

Can We Stop Kids From Becoming Addicted To Tech And Social Media? | The Show | Dad Saves America

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SUMMARY

Dr. Lisa Strohman discusses the alarming rise of mental health issues among children, particularly linked to technology use and social media. As a psychologist and founder of Digital Citizen Academy, she emphasizes the need for parents to understand the impact of digital devices on their children's mental well-being and offers practical strategies for managing technology use.

- The highest rates of self-harm and suicidal thoughts are being observed in children, largely influenced by their digital interactions.*
- Children are increasingly exposed to technology from a very young age, with significant mental health concerns arising from this early exposure.*
- Dr. Strohman advocates for a technology use continuum to assess and manage children's relationship with screens, rather than labeling them as "addicts."*
- Parents should model healthy technology use and establish clear boundaries regarding screen time.*
- The importance of open communication about technology and its effects is crucial for fostering a healthy environment for children.*
- Dr. Strohman highlights the need for parents to create opportunities for real-world interactions, countering the isolating effects of digital engagement.*
- The conversation around technology should include discussions about the potential dangers of online content, including exposure to inappropriate material.*
- Building a supportive community among parents can help mitigate the pressures of technology on children and encourage healthier practices.*

- Now we have the highest rates of cutting I've ever seen in my practice. The highest rates of suicidal thinking and ideation, but really what we need to look at is what is influencing our kids and why are they getting into these dark corners? - The physical world isn't as scary as we're led to believe, but our kids have a new world to contend with, the digital world. We're currently raising the first generation of digital natives, kids born to a world already connected by the internet.

It's a new and very confusing frontier for us as parents. In a 2020 survey, Pew research found that 88% of American

kids under two years old engage with digital devices and this rises to 91% of kids by age nine. Another Pew survey found that 40% of parents are concerned with their kids' mental health, making it our number one worry. How do we keep our kids mentally healthy in an increasingly digital world? Well, today's guest, Dr. Lisa Strohman, is a licensed psychologist and the founder of Digital Citizen Academy, an organization addressing the issue of technology addiction and overuse.

She's also been a visiting scholar with the FBI's analysis of violent crime division where she became intimately familiar with the darkest recesses of the internet. Her books "Unplug" and "Digital Distress" explain the challenges of growing up in a digital world and offer practical advice for us as parents. - So if you're texting and driving, your kids are gonna be texting and driving. If you are answering phone calls while you're at dinner, they will find that equally acceptable, because they watch us all the time, whether we think they are or they're not.

That's what I would say as a parent in that space. Model it well and really be open to opening up your screen time, talking about it. Here's what this looks like. - With her expertise in tech wellness. Dr. Strohman provides practical guidance for us as parents in the internet age. (upbeat music) Okay Lisa, I am really excited that you're here because from the beginning of "Dad Saves America", our kids' interaction with devices has been at the center of like our concerns, and when we talk to parents, it's their number one concern.

What do I do about social media with our kids? And I'm in conflict with this because I'm a gearhead. It's tension in our house. So I'm excited to talk about a couple things with you today. How do you think about technology addiction? You've got a great system for thinking about that. What do we need to understand about assessing if this is happening, if our kids are in trouble with their relationship with technology, what can we as parents do about it?

I wanna start off with a quote from your book. It's kind of explosive. You said "This book is dedicated to all the young people who have taken their lives due to technology related issues and to the parents', teachers, coaches and concerned adults everywhere working to prevent such tragedies from ever happening to other families." Unpack that for me. - I've been in this for 20 years. I've been practicing with these families and so sitting in an office an hour at a time trying to manage how do I look at a parent and tell them that it is okay for you to have

to grieve your child because of the things that they saw and the things that they were introduced to.

And I can't anymore be quiet on that front. I have to share what I know and at least try to explain how the industry in such an unfair way has taken over, I think the mindset of our children. - Was there a moment for you where this came into sharp focus, where it became clear that kids' experience and interactions with technology was playing such a devastating role in their lives? - It starts way before, I was in the graduate school program, JD PhD, I was at the FBI.

I happened to be assigned in Quantico in the profiling unit. And so I was working in CRSK, child reduction serial killer unit. I was doing homicidal pedophilia. It was terrifying. I was looking at these white vans picking up kids, right? That's what we all thought was the danger zone at the time. Louis Free was the director and he was like, hey, we could use your help, women are getting abducted. Would you be a visiting scholar? And so I came on with National Center Missing Exploited Children.

And so I was there doing my research and like I got into this unit and Columbine happened. And when Columbine happened, which was the first national like great tragedy I think, that we all kind of paid attention to, that's when I saw Harris and Klebold and what they had posted online. And then 20 years later, if I look at that, that was the genesis for me. 'Cause I sat there in the room with these agents listening to these profilers and I thought, oh my God, nobody is paying attention to how technology is influencing psychology and how psychology will be influenced back.

And that's where it started for me. - What was it about that event that had a technology component? - Where we are developing as people and as children specifically, we need to find purpose. We need to find our value, who am I? Am I going to be loved, these are all just very, very developmental phases that we have to go through. And so these kids are looking at that and even today we have what we call Columbiners and it is an ability to come in and jump in and be a part of something.

So that's the part that I saw looking at headquarters down in DC, 100 agents pretending to be young kids online and pedophiles trying to pick them up. And I just thought. - A catfish. - Yeah. -

Catfishing pedophiles. - Yeah, in the beginning like and and it was, yeah, it was right in the beginning. - This was all horrible. - I know, I know. - You were basically working in hell is what you're saying. - Oh, I had night terrors.

My husband was like, thank God we don't have weapons in the home. Like from the soulful place, it was very tragic. That's what has empowered me to like help others. I think that there's ways to step out of it. - To come back to the technology part, I'm gonna be a little more skeptical in a lot of ways than probably I would otherwise be because I'm such a tech lover. So I'm like, no, it's not the tech, it's the people.

What were those two broken young men doing online that you think played this causal role? - I think we both can be right. I don't think that we have to say that it is 100% tech because it is also people and it's fundamentally is, do I belong? And so when you look at these two gentlemen, they were isolated, they were ostracized, they were not accepted by their peer group. There's a lot of work now we look at incels, involuntary celibate groups young men follow, same principle of they just need to feel needed.

If I wind back and say, all right, on a campus, if we had 1500 kids at a high school, let's say. - Oh, problem number one. - And there's a cohort, right? Like of maybe the the jocks and then the nerds and whoever, right, but you had a place and you belonged to a place. So if you fast forward to today and you look at our kids today, they're competing against five billion people online every day.

How do you find a place and how do you matter? So that's what I saw back then in the very beginning that was like, these kids just wanna matter and they're trying to find a voice. - You bristle at using the term technology addiction. So I actually want to take a little time and get your definitions of things because I think we throw words like addiction around a lot. So I guess first is like how do you define technology?

- So all tech is not

developed equal as you know. So I look at technology and I say, all right, is technology kind of like a food pyramid? So at the base of it, do we have educational media? Do we have literary media, do we have all of those things? The top of the pyramid with the donuts and the ice cream and all the stuff that we really, really love. Like we just need to limit that kind of media.

There is a lot of good that tech can bring. I can take a class of kids or a group of kids and I can take to Machu Picchu and we can walk through some of the most beautiful places on earth with a headset and never got on a plane. So there's a lot of really good purpose that we find in tech. So I'm not gonna vilify at all. - You're not a full Luddite. - No, I'm not, no, no.

- And then how do you think about addiction? And we talked about this with Dr. Drew who introduced us. Give me functional definition of addiction. - So addiction is a dependency or something that we need in order to move forward, right? And there's substance addictions and there's process addictions. So the substance addictions are pretty easy. We're putting something into our body, a process addiction is actually something that we're participating in, so gambling, technology, all of those things, that's a process.

It's the same dopamine reward pathway in your brain that gets highlighted and gets excitatory. But it's different than the substance addictions. And our friend Drew and I, we've talked for years about is the kids getting wired in at these early age of technology, that dopamine push is that priming them in getting them ready for more substance based addictions, which is what we're trying to find out now. Is there a higher level of addiction? So that's how I look at it and how I explain it.

I just personally hate labeling kids. I am an anti-label psychologist in my practice, because I think people aren't to be trusted, they'll live up to that label if you give it to them. - There is this really weird feedback loop with labels. I hate them too. Is that something that psychologists just love to do? Like why does that happen so much? - I think you have to look at the money. We have the Diagnostic Statistical Manual, that's our bible in psychology,

DSM Five now, right?

And you look at it and it's ridiculous. If you look two versions back, homosexuality, is a disease process, really? - Right, right. - Are we getting it right every time? Why are we doing that, right? So I look at it as a guide for insurance because insurance works off the DSM, insurance pays off the DSM. And so it's this framework to help us understand as professionals, like this group of something could be an issue, like spectrum disorder, which used to be autism, right?

We're not gonna call it that. We're gonna call it spectrum disorder because there's a myriad of different issues that we could have. We don't have to like label it in these different categories. So I think it's a guideline, but personally I'm probably not the typical psychologist, but the only reason why you would have to do that is because you're gonna get it for insurance based reasons in order to get reimbursed and get paid. And so that's what irritates me because I just think that we cannot abandon that generation and say, here's your label, you need to learn how to live in it.

- So how do you, what do you use instead of addiction? - I say overuse, let's do technology use continuum. And I say, let's look at where you're starting. How do you manage your technology use, how much are you using? If you and I pulled our phones out and we looked at our screen time, I know you don't wanna do that. - Not gonna do that. So technology, what was the term you just used? - Technology overuse.

- And then the spectrum. - Technology use continuum. - Along the technology use continuum, I wonder if I'm over the edge of this one side of the spectrum, I bet I am. - We should give you the test. (person laughing) - So you have a test? - Oh, yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, I have a questionnaire. - So how does the test work? - I have kids, I have self-report for teens and I have a parent report and for adults as well.

But you answer the questions and then it loads in and here's all the different areas and it tells you whether or not you have maybe moderate, none, problematic. - How do you know on a spectrum like that whether or not we have a problem, how do we start? Help me start to break down. - What's too much? - What's too much, where is like the beginning of, oh we have a problem here? - Like the substance addiction.

If it's impacting your educational, your work, your familial life and it is causing friction, if you're getting yelled at by your wife because you're doing too much on screens and not paying attention to her. - Good place to start. - Yeah, well I remember, I've been married 30 years, so I remember when I was first married and the laptops came out and I thought, oh my god, this is gonna ruin marriages because people were gonna. - There's so much more ruined in a nation than than just laptops, it turns out.

- Yeah, absolutely, yeah. So then you get these portable devices. So like I've just kind of been, I'm at that age and I'm old enough to have seen it all happen. And it's when I see people that are impacted negatively by technology and they don't know how to put it down or they won't change that, that's when I would say there's a problematic use or an overuse. - In your writing, we've found like sort of four buckets of symptoms, behavioral, physical, emotional, and interpersonal, so let's take each one of those.

- [Speaker] Okay. - So what are behavioral symptoms that I should be looking for? - Well, so behaviorally, like if you're changing yourself, if you used to be kind of an athletic person or you used to like to go on hikes or used to go and do things that are with other people and behaviorally you start to isolate, you start to change who you are as a person. That is one of the key tell signs that I tell parents.

It's like your kids should develop in a way that build them out, and from a behavioral standpoint, we have to learn how to iterate with other people, other environments, right? We have to generalize our world. But if you live in this just one little world, this is why meta terrifies me because we can control it totally ourselves and not go anywhere. If you don't learn how to figure that out behaviorally, you start to see those things happen with these kids.

It's almost like watching a human shut down. - What about physical symptoms? What should we be looking at here? - So the whole thing about the horn growing in the back of the head. I don't know if you saw the science on that. - I did see this, but lay this out. What's happening there, 'cause it's upsetting actually. It's like, oh no, we're turning into we're turning into the aliens from that Christopher Walken movie. (person laughing) - Yeah, well so if your head is down, so there's a counterbalance.

We actually structurally are trying to compensate for that. And so there's structural changes that are happening in that way. Eyesight, we

have convergence

issues for the first time because we're only 12 inches away, typically at any given time, we now no longer have to look long and short. And so our eye muscles are actually weakening. And so from a physical standpoint, reading becomes harder for children because their eye muscles are so weak, they're not able to do that.

I have so many kids

that are in eye therapy just because the parents thought that they had a learning disorder. But the reality is, it's because they're spending so much screen time, they're actually weakening those eye muscles. - So the lack of the changing dimension is what's preventing those muscles from getting worked. - Correct, so sedentary lifestyle, obesity, even like anorexia, like a lot of my gamers don't eat. So the physical parts to me are the ones that I worry about most because they're hardest to build back from, what you set as a child particularly really sets you up for life.

Mama bear comes out, it's like

we gotta get our kids moving. We need to get them active. We need to get them into a place where they, again, we have to balance, 10 years ago I would've told you, get them off the screens, today, I'm like, let's figure out a way to do this and balance it in a proper way. - 10 Years ago you're an abolitionist. - Maybe. - Why back away from a stronger stance?

- Practical reality, the

world is not gonna slow down. I also have kids, I have 15 and a 14 year old. I'm in the mix with everyone else. - You're in the eye of the storm. - I am, I am. And and my kids, quite frankly from a physical standpoint, I did the things I've said. They've never had social media. My daughter got her first device on a Thursday in November because she needed it. And I said this is a tool not a toy and it is my tool that I'm loaning to you and anything you do on it reflects on me.

So I need you to be careful

and you can use it for good. If I find out you are using it for evil, then we'll have a conversation. - So emotional symptoms. - The emotional piece is probably the hardest. Emotional pieces where you start to see levels of anxiety, depression, self-harm, this emotional crisis that they're having when a teenager is first introduced online and they're able to go into these social networks and their fundamental core developmental stage is to find out, am I enough and am I good enough?

Is that stage. And so if you imagine a

kid who's posting something and they're being ostracized

or being ridiculed or they're being made fun of or you see that all your friends, five of your friends are doing something, you didn't get invited, right? All of a sudden that developmental stage is, well I'm not enough. And so then I start to have anxiety, from an emotional standpoint, this is where I see the highest level of crisis. - Can you gimme the cheat sheet of development?

What do we know about what kids need at what ages? - Infant stage, you're looking at building attachment, right? If a baby cries and you bring it milk, it's gonna understand I have a secure attachment with this human, they're gonna show up when I need something. If you have an infant who cries and only sometimes they show up, now you're gonna have a ambivalent attachment style. Sometimes people show up, sometimes I don't. And then if nobody shows up consistently enough, then you have this avoidant attachment style and so then you go through life not able to attach.

So that infant stage to me is one of the most important stages, which is what really upsets me when I see parents handing kids a device when they start crying. 'Cause what you literally are doing in that moment is saying, I know you need something, but this will occupy you. Which is then setting them up for this avoidant personality sale where parents don't even understand that we're not giving them that human interaction. So that's the very first important one.

- We have one child, he's now almost 18, there was this term attachment parenting that I remember, I have to kind of put myself back into the baby time. What's the healthy amount of attachment? - Am I making eye contact, am I giving touch? Am I being there for that child and am I also not overwhelming them? So like a child who kind of squirms or is looking away, like they're overstimulated. So at that time, it's okay to set them down, right?

You wanna be able to give them that ability to explore even with their eyes, even if they can't move. The healthy amount is really understanding that if they have a need, you show up for it and you show up for it in ways that are human, not technological, right? You see these devices now, like the baby cries in the middle of the night, a thing pops up because it hears a cry. It's been designed to turn on and there's lights

that show up and soothing music comes on so that the parent can stay asleep.

- I didn't know that this was a thing. Oh this is upsetting. - Yes, yeah, so again, I get it, I was an exhausted parent. My kids are 15 months apart. And there were times where I was like, I just wanna sleep. But as a psychologist, I understand the importance of showing up and being there for that kid. - So as we move into the toddler phase, which feels like the area where we start to get into much more handing the phone while we're out at the diner so that you don't make a mess and make dinner a disaster for us.

Which is completely understandable. As part of this show, like I don't like to be judgmental of parents. It's hard to be a parent but it's not great to do that. - Right. - What do we mean by toddler and what do we need to understand about the development they need to do and the problems that introducing screens creates. - So toddler phase is kind of 18 months. So it's anytime they start like crawling, moving things like that up until about four or five.

And that toddler phase is really all about exploring our environment, learning boundaries, understanding what's safe or not. Are there people that are gonna be there for me? If you ever say like a toddler, kind of like walking away in like some like kind of crazy little walk and looking back at their parents to see, are they gonna chase me or not, right? Like that's them. Like am I trusted by this person and do I have the ability to go and do those things?

The second you hand them a phone, they're not exploring. They are passively getting whatever content it is that you're giving them. And so there's a lot of things that terrify me about that because you're not then in control as a parent, right? So if you think about the primary influence of a child's moral ethical compass, it should be our home family values, whatever those may be. But the minute you hand them into a world of technology and getting that content starting coming into them, their influence then becomes more in line with whatever they're getting and that becomes more important to them than you, and so as a parent, we're giving up our value in our children's lives the minute that that transition happens.

- So "Daniel Tiger" sucks,

is that what you're saying? - Well, I mean, so my world is crazy. So there was a case, we'll go in and they'll put Peppa the Pig on there, a 10 minute thing. You think as a parent, just let them watch it while I cook dinner and they will splice in porn at various areas and then they get super excited once they see how many people that they've exposed to it. - Wait, hold on one second, what's happening?

- I'm sorry. You know, again, remember I started Quantico. - This is the Quantico nightmare scenario. What's happening? - So you look online and you probably have one to 1.8 million pedophiles online every single day. They're looking for content, they're posting content, they're trying to expose kids and they get excited just by the ability to know that they got somebody to follow them or to have a conversation. So in these worlds like Minecraft, I spend a lot of my time presenting to parents and showing them what Minecraft porn looks like.

Most people don't know what that looks like. - It's very pixelated, I assume. - It's very pixelated, and these poor parents had no idea, I'm sorry, lock down your servers don't do open servers. I terrify people but I do try to come in and give solutions there. There are ways you can keep your kids safe. I'm just saying that's why it makes me upset when you see a toddler and you hand them a device, you just don't know what they're getting and they can't communicate back, Hey something crazy just happened or right.

What was that like, they're not talking at that stage. They don't have the ability to communicate. - So Lenore Skenazy, we did this short film with her. She was called the World's Worst Mom 'cause she let her nine year old take the subway, one of the things she says, which I believe is true, is that we as parents have been scared into thinking that the world is more dangerous than it is. In this case, it's the physical world, I don't like fear mongering.

I think there's a lot of fear mongering out there about climate, about everything. Our kids are just bombarded with it. So I really want to challenge you to make sure I'm understanding like what

is the nature of the threat? - The dark shadowy figure that's gonna go after your kid in a street corner when they're walking home from school is less likely now than somebody who can find someone online who's posting, and there's a lot of reasons why.

If you have a picture of a young lady that's posting on Instagram with like kissy faces or they might be in bathing suits all the time, there are ways that these third party data bots will go and pull that, they can actually look at that and that is a more vulnerable target than someone else because now we know that they probably aren't being watched by their parent and I can start a conversation with them. And so the guy who used to get in a van and spend 50 bucks driving around and could do a 20 mile area, can now go online and reach thousands of kids.

- Do you have any sense that your time at FBI has created any confirmation bias for you? I'm sure you're seeing the worst of it. - 100%, and that's not the worst, to me, that is like the least likely as a parent to be worried about, honestly, I think again, talk to your kids. As parents, we need to be able to say, don't give your address. People may not be who they are, right. My goal has always been like educate the kids.

Kids are adaptable and we can do that. The part that really, really upsets me is the influencers and the people that come in. And the algorithmic nature now I think is enslaving children into these worlds of, if I'm depressed, it's going to, because giving me that content, this is the Molly Russell case. And you start to see the feeds populate the mind. And as the mind gets populated, now we have the highest rates of cutting I've ever seen in my practice.

The highest rates of suicidal thinking and ideation. Second leading cause of teenagers is suicide. So that's the fear that I do want parents to hold onto and understand because we can be scared of the guy in the dark hood that's gonna show up and try to meet our kid at the mall. But really what we need to look at is what is influencing our kids and why are they getting into these dark corners? Not to their fault, but that's the part that scares me the most.

- So we were talking

about some of the things at the early stages of development, as you move into what would be the next? - Elementary school. - Elementary school age seven. Like the age of reason. Like as a parent, like you saw it happen, it's like they get to be seven. - [Speaker] They can talk. - And it's like, oh my God, you're a person now. This is amazing, I can talk to you. - They still think you're cool.

- Yeah, well yeah. There's a short window there of which I am well past. Help me understand now what's happening in this elementary school age. What do they need and what happens when the screen is there? - So they need to be able to learn how to trust one another, how to interact with one another. It's bifurcated in the US, like a lot of kids are already getting their personal devices by elementary school. Which personally I feel is too early.

But when you do that, you've got groups and factions of kids that are like playing in this online life and talking to each other and isolating in that way so that when they're on the playground, they're not really connected to the kids that are there and the kids that aren't in those online worlds. back in the day we watched The Office and you go into work and be like, oh, did you see that episode, right? - It's like I don't watch The Office.

- Right, and my parents don't let me, right? So that's what's happening to these kids. And so they're left out of a lot of things and they don't understand it still. So at that age, it's really hard. The other thing that happens at that age group, in the elementary school age, in the United States specifically, it is the age where kids are introduced to porn. So the average child is age eight when they're first introduced to porn.

And chronic viewing begins at 11. - Chronic viewing begins at 11 years old. - So we're looking at fifth graders, fourth, fifth graders. - Prepubescent. Prepubescent. And it's not to their fault, right? So if you look at our kind of core standard and culture, we in second grade start to introduce the concept of historical figures and we're gonna do our first research project. So we give them a device and we say, hey, look up Sir Francis Drake, let's have you do some research.

And the industry is brilliant as they are 'cause it's 100 billion dollar industry. - [Speaker 2] The porn industry? - Yes, attaches their advertising bundles to these searches. And they now are getting children on average, 10 years almost before legally they should be even introduced to any of that, right? And so it's not the child's fault, it's not like they're

searching
it, it just is introduced. - It's funny how hard it is to
prevent this from happening.

So when we moved to Austin, my
son went to a Waldorf school. So Waldorf, I think this is
true for all Waldorf schools. As a parent you sign a
contract saying that your kid will not have any access
to media until sixth grade. And yet he went over to a buddy's house, another Waldorf kid, but his buddy's
brother was a teenager and he got exposed to
pornography at his buddy's house. He was only eight, he was
eight and this happened.

So we did beyond what
most people will ever do in terms of schooling situation, which is where their social group is. And yet we still
couldn't
prevent him from getting exposed. - Absolutely, and that's
the part in food, water, and sex are all primal drives as a human. And so parents just have to
know it's going to happen. You shouldn't have a national chain called Dick's Sporting Goods where kids are
looking up things
to buy their baseball bats because that's not gonna go well, right?

So you have to think through on some of those things. Like, so it's going to happen. - Poor Dick's. - I know. - I
mean Richard's just didn't feel right. - So it's going to be something
we have to talk about. And a lot of parents don't
know how to talk about it. And so for me, my son was 14, I started having this
conversation with him when he was about 10. And he was like, mom,
like you're so awkward.

I was like, I do this for a living, I talk about this all the time. He like, no mom, you're
yeah, super awkward. Just stop talking. So it's hard, it's hard
to have that conversation, but you have to, 'cause it's gonna happen. - The social dynamic
that you're describing starting to happen, the sense in which their world starts to be more online, the anxiety,
the cutting,
the suicidal thoughts, what's happening there, what's the mechanism leading to that?

- I think that if you look, and I'm gonna reference the
Molly Russell case again in the UK because I think if you look at. - Can you describe what
the Molly Russell Case is? - Sure, she was a beautiful
little 13 year old girl. She had some hard times with
school, started researching, looking up, she was sad about something, said something about being depressed.

And she starts typing in depression and this algorithmic exposure to cutting and hurting and like suicidal gets very, very dark.

She was also doing contemporaneously a handwritten journal, so what was so interesting in that is that you saw the feed and if you look at the timeline, start to incorporate her own writing in her own thoughts in ways that mirrored what she was actually being presented with. It's a highlighted case 'cause it actually is showing, and it took four years for the parents to get access to it and like really dive in to identify it and all that.

And so it really highlights what I see is that we are unfortunately trying to be so efficient. I don't think that there's like this nefarious like Zuckerberg's trying to kill all of our kids or any of those things. Even though he's the only person I've ever ranted against online I will say. But I do think that he was trying to do some things that were good. I think that he was like, if you like horses, we should give you feeds of horses.

But these suggested connections and these suggested kind of algorithms that keep us sticky. And if you look at some of the public testimony of Francis Hogan, he knew that he could make his users happy. In 2014, I believe he did an experiment, he took 600,000 users, he was like, I just wanna see if I can make these people happy. And he did something with his algorithm and that's when it started. And when that started, right, that's when I started to look at, okay, what is this doing to our kids now?

Because we have these kids that are unformed human souls. Like they're trying to figure out who they are in the world and we're telling them and pushing them into places that can be very dark at that age, am I pretty? Who am I shipped with? They're gonna take two people and say, here's these two people together and people vote on it. Well that's awful, right? - There's all kinds of swiping left and right. It's all terrible.

- Oh my gosh, so awful. - But it's this neurotic sense that they're getting of I'm not good enough. And so when you don't feel good enough, you start to look for ways to make yourself feel better. And there's a lot of people out there that put out information out there, it's like, here's how cutting makes you better. So to me, 15 years ago, I would think if you were cutting, you probably would be more in line with some sort of personality disorder or

something's going on from
a systemic childhood exposure.

Now it pretty much is like, hey, this works and this is why
it works, you should do it. And that could be like
a three second TikTok. And now we've got the highest rates. If you look at the CDC statistics, the highest rates
started beginning after TikTok was released. - Of cutting. - Cutting, oh, it's skyrocket. - Let's spend a little time
on this. There's a gender disparity with some of this behavior, right? Is cutting more prevalent with girls?

- It used to be, it is still, but it used to be the boys are catching up with the eating disorders, the
self-harm, all of the things. - [Speaker 2] Really? - Absolutely. - Why is cutting feel good? Why does that work? -
So from a neurochemical response, let me get a little nerdy and that's fine. - [Speaker 2] Nerd out. - So if you are
anxious and
you're feeling super anxious and you're uncomfortable and you can't catch your breath
and you take a rubber band and snap yourself really, really hard, your body has to choose, am I focusing on this
anxiety
or focusing on my pain.

And an endorphin is released
in order to manage that pain. So you can't do both at the same time. It does work is the problem. And so when
kids start
to communicate that, a lot of times when they're
having an anxiety attack or something's happening and they can't get themselves settled, one thing that helps
them get settled. - Is cutting and hurting. - And it's neurochemical, for them, a lot of them will say, I was so
numb I couldn't feel anything and I was just doing this.

A lot of it is a badge of honor. Like if I go to school and I have these, I get attention from that, so
there's secondary gain in it, but the actual cutting itself, whether it's burning or
cutting or scratching, like whatever it is. - Just injuring, self-harm. - Self-harm, yeah. And eating disorders are
considered a type of self-harm. To me that is really them trying to manage an emotional state that gives them a
neurochemical response when they do it.

- How should I, as a parent, think about, we have this sort of phrase, they just want to get attention. Is that part
of what's happening? That there's a cry for
help or wanting attention that we need to attend to in
a different way than we are? - Typically kids are really
trying to find a space. And so when you think about whether or not you're in a space where you're
trying to gain attention from 50 kids that might be in your class or you're trying to gain space where we've got
eight
billion people online and we're trying to
put ourselves out there and we're getting told,

if you are a part of this, like I remember when one of my patients came in and she's like, TikTok is lame.

All TikTok is where it's to be, and I was like. I don't know what all TikTok is. - What is all TikTok, some new fresh door to hell? - Well it was like where all the creatives went. But again, more labels and they're creating these labels to create communities, in my opinion, that are smaller and more manageable for themselves that they can identify with and be accepted back. And it's really about that piece of being accepted for this age group as we develop, who am I and do I belong somewhere?

And it's really hard to belong somewhere, particularly if you're like a smelly 14 year old boy in middle school. - So before we move on to what we should do as adults and as parents, what else do I need to understand before we move on to that? - I think that probably one of the most dangerous things that are happening is that they're being taught that they can kind of shortcut their way through life. That they don't have to show up anymore in authentic ways for people.

And they can dial in their empathy and they can dial in their attention to people. Now the whole chat AI. - ChatGPT. - [Speaker] ChatGPT. - Promise and peril. - Oh my gosh, like are we just outsourcing ourselves for everything? Are we not gonna have any creative, individualistic thoughts anymore? Are we not going to be somebody who thinks outside the box anymore? What kids are learning is, I can just sit in my house and watch Grand Theft Auto and record it and sell it and get followers and make money.

Most of these guys make way more than I do, but when I look at that, it's like, is that what we want for our society? Do we want our children to grow up and believe they can just like never leave their house and be these kind of isolated people and make money and never contribute to society? - You've talked about algorithms, ChatGPT, my understanding of it is it's a collection of past writing that has been pattern recognized such that when you ask it a question, it will basically predictively reconstruct what it thinks would look like what has already been written in the past.

And that's really neat and it's powerful enough, since most people don't know anything, nobody knows anything really, that any given person has a lot to learn from everything that's ever been written. But how are you gonna have any progress in a society if every piece of technology that does things for us is only reproducing versions of what's already been done? - Right. - And then entering us into feedback loops

where we're seeing more of the thing we already saw and meeting more of the people that already think like us.

I mean, how do you think about. - It's very validating, right? - Is that part of what makes this so potent is the desire for young people, well for all humans to be, Adam Smith, says "To be loved and to be lovely, to be worthy of love." People are seeking affirmation and these are basically affirmation machines. - I mean, I think everything that you just said is absolutely correct. We are looking for content, we're looking for connection, we're looking for things that make us feel like we are understood, and so that's easy, right?

You can create that. What I find unfair is the fact that they are able to take a demographic for instance, and say, you know what? This demographic in the middle school years really connects with X. And so we're gonna globally attach that, not just because your friend liked it, right? It's not a regional. Now we're just gonna take demographics and we're gonna actually do a couple things further. We're gonna start throttling back the feed and the speed in which you get to see it because we want you to be sticky into this device longer.

That to me is an unfair advantage, it's manipulation and it's intentional for ad dollars. And that's what really frustrates me and it makes me angry. - So let's get to the Saves America part. - [Speaker] Okay. - Which is, what the hell are we supposed to do about this? - Burn it all, no, I'm just kidding. (person laughing) I was just kidding. - I've got my Guy Fawkes mask ready at all times. Cut that part out.

So what do we do, what do we do as parents? When's the earliest that we should introduce technology to our kids? Specifically screens that have access to the internet. - The minute you access the internet and give a child access to a screen that can do such, is the minute you're gonna get them into these areas that we talked about. The porn, the negative talk, the hate speech, all of that stuff. So are you at a place where you think your child is ready for that or not ready for that?

I always say to parents, it's like if you can wait past eighth grade, after the middle school dumpster fire years. I say up until that age, they don't really have the critical thinking skills in order to not just get pulled into it. It's like watching a train

wreck in front of you. You can't look away. So if you can keep them off of it till then, that's ideal in my book from a psychological perspective. - Okay, so high school for social, online connected content.

So does that mean get them a flip phone? What does this look like in the real world as a parent in the 21st century? - Can't be a flip phone. You've gotta be able to get your kid introduced into society. I've had so many different conversations. My daughter who is a sophomore, she has a 4.9 GPA first in her class and she's top of soccer, not one college will ever see her if I don't let her go online and present, here's who I am in this world.

She technically doesn't exist. Is she gonna be able to go to the college she wants? - [Speaker 2] Should she go to college? Is a different. - Right, that's totally different question. - We've got plenty of great episodes. - Oh yeah, I know. I watched them, I was like, oh my gosh, yes. I think that you have to look at it. Am I using it as a tool or am I using it as entertainment? And so I would never, my daughter's 15, five, 10, never has worn a drop of makeup in her life.

A beautiful girl. I think the minute she went on Instagram, that would all change, right? I see it, I see her friends and her peers change. They're doing things different to themselves. They're dressing differently, they're doing all these things. Whereas I've had conversations about what is it that you're putting out to the world? I don't have anything obviously against makeup, I don't have anything against those things. But from a normative standpoint, who are you doing that for?

And if you're doing that all to put onto a platform so that the world can see you to get feedback to feel good about yourself, is that external or is it internal self-concept and self-worth, I really, really think that that's as parents we have to focus on, our children need internal self-worth. They need to know that they're enough without the rest of the world having to weigh in. - So no connected device before high school. I think the other half of this is the Lenore Skenazy half, which is, yep, get your kids out at the frigging house, let them go walk, let them do things without you hovering over them all the time.

- Right. - Them being able to call you if they need help's pretty good. So is when I said a flip phone, I mean, is it

about giving them a
flip phone in third grade so that they can walk
to school by themselves, but you can also feel like yeah, they can reach you if you need to. - At least we know
where they are. - Yeah. - Yeah, if you as a parent know how to keep everything locked in, I'll get calls all the
time.

Saw your son riding his
bike down the street with a shovel on his handlebars. And my question's always
like, did he have a helmet on? Because I'm a little like
Lenore, like I don't care, I don't wanna know. Like he's building bikes, he jumps, you know, for his bikes,
whatever. But it's like. - At least I didn't Child
protective services. - [Speaker] I know. - Which too many busy body jerks do. - Right, right. But he has a phone
and I know where he is and he checks in with it
and I have rules on it.

If this device is a tool
for us and our family, then if I call you or
I send you a message, I have an expectation you write back. I have an expectation of what, these are our terms of
agreement. We have a cell phone agreement. We go through and we talk
about all the things. - Okay, so you have an actual contract. - [Speaker] Oh yes. - So talk me through this
'cause this is interesting. - Oh, I love contracts.

(person laughing) So the agreement was like, this
is a tool that you can use. It is to help us as a family,
here's our expectations on it. You have a zero or you
don't turn an assignment in at school, you lose
your phone for a day, you have to turn that
assignment in, right? It's a whole other thing to talk about like how as parents we're like looking at
their grades every day. Nobody knew what we were
doing until the end.

A lot of the stress I see in my practice are parents are checking on those things, tether it to something, they
really want access to this device or these friends that
they wanna connect with. Let them connect with them, teach them how to use that as a tool. Hey, can you guys
get together and go to the bike jumps? Can you go and do this? Like use it as a tool, not as a passive way to sit
there and just like scroll through everybody else's creative content while you're sitting there doing nothing.

Because at the end of the day, that's not gonna feel very good. - What's the value of boredom
as a matter of psychology? - That's a great question. I think the value of it is to be able to sit with yourself and
not have to be in a place where something is happening to you. People talk about meditation,
terrible at meditating. I have really bad ADD. - The monkey brain scratches fully through my skull out into the

world.

- Oh my gosh, it's terrible. Yes, but I do love the fact that we have to teach our kids it's okay to have solitude and just take a minute. So I do box breathing, so 10 seconds in, hold it for 10 seconds, 10 seconds out and then pause. It's so rewarding from a cleansing standpoint. We don't take deep breaths anymore typically, I do it at red lights and now my daughter who's now driving with a permit, we were at a red light and I saw her doing it.

So it's a proud moment for me. - Good. - But it's like you don't have to talk all the time, right? I can sit with friends and I can be there and just appreciate that we're there and like looking at a sunset. So I think that that's a great question. This group doesn't have that. - What's reason for hope? Why should I think that we can rebalance our relationship with these things that are useful and that we love and that add value to our lives, but also have this destructive capability if they're abused and if they're overused.

- I think that there is reason for hope. I don't sleep a lot, but I'm working on my book, my new book called probably something about the Power of One. I really truly believe that in our society, in our life, like if we have one person in the most difficult of times that we can look to and say, okay, this person gets it and I'm gonna be okay because I have the support of this one person and I truly believe like what you're doing here.

And I think as parents, I think that if we band together, I always say find your island, in my community. They're like, well if Lila doesn't have it then they'll always say I need this. And they're like, does Lila have it yet, right? So so there's one other parent that says no and we are together and we're okay with it. If you're waiting till eight, then you had one other friend or two other friends. It's a lot easier than I'm the only kid that doesn't like have this.

- What do I need to do as a parent myself and my relationship with this stuff? Because it's pretty hard to tell your kid to not do a thing that you're doing all the time. - So the modeling piece, right? So if you are texting and driving, your kids are gonna be texting and driving. - [Speaker 2] Yeah. - If you are answering phone

calls while you're at dinner, they will find that equally acceptable. So think through what is that piece of you that you want them to take from, because they watch us all the time, whether we think they are or they're not, they are watching us and they're looking and they're taking our leadership in that.

We did tech-free Tuesday in my house, so if it happened. - Tech chavas on Tuesday. - Yes, if it was Tuesday and I happened to have a business call or something like that, the kids got were in control and there was all sorts of punishment, like to do 50 pushups or what, I can't do five. So we're gonna have to work this out sometime over a payment plan or whatever. But we give them some control and some power and some fun in those boundaries.

That's what I would say as a parent, model it well and really be open to opening up your screen time talking about it. Here's what this looks like. Thank God you're a kid and you don't have to be on this device all the time because you're not working and you're not obligated to X, Y, and Z. You don't have people that are working for you and all of the things, right? Yeah. Like so have those conversations I think is important.

- On the social network effect problem. Why don't you go outside and the answer is there's no one outside. So it's boring, how do we fix that? Where do we start? - You make calls, you call other parents and you say, hey, my kid is gonna start doing dirt biking. I'm happy to have your kid join my kid. You have to as a parent like create those opportunities for them because we can't hand them devices in average in the United States at age seven and then expect them to figure out how when they become a teenager and more mobile and like need to go out and push these boundaries and explore the world, without the skillset to do it.

So you either have to teach that the whole time or you have to be someone who's able to facilitate that at that time. And I think that that's really important that parents need to say, I know that my job is not over. Just because they're walking and they think that you're the worst ever and the eye rolls and all of the things, right? They still need you at that stage even more than they did when they were little.

They're gonna be able to source their own food at a lunchroom in elementary school, as a teenager, they're coming up some pretty complex issues. They've got friends that might

have had a sexual assault, they might have people in their campus that are propagating hate speech on online channels and they're dealing with it and trying to figure out how and who and what they are and how do I react to that. And if we don't show up as parents and listen and really dive in and say like, how's your day going and accept, fine.

We're not gonna get anywhere, right? - It's always fine. - Right, we're gonna go to the stool, we're gonna take the leg off. Right, here's the flashlight. Not do it that way, but like, spend time with your kids. Go out with them. My husband reminded me, he's like, you're 50, you probably shouldn't be like jumping dirt bikes. - I started jujitsu with my son, day one, he flipped me over and broke my rib. - Yeah, do those things.

- So he said pick up the phone as far as getting outside, have you picked up the phone for, hey, we're not giving them phones until high school. Who's with me? - Well, I'm a pretty public figure so. - Yeah, you're maybe in a unique spot. - I'm in maybe in a unique spot from other parents. So I would say. - From parents, from clients. - I say to them, I'm like, who do you have in your corner?

Start making those calls, be vocal about it. Nobody really knows, the world of this kind of overuse, addiction, whatever we're gonna call it. The families that are struggling and they're taking phones, they're screaming at the top of their lungs. There's holes in the wall, there are fights that are occurring that just bring the worst in people. It's reminiscent of like growing up in a household of an alcoholic that you just, there's no safe space and we don't talk about it.

We show up for church, we do all of the things and we pretend like everything's okay. We have to stop pretending everything's okay because we're having this conversation because we know it's not. So we have to be willing to be a little bit more vulnerable and risk, what does that that look like on the inside so that we can get help. - When parents do see there's a problem and they step in and take away the phone or limit the computer, there's some pretty crazy responses that happen.

Tell me about some of the things you've encountered that you know we should be aware of. Like as a parent, if we've already gotten to the

point where we know there's a problem, we know there's this overuse. - The physical violence is defined as domestic violence. So if you have a situation in a house where a child attacks an adult or they're screaming or things like that, it can very quickly escalate, depending on the household, if a neighbor calls or something like that, and now you've got real legal consequences in those scenarios.

- How frequent is that happening? Do you have any sense of how frequent we have violent tantrums being thrown when devices are taken away? - I would say if devices taken away from any level of child that's had access to it without the boundaries put on, I would say it's very common. I would say probably 80% of my families that come in have experienced that. - And what does this look like? Gimme some of the horror stories.

- Doors being kicked in by children where parents have locked themselves into their bedroom. Kids who have threatened, gotten knives out of kitchens, saying that they're gonna kill their parents, children telling their parents that they were gonna go kill themselves and it was gonna be on their hands. It gets very, very dark very quickly because you're taking away something that to them is almost like an appendage to their life. - It's their whole world. - It's their whole world.

- Are there strategies to mitigate that heading in if you feel like there's a chance that this might be the response, what do you do? - Yeah, so I mean I've created so many different things, but like I do like this digital detox kind of program where I'm like, you can't just go from everything to nothing. Think of the non-stick pans. We all use them and then all of a sudden they were like toxic, we're not supposed to use them apparently.

- I'm still using them. I might get the cancer, what are you gonna do? - We get the knowledge. - I like eggs with less oil. - Yeah, well there you go. Yeah, but ceramic's fine. But when you learn something and now you've been educated on it, it's like how do we bring someone with us? We talk about it and we sit down and we're like, hey, let's look at these things. And I think a lot of it's gonna come from our parents just taking the time to sit down and say, hey, like let's look at how this looks like for everybody else in society, we're no different.

We're in the same boat, yeah. Here's my screen time, I'm doing too much. Why don't we try to do this? Like let's create a goal at the end, right? Like if we can manage to do

this, at the end of that, let's say we use our screen time less than two hours a day, our, our kind of junk screen time, right? The gaming and the social and all of that stuff. Let's do less than two hours a day.

That's what we science actually shows. Like we're not gonna damage. Yeah, we're not gonna have structural or neurochemical like impact. If we can reduce it to that, then hey, how about at the end of the month we take a trip, do something fun that you wanna do, bound it with like some sort of tethered, we want a reward for that for them and how do we attach what we need as people into that, right? We need to have connection.

We need to have people around us and maybe it's, hey, I'll take you and your friend to the waterpark or to whatever, something not on screens. - Yeah. We'll go to Dave and Busters. Is that still a thing, does that exist? - I think it is, yeah. (people laughing) Nightmare in a box. - Digital detox, is there a digital methadone? Is there a thing, take this away but give you this other slightly a addictive thing that's not as bad for you.

- Well, kind of, to me it's time and like replacing it with things that are of equal value to them, which is hard if they used it too long, right. I mean there are things that you can do. There's a great Reset Summer Camp does like a whole program. He's a great guy and he basically goes to a campus and he does a whole digital detox like with the kids and they have like no access but it's super expensive.

Yeah, it's super expensive and it's almost like a kind of a rehab for kids. What is happening is, and this is no joke, rehab centers are actually creating pathways to bring in people in order to be in that same kind of 12 step program with these addicts, which I think is a total nightmare. Like you do not want your kid to do that, in my opinion. 'Cause now we're taking a tech addict and we're introducing them to maybe a fentanyl addict.

Like probably not a great idea, it's already hard enough as parents, I wouldn't do that path. I think that the interim of the methadone piece, right? Is if I'm using my phone this many hours, let's just try to do it a third of that and let's just see if we can do that for a week, right? Can we put some time restrictions on it? I've got my 20 year olds, they'll put in, I'm like, how much are you using your Instagram, right.

And my patients and they're like, six hours a day. I'm like, let's try to like pull that back, right? And so they learn that they

can put like a reminder on and they're like, oh my gosh, this is so easy. And then all of a sudden it doesn't seem as onerous to them and they start to make choices and they're like, you know what, I'm just not grabbing it all the time. Like I'm thoughtful, like I wanna check it in the morning, I wanna check it this time.

It's almost giving them power back and you just can't go from everything to nothing. Particularly with an adolescent mindset or a young child. You have to kind of piece it back and be kind of tricky. It's like putting the vegetables in the food when they don't know it's there. - Yeah, it's put a little cheese on it. - Right, right, blend the cauliflower into the potatoes. - Your story, you had a pretty unconventional childhood, so let's talk about that for a little bit.

- Yeah, okay. - You know, before we got started you said you were raised by your dad, like a single dad. - [Speaker] Yeah. - That's pretty unusual, how did that happen? - So my parents, when I was five got divorced and my brother and I, 18 months apart, my dad was a bureau chief of Department of Justice. My mom stayed at home pretty unstable. At the time, both of them functional addicts at best. My grandmother lived with us.

- When you say functional addicts, what do you? - Alcohol. And my mom was actually eventually overdosed in 2011. But like into like pills and you know, all of the things, loving, right. I loved my mom. She was like a very important person in my life, but as an adult, looking back, it wasn't functional. So we were young kids, we had to go through all these tests and all the things. And my dad was awarded custody, so I had visitation with my mom and then I lived with my dad, so my kind of primary home was my dad, which was super stable, strict.

I tell him I'm thankful for him. But you know, he was married eight times. - Eight? - Yeah, definitely. - Was going for a record. - You marry anyone that you're gonna bring into your bedroom or into your home, my dad's very conservative, my grandfather used to say, can you just like them a little Bob, 1935 was his birth year. So I grew up with him like being very, he was forensics and it was like he would talk about cases and we'd go to the FBI and we'd go to Washington DC on his work trips.

So it was a really interesting

kind of life there. And then I had my mom who I'd go visit and was homeless a majority of my life. So we would have couches or shelters. She was on food stamps. And I just remember one time I was like, I'm just so ashamed of you. I was like seven and she didn't say a word to me. Well she was trying to buy cigarettes with the food stamps, which is like clearly not a thing.

- [Speaker 2] Yeah. - And I was really embarrassed by it, and so I told her, because I've always been open with myself and my mind and she didn't say anything and she walked to the car and she was like, I'm just gonna make sure you are aware that you can think about how I'm ashamed you are when you walk home. And it was like in hindsight it's like two miles I walked home on this side of the road.

So Lenore would be very proud. - Kind of free range parenting. - I know right? - I know, we do over-diagnose neglect, but this might have been on the other side of that. - Maybe. - You had from an early age, a traumatic experience with addiction. - Yes, and I was dying and in fact my first TED Talk, I talk about this and when I was nine, I can't remember, I think my dad married a new person or something and I got an Xbox, or not an Xbox, PlayStation, Atari, right?

Is it, yeah. - It's probably Atari. - So I remember it came home and I remember that I turned it on and I was playing Pitfall and it was like this guy jumping through the jungle. I'm like such a OCD probably too much, I am a little self-diagnosed, but if I missed a, I turn it off and started again. And because I wanted to get every single one until I got to the very end. And quietly my grandmother was there watching and I got all the way through and I finally had perfected and got every single one.

It took me like six hours or something. - Oh, yeah, Pitfall was really repetitive. - It's very repetitive, oh my god, it's so frustrating. And she said, I'd like to talk to you. And she brought me in her room and she said, sat me down in her bed and she said, I want you to know something, she said, you have a mother who struggles with various levels of substances and addictions and you have a father who drinks every day and has an issue with drinking.

And I think that you need to understand. - [Speaker 2] You're at risk. - That you could be at risk because what I just saw is something that I am worried about and I never played again, I never played, I'm not a video gamer and I've never tried a drug 'cause I thought I could like them. - That adds a whole nother layer to your perspective on all of this. You've got so many reasons

to be worried about this.

As parents, we play psychologists to our kids at a lot of moments. What's your advice for how to be the best therapist for our kids when that's the role we need to play? - So I always say in one of my most important classes I ever took was in communication actually. And I always say ask the question if they're not cuing. So in rhetoric and communication, we talk about cuing. So if I come to you and say like, I've had a really hard day, I just need to vent, or I've got some questions, I'm not sure what to do with this, right?

I'm queuing you of what I want your role to be. Our children don't have that as much anymore. We've lost the art of that. So as a parent, I think the best thing you can say, are you looking for advice, are you just venting? Ask them, like that sounds really tough. Like is there something that I can do? Did you just wanna talk through this, right? Be open to give them that art and that communication skill because to me, fundamentally that's the best way you can help your child.

- What if they're not coming to us, but we sense through behavior or through our feelings that they need to talk, but they're just saying, yeah, it's fine. Is there a way to open the conversation without having to push? Like, tell me what's going on, what's happening? Why aren't you talking to me? What should we do? - Secrets of the trade. - What are some tips and tricks here? - So the bewitching hour for girls tend to be in the evening.

So like really anywhere between like nine and 11. Like sitting at the edge of their bed, not making eye contact with them and just kind of being present, even if you're just kind of like petting the dog or whatever, it kind of, again, it disables that piece of them where their guard is up because it's like they're tired, it's the end of the day, you're just being present, they can get to a relaxed state. So that's kind of my little secret trick with girls.

- [Speaker 2] Okay. - Boys tend to do better if they're occupied. So playing a video game, throwing a ball at a hoop, going on a walk if they're active, and again, the eye to eye is very kind of aggressive I think if they're trying to share something, so again, not something that you're like looking at each other, but like

able to be in something, but active tends to work better with boys than anything. And then globally, I would say like getting them in a car.

Like our rule is like, we're not on our devices in a car for various reasons. Right. - Yeah. - I don't wanna be that example and I want them to have that opening. I mean, if I'm going like 60, they can't jump out. Right, so I can ask anything. No, I'm just kidding. (person laughing) - Trapped. - But just going through that car and like being in the presence of a car and being able to like disconnect from their school world, from their house world, and they're in a vehicle that's kind of like contained and they're not distracted by something is also a really good time.

- Well that is great advice. And now the lightning round. - Right into it, oh gosh. - All right, I've got them right here. - Stressed all of a sudden. - Here we go, we're gonna lighten it up. Although it doesn't have to be light. You can go into the dark Quantico nightmare zone if you wish. What is the number one lesson you learned from your dad? - I would say the number one lesson is to be consistent in life and understand your worth.

Because if you don't respect yourself, then nobody else will. He did a really good job at just making sure that I understood that. - That's a great lesson, all right. What does masculinity mean to you? Or what is masculinity? - To me, being masculine is really about being able to show up and have strength with sensitivity, and as a psychologist, I think that we've lost the ability. We think that the masculine nature is the big muscle and like, can come in, you could beat anyone up and all of that, which is really not masculine at all.

That's actually from an energy standpoint, it's actually terrifying when you get into a hostile kind of violent nature. And I think that untethering that and looking at what is masculine, at least from a psychologist and personally for me, is somebody who can show up, they can listen, they can attend, but you also know that they have the strength to support and be there for you and support you. It sounds like in a way you're saying it's being able to carry the sword but not taking it out.

- Yeah, absolutely. - How do you think about, as a woman and as a mother and as a psychologist, the way masculinity is being treated in popular discourse and in school and higher ed in particular. So you've gone through a lot of academics. How do you think about that? It's a big question, but what's your hot take? - I guess I would say like, I think that it's being undervalued, devalued. And I think that what's happening just globally as a society is that we aren't giving each other the space to have our natural order.

And I say that because like
my grandmother one time brought me a jar of pickles
and she said, come with me. And I walked into the room with her and she handed the jar
of pickles to my dad. And she's like, Bob, can you open this? And so he of course he like
opens it up and she walks back and we go in the kitchen, she said, under no circumstances
do I want you to believe I couldn't have opened
that jar of pickles, but if there's a man in the
house that will feel useful, you let him open that jar of pickles.

I was like, five, six maybe, right? And I was like, okay, right. - Got some old Nona wisdom right. - Right, right.
Which is why, maybe that's why he's been married eight times. Like she was perfect. She was like the amazing
woman. - This is his mother? - Yeah, his mom. - Yeah. - But that masculinity of allowing someone to be there for
you and to teach young men that
you need to be that person. Like you need to be the person who's.

You never should like, let
somebody go unescorted. Like, you know, teaching that piece I don't think happens anymore. - Less screens,
more chivalry. - Yes, love that, yes. - What's the most valuable
thing you've learned from your children? - I would say that the
thing that I learned, because I wasn't sure
I was gonna have kids, so I was 35 and then 36 when I had my kids and I had actually due to my childhood, I
never thought I'd have a house.

I never thought I'd live past 30. So it was like this whole
kind of like newness for me to take on a child and
just having the ability to love so unconditionally and so deeply and to have that onus right. Of like having what
it is to be a mom, I think taught me that
who I am as a person isn't just about me anymore. Like you lose all of that. This is about being a steward for
these children and their future.

That taught me in probably
why I do everything that I do, because I want them to have a
future that matters for them. - One of our guests said that being a mom was the most entrepreneurial
venture of her life, and she was a serial entrepreneur, so. - Yeah oh 100%. There's no rules, I say to
my daughter all the time, I was like, I'm just winging
this, like, I'm trying my best. - This is the tragedy.

This is the tragedy of becoming an adult is you realize like,
oh, like all the adults when I was a kid are just
like screwed up people like I am like, you see, there's this moment that happens when you, hopefully it happens
later,

where you see your parents as humans instead of
as parents, it's weird. - Right, right. - It's a real weird thing,
it's a weird moment. - Right, I always say there's no manual. We're gonna do this together and it's gonna be okay
at the end.

- Yeah, what's the most dangerous thing you've ever let your kid or kids do? - Oh, I am much more the
risk taker than my husband. I let them kind of do anything. They started cooking at seven
and let them use sharp knives. I let them take shovels apparently and go dig in fields. - You let them bird bodies
in the neighborhood. - We hike on high cliffs and I trust that they're not gonna
fall and jump off, right.

I mean, I let them live life and I recognize that I
can't bubble wrap them and I want them to take those risks and I don't want them to be afraid. So I try to be the
parent that doesn't, my husband's a doctor, so he is terrified of everything. - Yeah, high risk aversion. - High risk
aversion, yeah. And to me it's like we
can't bubble wrap everything and we have to let them like
take those risks in life.

So the most dangerous, I
mean, I guess hiking in Zion, we went on some of the trails that said that you shouldn't go on. I mean they're
pretty. Oh, and we repelled off of mountains. I thought that was pretty cool. - Yeah, that's frightening. I don't
have the guts for that. So bravo. - Thank you, thank you, it was fun, yeah. - Your kids are really
lucky, that's awesome. What's the most dangerous
thing you ever did as a child?

And it sounds like these
might go into dark places. - Oh God. What can I talk about publicly on that? Probably the most dangerous
that I would say when I was 16, there was a highway, highway
49 between Sacramento and my mom's house in, she'd remarried and this guy had this house up in Auburn. And
Highway 49 is a switchback road. And I had a Celica, only had
one seatbelt that worked. Thankfully my best friend was on my side and we were driving 49 and I said, I drive
this all the time.

I was like, I'm pretty sure
we can do this in the dark. And I turned my lights off and was driving on the switchback. - Terrible choice. -
[Speaker] It was terrible choice. It was a terrible choice. - What were you thinking here? - And she's like, I don't
even have a seatbelt. Going off of a cliff that's like 200 feet in the air was gonna matter. And then I turned my
lights back on. But that's probably the
most dangerous I've.

- This is like the moment

where the camera's on you and then you say this and we start to Dutch angle. It's like uhoh. Wheels are coming off the bus inside the mind here. - Right, that was. - Okay, yeah, that's terrible, all right. Shame on you. - Yeah. - All right, as a psychologist, this could be fun and funny or terrible. How have you most damaged your kids, either physically or mentally? - Well, so physically I would say the damage I did with kicking my daughter out into the ocean and she was very little and I love the ocean.

It's like my safe space. - Best thing ever, so great. And she got tossed by a wave like upside down and like I couldn't find her for a second and I burst hysterically into laughter, which she still to this day. - After got her after. - Psychologically. - This was after you. - After I had saved her and got her to the shore. - If you started laughing when you couldn't find her, I'd say maybe, no.

- I really good in a crisis, it's after when I like fall apart and start laughing, she still brings that up to this day. She's like when you almost killed me and you just laughed about it. My son, 'cause I have two, he in preschool, I picked him up and we walked out and all of a sudden I turned around to put her in her car seat and he was gone. And I'm in a parking lot in a neighborhood and I called him out, Colt, Colton.

Colt, like I'm screaming at this point, the statistics of children abducted go through my mind. I start acting like a lunatic, lock down the school. I'm like yelling at parents. I'm like, I don't know where he is. I'm screaming at the top of my lung, getting every parent I can alerted. The kindergarten teacher comes over and she's like, you need to calm down and you need to just settle. We're gonna figure this out. And then this mom finds him and he's like hiding behind like an electrical box.

He's like, you just started yelling. It was terrible. (person laughing) - If you could relive one memory of their time with your dad, what day would it be, what would be the event? - I would actually say it's gonna sound terrible and weird, I think. - It's all right. - The one day I think I would relive, my mom passed away in 2011 unexpectedly. My parents when they divorced hated each other. Like there was zero reason they would get in the room.

But my mom died and I called him and I had to fly out to her home in California, I was in Arizona and he said, I'll be there by six. And he drove and he came to her house, as much as he hated her

and he helped me organize everything that I needed to take care of, that showed me so much how much he loved me. - That must have been a really poignant and painful time together.

- It was, and he did okay. Like, I mean he was a cop, right. So are, we have a lot of dark humor in our family. So she had a drug issue and so like online pharmacies were a nightmare and they still are like for anybody, but people were calling and trying to sell her and he was like, I remember him grabbing the phone. He was like, she's dead. And I was like, okay, too much dad.

Like I love you, but that's too much. Like I don't need to hear that. - Yeah, that's really something. What did your dad teach you about God? - My dad interestingly gave me my grandmother who taught me about God, my grandmother who lived with us since I was very little, she sat me down one day and she's like, we're gonna go through this book, and it was the Bible. We're gonna go through this book, it's about death, murder in mayhem, we're gonna get through it together, it's gonna be okay.

- It's an adventure book. - Yeah, and gosh, it was, and then would take me to the different churches and one of the churches I went to, I remember coming home and telling my dad I had gotten put into timeout 'cause I had a question, I didn't understand the resurrection. I was like, so there's no food and there's no water and there's a big rock. And like, but how did he get, too many questions. So I got put in timeout in bible study.

And I told my dad, I was like, I feel like in church you shouldn't have timeout. And he lost his mind, went down to the church and then didn't go back to that church again. I don't know actually what happened there. So he was the steward of it, but he didn't necessarily, I think understand or hold it himself. Even to this day, he's 87, he's still with us, even to this day, like it's not something that he is comfortable talking about.

I try to bring it up as much as I can just to make him uncomfortable 'cause that's what a good daughter does. - Yeah, yeah. No, of course we have to, if we aren't making our family members uncomfortable, we're not doing part of our job. - Right. - Moving from one light topic to the next. - Okay. - What do you want to have written on your tombstone? - Oh God, killing me John. - It can be a joke.

(person laughing) - Yeah, I would say life is messy, bring a broom. That's what I would want. I mean, life is like

beautiful and it's chaotic and it's messy and you just have to show up. And I think that 90% of what we do is how we react to it. - That's it. I have one last question for you. - Okay. - It's a question I ask every guest. How do you think about your role as an American, sort of in the story of our country, what you're trying to do?

- I think that the role is to not be passive and to stand up for what you believe in it. It's been a difficult journey in this space as a woman, as someone who's going up against an industry trying to talk about the realities that truly are showing in scientific journals across the globe and not be marginalized I think because it's such a big topic that oh, it's just one person and so it is showing up every time, whether it's a five minute, two minute, three minute.

Takes a long time to get all this and then it's like two minutes of like this little right talking point. - [Speaker 2] Yeah. - But I do all of them I can and I try to be the person who can show light for parents and for people, that it does matter. We do have to stand up. And if I'm not doing that, like I really am terrified that nobody else is gonna do it. Right, like if I don't see other people doing it like you and trying to spread the message.

This is all hard work to do these things, but we have to show up every day. So to me that's the best I can do, is being present and trying to do the best that I can every day. - Lisa, thanks for being on "Dad Saves America". This was a fantastic conversation. - Loved it, Thank you. - I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Dr. Lisa Strohman. We'll put links to our books, "Unplug" and "Digital Distress" down below.

One of my favorite tools from our conversation was Dr. St. Strohman's technology use continuum. Being able to assess our kids' tech use and any symptoms of overuse is invaluable. The first step to solving any problem is knowing you have one in the first place. If you enjoyed this video, please share it with your friends and family and be sure to like, subscribe and hit that notification bell. At Dad Saves America, we believe that dads are heroes that play an essential role in overcoming the challenges we all face together.

And now we leave you with a flipping awesome mom. (people cheering) - Yes, I told you.