



Recovery Takes a Jump-
and a Plan: 10 Tools to
Build the Parachute to
Support the Recovery
Journey

What Elements Support
Real Change

Nicole Hawkins Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist
CEDS-C
CEO
Center for Change

1

Recovery is
Possible

1. WHY DO CLIENTS GET BETTER?
2. WHAT MY CLIENTS HAVE TAUGHT ME ABOUT RECOVERY
3. 10 THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT RECOVERY

2



Hope Is The One Thing Stronger Than Fear

- The thought of recovery was overwhelming
- Do people really get better?
- Can I recover?
- What if I fail or fall?
- I constantly heard "you just need to trust and have HOPE."
- "Just take the leap"

3



Recovery From An Eating Disorder Is Like Packing A Parachute

Both require care, preparation, and commitment

Attention to detail- know the facts

Trust of the process- Facing the fear and taking the leap

Navigating the Descent

Establishing a safe landing

4



Why Statistics Matter! You Matter!

Eating Disorders have the 2nd highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness.

Males represent 25% of individuals with anorexia nervosa.

10,200 deaths per year, that's one death every 52 minutes.

Less than **6%** of individuals with eating disorders are underweight.

As many people die from eating disorders as breast cancer each year.

323.1 million dollars was spent on breast cancer research vs 53 million spent on eating disorders in 2024.

5

Prevalence vs Funding

Illness Prevalence NIH Research Funds (2024)

Alzheimer's Disease	55 million	\$3.8 billion
Autism	78 million	\$306 million
Schizophrenia	24 million	\$1.75 billion
Eating Disorders	70 million	\$18 million

Research dollars spent on every person with **Alzheimer's: \$69.09**

Research dollars spent on every person with **Autism: \$3.92**

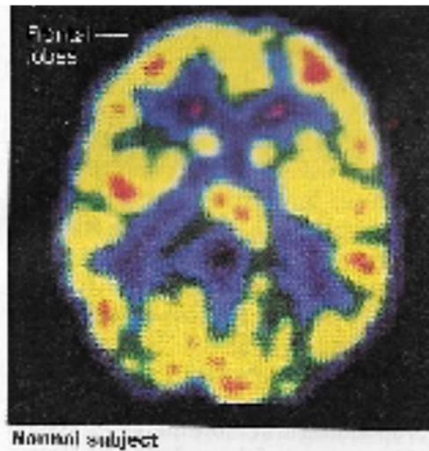
Research dollars spent on every person with **Schizophrenia: \$72.92**

Research dollars spent on every person with an **Eating Disorder: \$.26**

This is Why Statistics Matter!

6

Eating Disorders Are Not A Disorder of “Choice”



Prefrontal Cortex:

Executive function- knowing good and bad

Planning of complex cognitive behavior, thinking of future consequences

Empathy

Insight

Response Flexibility

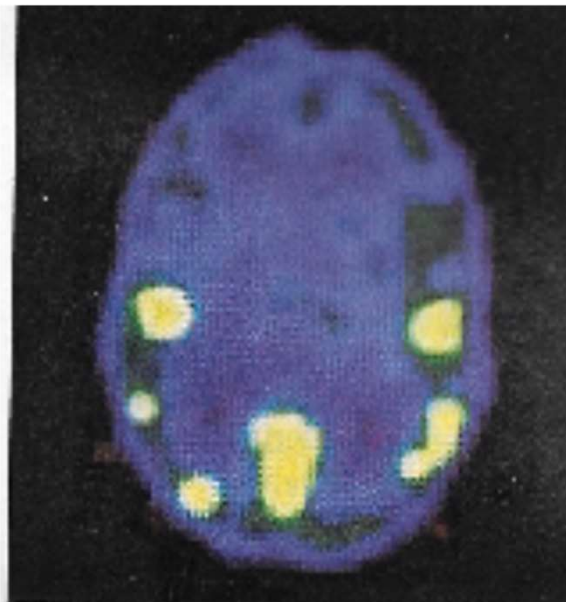
Personality expression- emotional regulation

Ongoing decision making

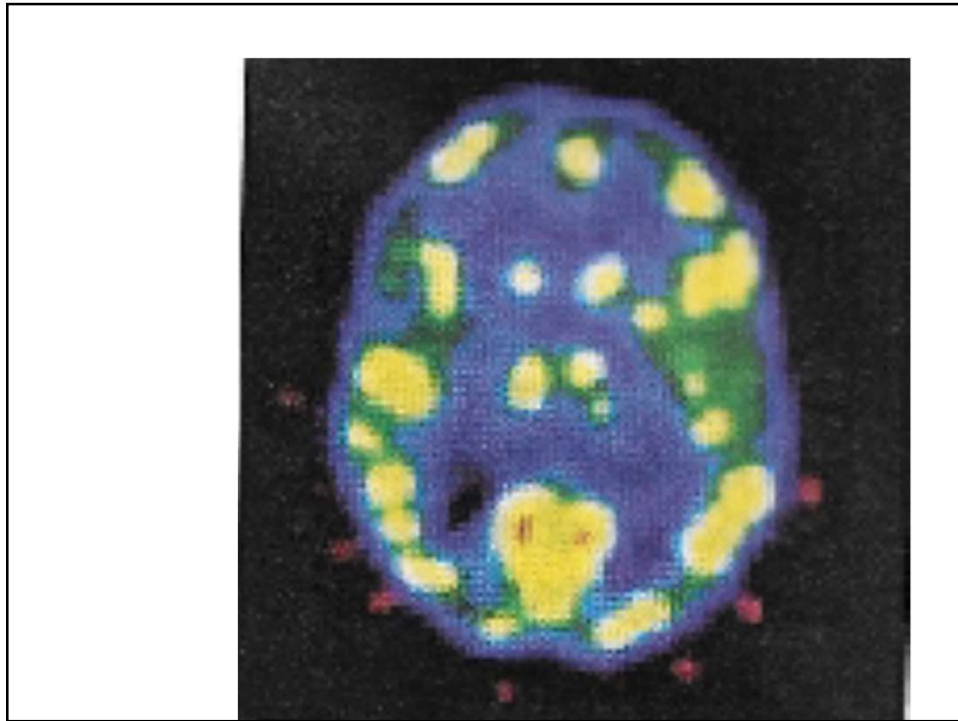
Moderating social behavior

Impulse control

7



8



9



Tools For Success

4 Key Factors For Recovery

10

Consistency and Structure

Written plan is important

Having predictability in your schedule

Structure for when you need it most-when do you struggle the most?

Defining what structure is needed, not being alone

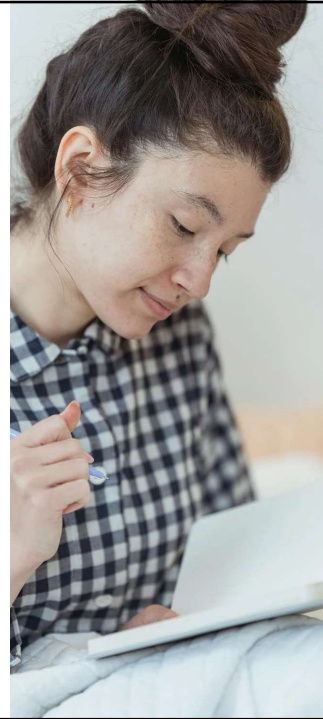
Having a meal plan- times and requirements, support people. Write it down, have a support person. Educate your support person.

Movement/exercise plan- be mindful about your movement.

Sleep Hygiene plan- getting at least 8 hours is important.

Self-correction plan- this is the key.... This takes lots of practice and you need to practice it.

Staying busy but not too busy



11

Consistency and Structure

Substance/caffeine plan-
vaping? drinking?
Smoking? Marijuana?

Social Media guidelines-
limit your time, clean it
up, and set rules.

Setting small obtainable,
measurable, daily,
goals- this is important
to set one goal each day.

Celebrate even the
smallest victories-
periods when they have
done well

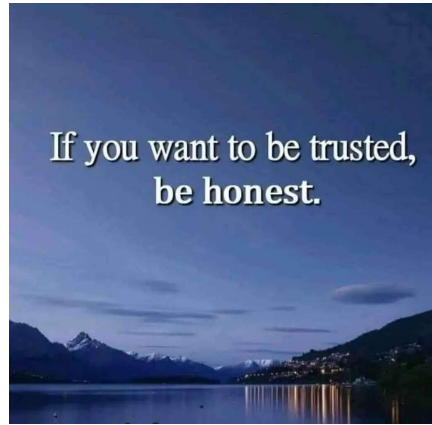
Putting your plan on
paper- and sharing it
with others

Making plans for the
future. The future can
be scary, what is your
greatest fear?

Daily and weekly
family/support check in's
- allows others to help
and define their role.



12



Honesty

Honesty with yourself and others

Talking openly about your flaws and inabilities

Being honest with your family and their team.

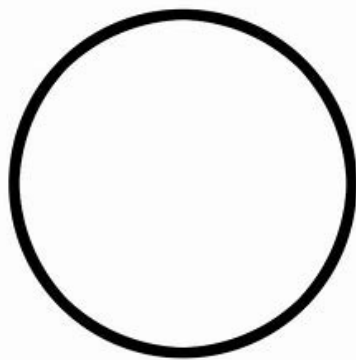
Eating Disorder autobiography
Assignment: 10 pages- every detail

Who will you share it with?

Who won't you share it with, and why?

13

Recovery Inner Circle Exercise



Who is inside the circle?

Who is outside the circle but still on the front page?

Who is on the back page?

14

Honesty



1. Are you keeping behaviors that you know are preventing you from a full recovery, are you lying to yourself and others?



2. Are you collecting matches that are going to burn down your recovery?



3. What can you do to extinguish your matches?



15

PRE-RELAPE SIGNS



Red Light Signs

- Deciding to use behaviors "just once"
- Telling myself I don't need a meal plan
- Lying about eating/using behaviors
- Isolating myself & avoiding social situations
- Only eating safe foods
- Frequently bingeing/purging
- Cheating on my meal plan



Yellow Light Signs

- Increased anxiety around food
- Obsessive thoughts about food/weight
- Urges to diet and lose weight
- Weighing myself frequently
- Checking nutrition info online
- Measuring & weighing food



Green Light Signs

- Following my meal plan
- Not being afraid of unknown calories or thinking any foods are "bad"
- Developing other interests and spending less time & energy on my ED
- Being willing to surrender control over food and my entire life to GOD!

Traffic Light Assignment

Red Light Signs- these are behaviors you know you need to stop.

Yellow Light Signs- slow down or be very cautious, these behaviors can be dangerous quickly.

Green Light Signs- add more of these behaviors and keep going.

16



Honesty

1. 24 Hour Honesty Rule
2. Pick an accountability person
3. Self correction: High Risk Situations and Coping Mechanism, self correction plan.
 - What if I purge?
 - What if I binge?
 - What if I restrict?
4. Learning from your mistakes
5. Daily honesty log

17



The 3 and 3 Self-Correction Rule

Identify three coping skills you can engage in before a behavior and after.

Examples:

Journal

Deep Breathing

Music or Podcasts

Sensory Stimulations- ice, weighted blankets, squeezing a stress ball


Hot shower/baths

Talking to a friend

Walking in nature

Positive Affirmations

18



Self-Correction

Examples of Self-Correction

- Seek accountability
- Self-reflection- what triggered me? Write about it
- Nutrition replacement
- Increase therapy time
- Increase self-care
- Read positive affirmations

19

Triggers and Coping


Identify the trigger

Conflict with my partner
 Feeling I ate too much
 My clothing not fitting well
 Disappointing someone at school or work
 Weighing myself
 Having my family not trust me
 Feeling hungry
 Trauma anniversary dates
 Going on date
 Being around other people that diet

Identify the coping skill

Draw or color
 Garden or buy flowers
 Listen to music
 Paint my nails
 Ask for help or support
 Take a 20-minute nap
 Use a stress ball or fidget toy
 Cuddle with my pet
 Guided imagery
 Walk in nature

20



Learning from your triggers


Did I get triggered to a 1 or a 10?

What was the emotion I felt when triggered? Anxiety, envy, shame, guilt?

What was the duration of the trigger? Did it last minutes, hours or days?

How did I cope with the trigger? Did I cope negatively or positively?

21



Reaching Out For Support

Why we isolate & don't reach out:

- "Dwelling on past mistakes"
- "Assuming everyone is judging me negatively"
- "Guilt and embarrassment about my behaviors"
- "Isolation and loneliness"
- "I will never be good enough"
- "Loss of integrity due to dishonesty"

22

Why Support Matters? The World's Longest Study on Happiness

85 Year Study on Happiness

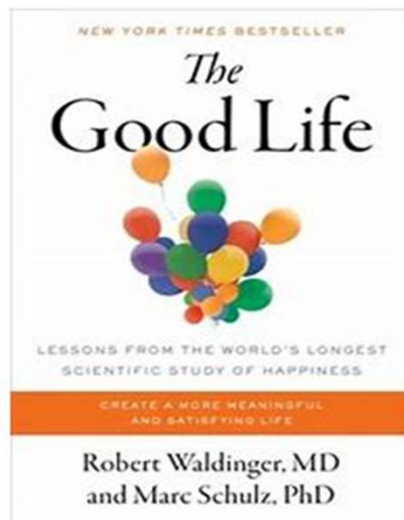
One of the longest running and most comprehensive studies ever conducted on human well-being.

It began in 1938 and followed 724 men, tracking their physical and mental health, relationships, health, and overall life satisfaction.

Had two groups 268 Harvard sophomores and 456 disadvantaged inner-city youth from Boston.



23



The Importance of Social Support

The study has helped provide priceless insights into human happiness.

Conducted regular interviews, medical examinations, career trajectories, family life, relationships and social connections.

Director of the study is Dr. Robert Waldinger, a psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital and a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

24



#1 Finding: The key to a healthy and fulfilling life is **quality** of relationships.

Not wealth, not fame.

Social connection matters- plane study

Relationships-positive relationships with friends, partners and families.

It's not the only thing that matters, but time and time again this proved to be the biggest factor.

25



Reaching Out For Support

#2 Loneliness is deadly

Loneliness can lead to chronic stress.

Which has a similar effect on our health as smoking a pack of cigarettes per day.

26



Reaching Out For Support

#3 Being introverted is not a disadvantage.

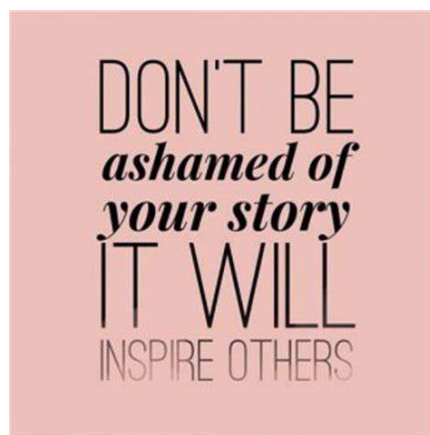
For relationships:

Quality > Quantity

The study shows that even 1 or 2 close connections is sufficient.

Introversion can even be an ADVANTAGE- as introverts may not require as many connections to feel fulfilled.

27



Reaching Out For Support

Continuing in outpatient treatment- your entire team. Don't vote members off the island.

Having a team I trust

Having a voice, having an opinion

Taking my medications

Making new friends

Joining groups or clubs

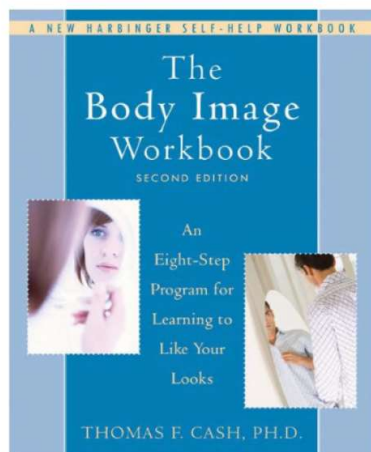
28

4. Letting Go of Negative Body Image



1. "Always wanting to change my body"
 - "The scale!!!!"
 - "Refusing to maintain a normal body weight"
 - "Hating my body"
 - "Avoiding situations due to my body"
- Clothing challenge
- Cleaning out the closet
- Body Image Challenges
- Buying new clothes

29



Therapist Recommended

4. Letting Go of Negative Body Image

3. Limiting Opportunities

What triggers can I avoid?

4. Weekly weigh in's with a professional


5. Avoid Avoiding

Body image challenge days.


30



Do it for the skin tight dresses.




I wish my thighs didn't touch






NOTHING TASTES AS GOOD AS SKINNY FEELS

5. Social Media: Connection vs. Comparison



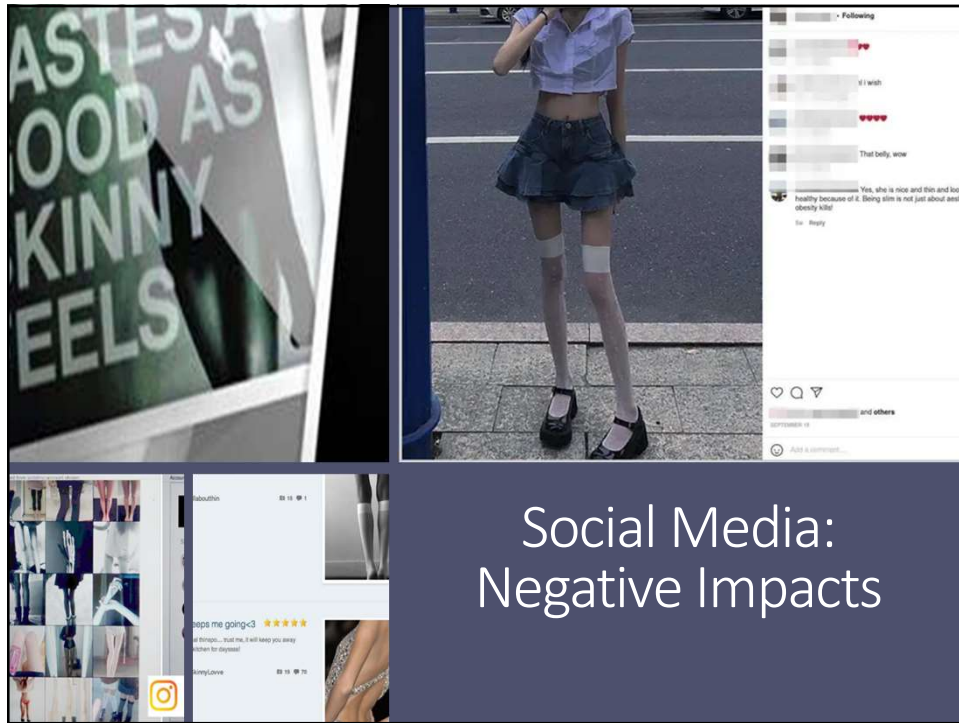
31



Media Consumption: traditional vs digital

- After only 3 mins. of looking at the thin-ideal image, 70% feel depressed, guilty and shameful.
- Girls that idealize the thin-ideal are 6 times higher for disordered eating.
- Women with eating disorders are highly impacted.
- My research in the 1990's classified as "too dangerous."

32



Social Media: Negative Impacts

33

Media Use

According to The Nielsen Company, in **2018 the average American spent less than 11 hours a day using media.**

In **2020 that increased to 12 hours and 20 minutes per day.**

In **2025 it is estimated to be 13 hours and 50 minutes per day**—that is more than the average time spent sleeping or working each day.

In **2023- teens spent 4.8 hours per day on social media platforms, girls averaged 5.3 hours, while boys averaged 4.4 hours. This is 9 hours per day.**

34

Media Use: Our Phone Habits



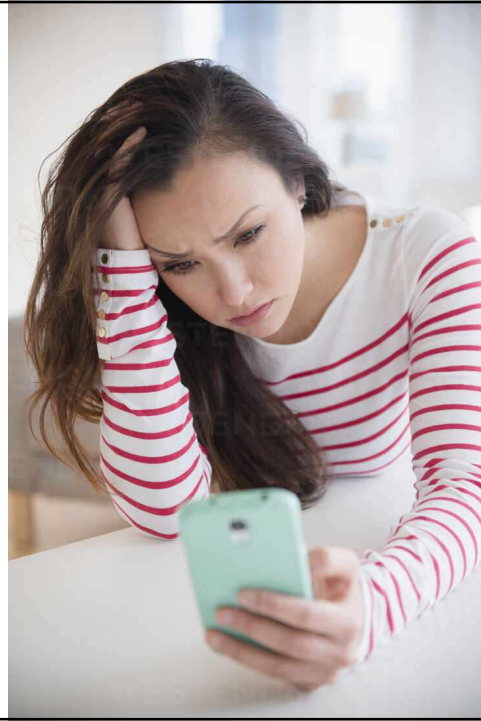
A new survey of 2024 habits revealed:



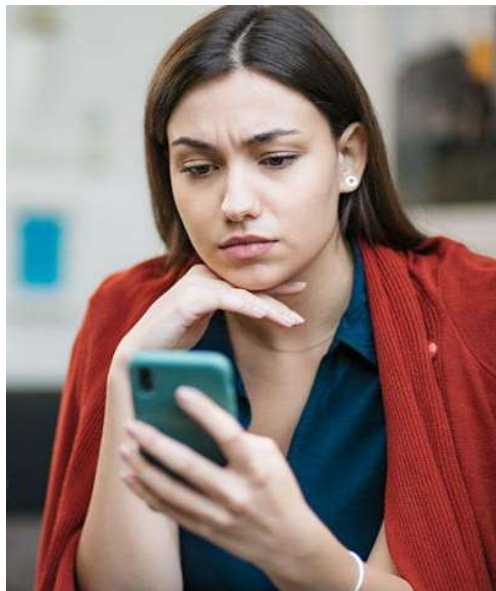
Americans check phones 205 times a day (up from 144 times in 2023, a 42% increase).



We spend 5 hours a day on our phones, equaling 2.5 months of the year.



35



Media Use: Our Phone Habits

4 out of 5 check their phone within 10 minutes of waking up

4 out of 5 check notifications within 5 minutes

4 out of 5 feel uneasy leaving their phone at home.

4 out of 5 say they're addicted to their phone.

2 out of 5 look at their phone during a date.

89% check their phone while watching a movie at a theater.

36




Media Use: Our Phone Habits

Teenagers spend **9** hours on their screens each day

They receive **237** notifications a day, equaling one notification every 4 minutes.

37



Adolescents and Young Adults Are In A Mental Health Crisis

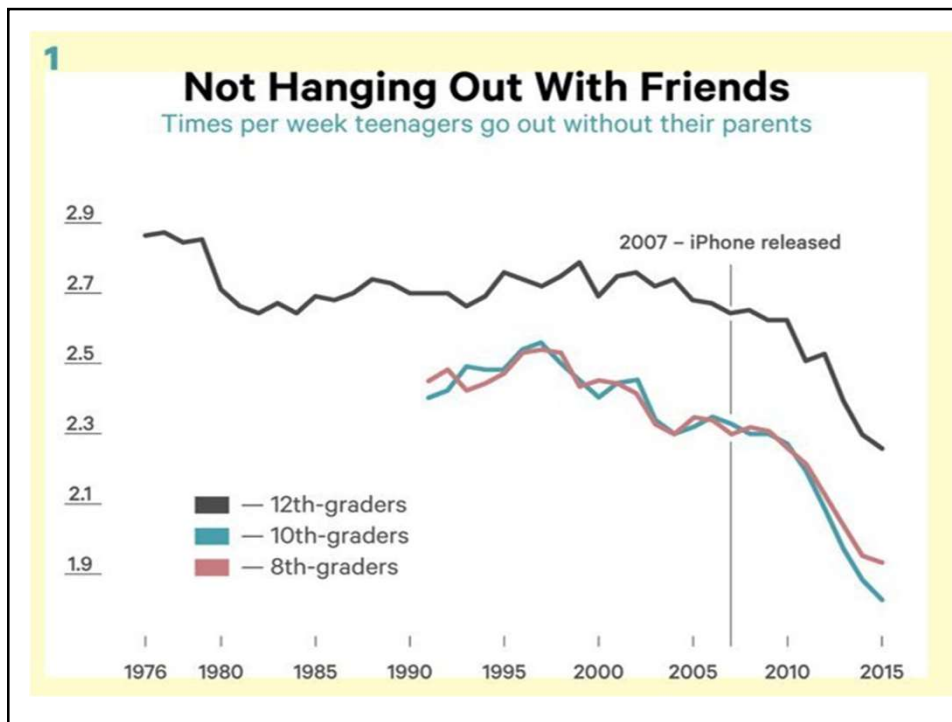
Social media began taking off among teens in the 2010's, let's look at the timeline.

The first iPhone was released the summer of **2007**.

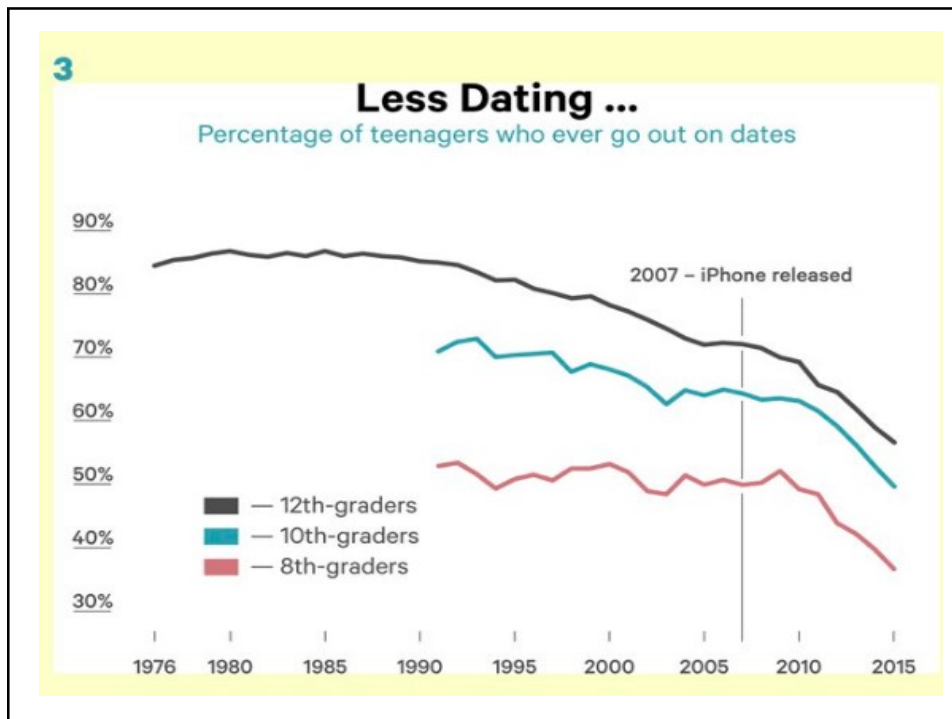
Facebook started allowing anyone age 13 and older to join in **2006** and Twitter launched the same year.

In **2009**- "like" feature & "retweet" was started.

38



39



40

Social Media Causes Mental Illness in Girls

In **2010**- smartphones added front-facing cameras.

Instagram launched in **2010** and Snapchat launched in **2011** and that is when things started to change. **Dramatically.**

The most intense period of rewiring of adolescent brains was **2010 to 2015.**

Dr. Haidt “social media use does not just *correlate* with mental illness; it *causes* it” in girls.

41

Increasing Rates of Depression

The skyrocketing depression rates are highly gendered, impacting younger teenage girls far worse than everyone else.

In **2017, 1 in 5** teenage girls between the ages of 12 and 17 experienced a major depressive episode.

In **2021, 3 in 5** teenage girls felt persistent sadness, double the rates of boys.

In **2021**, 25% of girls had made a suicide plan.

42

CDC: Results are In (2/13/23)

Youth Risk Behavior Survey was given to 17,000 high school students in the fall of 2021.

Girls- persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness

Boys- depression often exhibited in irritability or aggression.

57% girls reported major depression

69% of gay, lesbian or bisexual teenagers reported major depression

43

Rising Rates of Depression Among Our Girls

This graph shows the percentage of people in different age groups who experienced a major depressive episode in the prior 12 months.

You see that spiking **red line**?

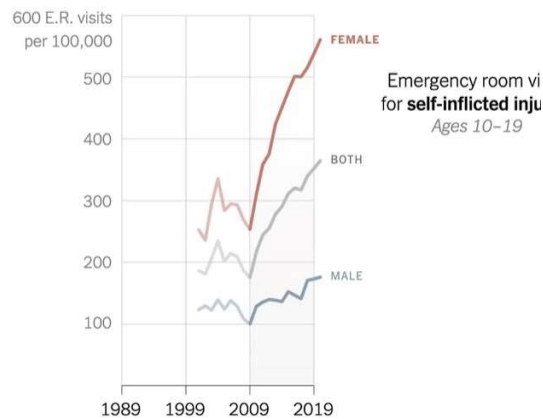
That reflects the rise of depression among **12-17 year-old** Americans.

The **blue line** shows depression rates for **18-25 year-olds**. Sharp, steep and ongoing spike starting in 2010!

Twenge, Cooper, Joiner, Duffy, & Binau (2019). *Age, period, and cohort trends in mood disorder indicators and suicide-related outcomes in a nationally representative dataset, 2005-2017*. Journal of Abnormal Psychology.
<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journ>

44

Emergency room visits for self-harm by children and adolescents rose over the last decade, particularly among young women.



New York Times | Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

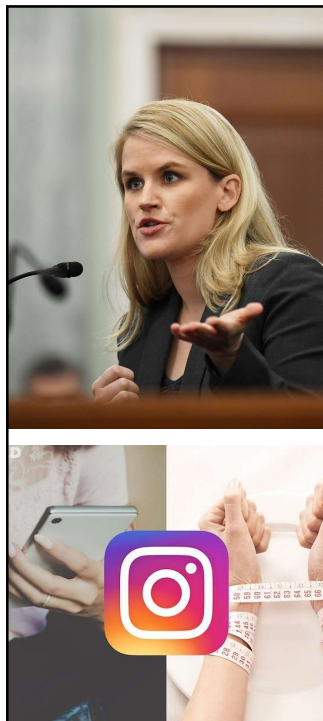
ER Visits for Self-harm

This graph is devastating and shows **emergency room visits** for children and adolescents for **self-inflicted injuries** before and after the widespread use of social media.

The rates went up for both sexes early in 2010, the increase was far more dramatic for girls.

The kids are not alright.

45



Instagram: Safe Platform for girls?

"We make body image issues worse for 1 in 3 teen girls."

Frances Haughen testifies to congress

2021- Investigative report by WSJ found Instagram is very harmful for young users, most evident for teenage girls.

INSTAGRAM AND "FACEBOOK SEEMS TO BE TAKING A PAGE FROM THE TEXTBOOK OF BIG TOBACCO-TARGETING TEENS WITH POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS PRODUCTS WHILE MASKING THE SCIENCE IN PUBLIC" said Sen. Blumenthal.

Intentionally pushing harmful eating disorder, self-harm and suicidal content to young users.

46



Instagram: Safe platform for girls?

- Approximately a billion users world- wide
- Around 160 million users in the U.S.
- About 22 million U.S. teenagers use Instagram daily.
- Instagram is free... that means our teenagers are the product!
- Advertisers exchanged around \$71 billion annual advertising revenues in 2024.
- Young users are being exploited.

47



1st Lawsuit citing Meta as the cause of their children's eating disorder and self harm

Lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, heavily cites [the Facebook Papers](#), a trove of internal Meta research documents leaked the fall of 2021.

The case was filed on behalf of Alexis Spence, who was able to create her first Instagram account at the age of 11 without her parents' knowledge. The complaint alleges that Instagram's artificial intelligence engine almost immediately steered the then-fifth grader into an echo chamber of content glorifying anorexia and self-cutting, and systematically fostered her addiction to using the app.

48

2nd Lawsuit filed last month against Meta

Alex was repeatedly bombarded with and exposed to content recommended and/or made available to her by Meta, which increasingly included underweight models, unhealthy eating, and eating disorder content

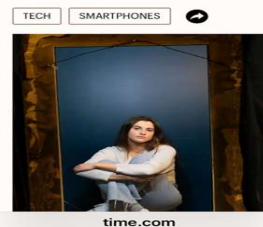
"Meta knows that its product is contributing to teen depression, anxiety, even suicide and self-harm. Why doesn't it change these harmful product features and stop utilizing algorithms in connection, at least, with teen accounts? Because Meta's priority is growth and competition concerns, and it sees 'acquiring and retaining' teens as essential to its survival," the lawsuit said.



49

Multidistrict Litigation

She Says Social-Media Algorithms Led to Her Eating Disorder. Now She's Suing TikTok and Instagram



-This is now in federal court in California

-Center for Change has been actively involved in the past 3 years

-1,800 plaintiffs have signed up-

-29 state attorneys general, local government, school districts, and parents of suicide victims.

50

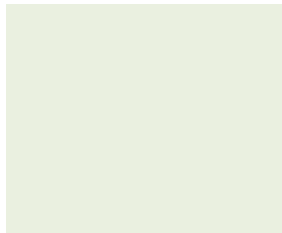
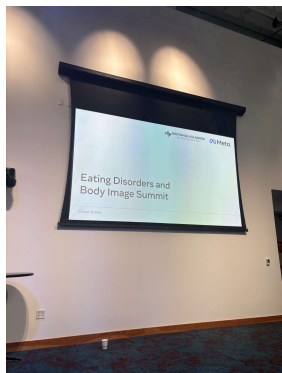


Is Meta trying to protect our kids?

Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024, Meta announced it will start **restricting** inappropriate content for teenagers' accounts on Instagram and Facebook, such as posts about **suicide, self-harm and eating disorders**.

Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024, Meta announced new **"nighttime nudges"** feature that will prompt teenagers to close Instagram during late-night hours. It will pop up after 10 minutes.

51



My Trip to Meta

In Oct 2024 top eating disorder experts and influencers from around the country were invited to attend a 1- day summit at Meta to help make the platform "safer" for individuals with eating disorders.

Meta team of 28 individuals is armed to protect 170 million against eating disorder, self-harm and suicide content.

Takeaway- nothing is changing, in fact, I think it will become worse.

52



Social Media Targets Our Kids

Center for Countering Digital Hate:
TikTok users that “briefly paused” or “liked” content about mental health or body image.....

Within **2.6 minutes** they were fed content about suicide

Within **8 minutes** they were fed content about eating disorders.

The Tech Transparency Project:
“Thinstagram” research- Instagram’s algorithm amplifies and recommends dangerously thin women and “thinfluencers” and anorexia “coaches.”



53



6. Self Care

Making/scheduling time for myself- making self-care a priority

“Caring for my own needs before others”

365 Positive Affirmations Assignment

“Learning to love myself”

Create a safe place- either physically or mentally. Create a home sanctuary.

54



6. Adding Self Care to Your life!

1. Journaling, affirmations and gratitude statements.
2. Call a friend
3. Coloring, art, drawing
4. Listen to an inspiring podcast
5. Go for a walk
6. Sitting by running water
7. Watch a sunset
8. Buy yourself a plant or flowers

55



Adding Self Care to Your Life

9. Self care tool kit/box
10. New hobbies- gardening, reading, crafting
11. Spending time in nature
12. Sitting in the sun for 10 minutes
13. Pampering- baths, skincare routines, pedicures
14. Deep breathing and mindfulness exercises and apps
15. Practice Gratitude and gratitude journals
16. Pet a dog

56

7. Service

- Purpose > Payment
- Purpose is powerful.
- People who have purpose in their work, experience greater life satisfaction and happiness.
- Whether paid or unpaid.
- If your career doesn't provide these feelings-try volunteering for a cause you're passionate about.



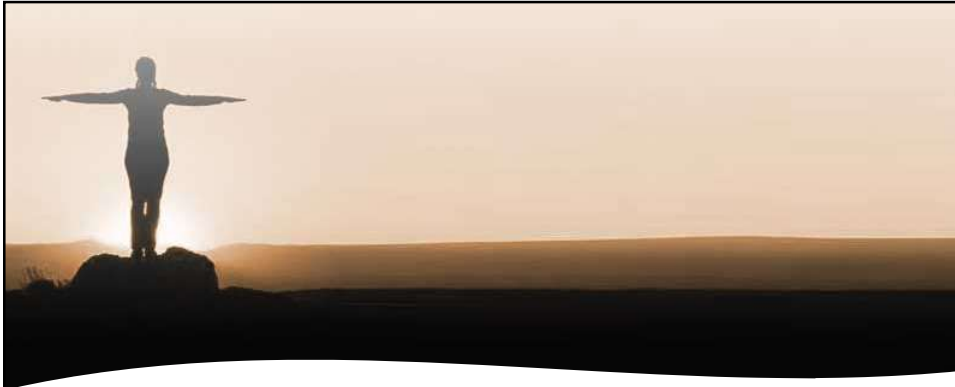
57



7. Service

- "Creating meaning in my life through service"
- "Volunteering my time"
- "Forcing myself to be out of my comfort zone"
- "Realizing that I had value and could contribute to others"

58



8. Spirituality

- Spirituality is not always equivalent to religion
- Spirituality-the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.
- Discovering my passions and my interests
- “Exploring my spirituality”
- “Going to church, practicing my beliefs”
- “Improving my relationship with God”

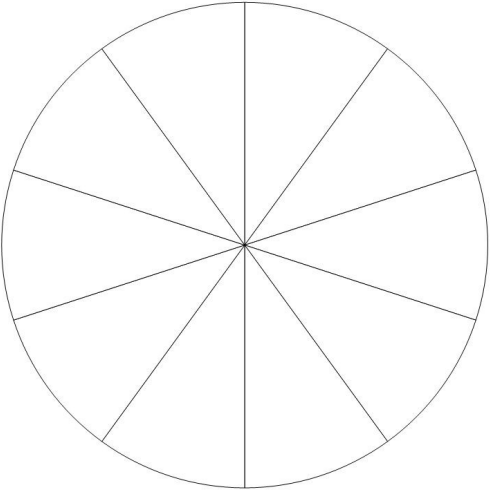
59



9. Healthy Relationships & Environments

- Letting go of unhealthy people in my life
- “I stopped expecting others to change”
- Staying away from predatory people
- 5 types of unhealthy relationships (Co-addicts, control, abusive, rescuer, co-dependent)
- Seeking out healthy people
- “I recovered for my family & future family”

60



10. Finding Balance In Recovery, letting go of perfectionism

When we only focus on one thing- we have no balance

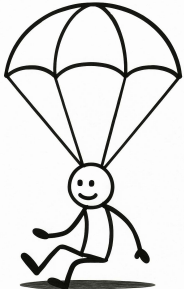
Recovery is about filling in the circle/parachute and filling up the space that the eating disorder used to occupy.

They need to fill each section of the circle, it takes time.

It will take time, be patient with the process

61

It is ok to fall down in recovery! Falling down doesn't mean failure!



Each element is a panel of the parachute; it helps catch them on the descent.

They can get back up, and it does mean they are starting over!

Setbacks are part of the process

They are not defined by their struggles.

You are not alone!

Keep going – the journey is worth it.

62