

I-Think

Big Ideas About Social Media

150 high school students learned about social media and its impacts. These are five ideas that stood out to them.

Your Amazing Brain: Under Construction

#1

Did you know your brain is like a city being built? During childhood, it grows rapidly. In your teen years, it's getting fine-tuned! Your decision-making center, called the pre-frontal cortex, won't be fully ready until your mid-20s.

Right now, your social brain is super-charged! This explains why you prioritize building relationships with your friends and having new experiences without always thinking through all the consequences. You're wired to see the fun now, not the problems later!

The Dopamine Trap

#2

Ever notice how you can't stop scrolling through Instagram or put down that video game? That's the dopamine trap!

Social media and games use special tricks to make your brain feel good. They mix exciting moments with boring ones to keep you coming back for more.

Watch out—too much screen time might make regular activities seem boring, and developing brains like yours are especially at risk!

Play: More Than Just Fun

#3

Remember when you were hanging out outside, with friends (and sometimes without adults!) instead of being on screens? That face-to-face play time isn't just for fun—it teaches crucial life skills!

Playing together helps you learn to read facial expressions, solve arguments, and develop "attunement" (your emotional super-power). Without enough real-world play, experts say you might struggle with making friends, handling tough situations, controlling emotions, and making smart choices later in life. Real play builds real skills!

Sleep: Your Brain's Best Friend

#4

Think sleep is boring? Think again! Your growing body needs those ZZZs. Late-night scrolling, "just one more game" or even reading after lights out steal precious sleep time. Not enough sleep? Hello crankiness and poor focus! It makes schoolwork harder and conversations fuzzy.

Plus, it impacts your well-being and can lead to feeling sad or worried. Shocking fact: 61% of teens aren't getting their needed 8+ hours on school nights. Your brain deserves better!

Finding Your Tech Sweet Spot

#5

Phones, social media and games aren't going anywhere—so how can we use them without letting them use us? Be a smart tech user! Understand how social media affects your brain and mood. Create device-free zones (like during meals, after a certain time or when hanging out with friends) and make real face-to-face time a priority. These breaks help build the social skills you need to be happy and healthy.

Don't forget to unplug, get outside, and play in nature with real people. Your brain will thank you!