox is seeing a worrying increase in kids exposed to harmful and upsetting material



## What are children saying about Roblox issues

CBBC's kids' news magazine Newsround has reported some of the worrying things kids told the organisations, with one child saying:

'I've recently been experiencing some cyber bullying on Roblox. They've been saying hurtful things like "I know your address", "I know your school" but it happens a lot and sometimes it really gets to me..'

A 14-year-old girl also commented:

“I was playing Roblox and I was on a game where you work at a pizza place and two people were pressuring girls to do inappropriate stuff with them and if they did, they would get extra money in the game.'

# Keep kids off Roblox if you're worried, its CEO tells parents



GETTY IMAGES

| Roblox has seen meteoric growth among young gamers

**Zoe Kleinman & Georgina Hayes**

Technology editor & reporter

13 March 2025, 06:06 GMT

Updated 12 minutes ago

**Parents who don't want their children on Roblox should not let them use it, the chief executive of the gigantic gaming platform has said.**

The site, which is the most popular in the UK among young gamers aged eight to 12, has been dogged by claims of some children being exposed to explicit or harmful content through its games, alongside multiple reported allegations of



## Simple phones



### The Phone £100 - £105 (€100) ↗

- A pared back internet-free phone that looks like a smartphone but only calls and texts (plus a few emojis 😊)
- Uncrackable operating system that can't access the internet and has no apps
- No camera
- Simple and intuitive to use
- Headphone jack for hands-free calling

# A couple of examples of alternatives



### Nokia 2660 Flip £50-60 ↗

- Texts and phone calls
- Very long lasting battery
- Range of colours
- Bright, colourful display (non pixelated text)
- Built in FM radio, MP3 player and torch
- Snake (and Tetris but you need to pay for the full game)
- Single rear facing camera (no selfies!)



### Nokia 105 £19.99 ↗

Sim-free mobile phone

- Talk, text and wireless FM radio
- Amazing battery life
- Torch and snake game

### Talk & Text Plan

£4.00  
per month

OMB  
data

Unlimited minutes and texts

### Why we love our Talk & Text SIM-only plan



#### Unlimited calls and texts

That's right. There's no cap on the amount of calls and texts you can make.



#### More for your money

Don't pay for data you don't use. Enjoy calls, texts and our brilliant network benefits for only £4 a month.



#### Wi-Fi calling

Send texts and make calls over Wi-Fi. No signal, no problem!

ASDA mobile

# Discussion point:

**Children and young people are going to see and use smartphones anyway, so they may as well have their own.**

## Things to consider:

- how much more likely would a child be to discuss something disturbing they'd seen on a friend's phone compared to their own phone?
- if worried about the consequences of phone removal would a child tell you if they've seen something disturbing on their own phone?
- phone use on their own and in private could easily send them down a wormhole.
- how about a family smartphone for use in the living space?



# **“Most harm happens when children are alone in their bedrooms” - Jonathan Haidt**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpdq08e5lz7o>

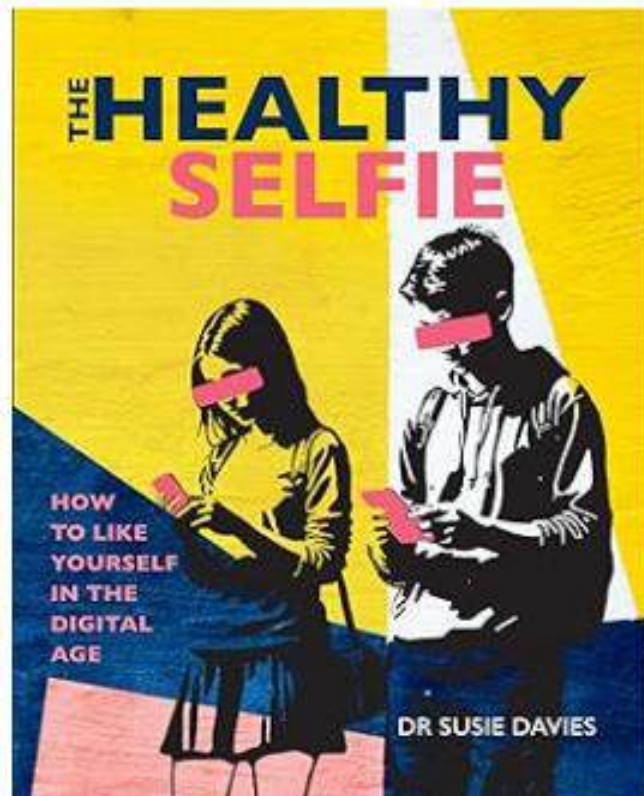


# Discussion point:

## How can we promote healthy habits?

Things to consider:

- What we model
- Delay, Delay, Delay
- meal times
- bedtimes
- asking children how long they want to spend on a screen before they start using it



## The Healthy Selfie: How to Like Yourself in the Digital Age

Paperback – 25 Jan. 2025

by [Dr Susie Davies](#) (Author)

5.0 ★★★★★  5 ratings

[See all formats and editions](#)

The ultimate handbook for teens to help them thrive in the digital age. THE HEALTHY SELFIE empowers teens to build a healthier relationship with themselves and their devices. Written by digital wellbeing expert Dr Susie Davies, this essential guide helps adolescents explore the impact of social media on self-esteem, self-image, and mental health. Each chapter is packed with practical tips and exercises to develop self-acceptance, build self-esteem, and foster resilience along with self-help exercises and tools for reducing screen time. This beautifully illustrated, full-colour book is a must-read for teens, while parents, carers, and educators will also gain valuable insights into the unique challenges teens face in the digital age. Covering everything from managing screen time to making healthy lifestyle choices, The Healthy Selfie helps readers build resilience and find greater happiness and balance in a tech-driven world.

# Discussion point:

**I don't want my child to miss out socially because they don't have a smartphone**

## Things to consider:

- what are they missing out on by not having a smartphone?  
(cyber bullying, explicit content, constant social pressures)
- what are they missing out on by having a smartphone? (29 hours per week of real world experiences)
- the average daily time that teens spend with friends has plummeted by 65% since 2010

# **Discussion point:**

**I don't want my child to be bullied for having a simple phone**

**Things to consider:**

- the impact of being bullied or teased about having a simple phone versus the impact of being bullied or teased relentlessly via your Smartphone (perhaps about the way you look or something you posted online). Which is likely to have a bigger impact on self-esteem?**
- 84% of bullying now takes place on a device**



# **Discussion point:**

**Children need smartphones so we can track them**

**Things to consider:**

- other methods of tracking children, including airtags**
- do we really need to track our children?**
- were you tracked as a child?**



Sponsored ⓘ

HH-Tech Smart Tag LITE (Pack-2 Black+White) For Apple iOS Devices, Air Tracker, Item Finder, Replaceable Battery, Easily Track Your Wallet, Bag, Suitcase, and More Worldwide with Apple Find My App

★★★★☆ 923

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Limited time deal

£14<sup>24</sup> RRP: £22.99

10% off promotion available

FREE delivery **Mon, 17 Feb** on your first eligible order to UK or Ireland

Or fastest delivery **Tomorrow, 15 Feb**

 Small Business ✓

# **Discussion point:**

## **Children need smartphones for homework**

### **Things to consider:**

- letting your child spend 30 mins a day on your phone completing homework Apps**
- consider your child using an iPad / tablet / laptop for homework Apps**
- consider a shared family smartphone for homework**

# Not above a bribe?

- Not for everyone but one possible way to approach this with your children:  
They get £1600 to stay off social media / Smartphones until they're 16 years old!

Say what?

Here's the maths: an average Smartphone contract is £35per month from 11-16 years old = £2,100. They get £1,600 and you pocket the extra £500 for yourself to say well done for navigating this crazy parenting challenge!!)

# Smartphone free childhood

1,739

CHILDREN

[Sign the Pact](#) 🍌

185

SCHOOLS

[Share the Pact](#) 🔗

Sort by:

Leaderboard

School name

Click on your school to see data for each school year

SCHOOL NAME	PACTS
Nansledan School, Nansledan ↗	100
St Columb Minor Academy, St Columb Minor ↗	93
King Charles Primary School, Falmouth ↗	87
St Agnes School, St Agnes ↗	84
Mount Hawke Academy, Mount Hawke ↗	64
St Francis CE Primary School, Falmouth ↗	43
Germoe Community Primary School, Germoe ↗	42
St Just Primary School, St Just ↗	40



# **What next?**

- TALK (to friends and your children)**
- More info on the handout -share it!**
- Sign the pact (QR code) Over 175,000 already signed (it's OK to make an about turn!)**
- Join the WhatsApp group**
- PICK THIS BATTLE**

**Want more sessions, more info, more ideas? Email me.  
sey@treviglas.cornwall.sch.uk**

**Want things to be different at your child's school? Talk to the teachers and head teachers. We're here to support you and your children.**



Parent Pact QR code

# 100,000 PARENT PACTS!

## SIGNED BY PARENTS INCLUDING:

Joe Wicks  
Benedict Cumberbatch  
Paloma Faith  
Jamie Redknapp  
Emma Willis  
Aisling Bea  
Zack George (Steel)  
Sara Pascoe  
Nathalie Cassidy  
Dr Chris van Tulleken  
Rachel Stevens  
Myleene Klass  
Emma Barnett  
Lucy Jones  
Sara Davies MBE

Anna Jones  
Louise Boyce  
Jamelia  
Poppy Okotcha  
Sophie Hunter  
Anita Asante  
Dr Zoe Williams  
Meera Sodha  
Anna Whitehouse  
Clover Stroud  
Rachel Ama  
Kate Silverton  
Joeli Brierly  
Anna Mathur



I saw a quote that said,  
“give a kid a smart phone  
when you are ready for  
their childhood to end.”



# **Haidt's suggestions on growing up**

- Age 6 - Family responsibility**
- Age 8 - Local freedom (perhaps borrow a simple phone)**
- Age 10 - Age of roaming (have their own simple phone)**
- Age 12 - Age of apprenticeship (earning, perhaps from neighbours or relatives)**
- Age 14 - Earliest age at which smartphones might be given**
- Age 16 - Children could consent to open social media accounts**



## INSIDE THE TEENAGE BRAIN

Adolescents are prone to high-risk behaviour

### Prefrontal Cortex

Its functions include planning and reasoning; grows till 25 years

**Adults** Fully developed

**Teens** Immature, prone to high-risk behaviour

### Amygdala

Emotional core for passion, impulse, fear, aggression.

**Adults** Rely less on this, use prefrontal cortex more

**Teens** More impulsive



### Parietal Lobe

Responsible for touch, sight, language; grows till early 20s

**Adults** Fully developed

**Teens** Do not process information effectively

### Ventral Striatum

Reward centre, not fully developed in teens

**Adults** Fully developed

**Teens** Are more excited by reward than consequence

### Hippocampus

Hub of memory and learning; grows in teens

**Adults** Fully functional; loses neurons with age

**Teens** Tremendous learning curve

## And the TikTok challenges....

Over an 18-month span between 2021 and 2022, the Blackout Challenge was said to have killed 20 children in 18 months, 15 of them under the age of 12. And it's hardly the only dangerous "challenge" to go viral. The "Skullbreaker Challenge," which involves kicking a person's legs out from under them as they jump into the air, nearly paralyzed a 13-year-old Pennsylvania girl, and has led to criminal charges in at least one instance. The so-called Angel of Death Challenge, a "game" in which participants jump in front of moving vehicles to see if they'll stop in time, has reportedly led to multiple deaths. And when a 12-year-old Arizona boy attempted the TikTok "Fire Challenge," where youngsters record themselves igniting blazes at home, he landed in the ICU and has undergone multiple surgeries since.