

# Mental Health Matters

*A Monthly Newsletter from Atlantic Behavioral Health*

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | August 2024

## Preparing for Back to School

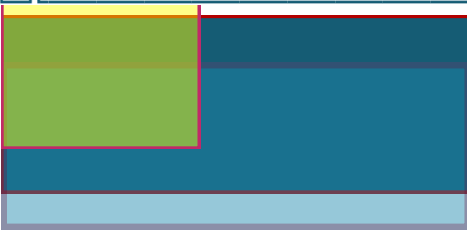
***Does your checklist include the impact of social media?***

Preparing for the kids to head back to school always seems to come up quickly. Between getting new shoes and outfits, gathering school supplies, and keeping track of everyone's schedules, it can be a lot to manage.

Today's families need to add one more thing to their list.

***Preparing for the impact of social media  
on your kids' mental health.***

Kids are constantly asking for the latest smartphones and becoming increasingly preoccupied with their use. As parents, it can feel like you're losing touch with what they're doing in the virtual world.



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If you have teens or kids heading to college, you have been witnessing the impact of social media for some time now. If you have younger children, you will want to get informed and be prepared. This issue is going to be on the back-to-school checklist for a while.

Here's a timeline of social media evolution:

- The first smart phone came out in 1992
- Facebook started in 2004
- You tube 2005
- Twitter 2006
- Instagram 2010
- Snapchat 2011
- TikTok 2016
- And look out, here comes AI (well, it's already here – Say hello to ChatGPT)



The influence of these devices and social media platforms has become increasingly pervasive and powerful. Many now suggest that this trend may be detrimental to our children's mental health.



Just like teaching your kids how to safely cross the street, safe social media use is just as important for kids' health and wellbeing.

The Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, MD recently highlighted social media's impact on kids' mental health and suggested that we might need to introduce warning labels for kids and families towards healthy social media use.

***"The mental health crisis among young people is an emergency – and social media has emerged as an important contributor,"***

Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, wrote in an op-ed [published on June 17](#) in *The New York Times*." [Medscape Registration](#)

While this gets sorted out, there are things you can do now.

Dr. Christopher Lynch, an Atlantic Health System pediatric psychologist has some important tips and guidelines as you prepare for back to school:

1. Be aware that elements of social media are present in many electronic activities (not just the well-known apps). If your child has an internet connection, they have access to social media.
2. Lead by example. Show your children the steps you take to limit time on social media and electronic devices in general.



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3. Don't wait until you have a major concern to talk to your children about social media. Instead, start and keep an ongoing dialog with your children about what they are using and how they are feeling about it from the very start. This will encourage open and honest conversations.

***“The most common question parents ask me is, ‘is social media safe for my kids?’ The answer is that we don't have enough evidence to say it's safe, and in fact, there is growing evidence that social media use is associated with harm to young people's mental health,”*** said U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy

### Warning signs

1. If your child spends more than three hours using social media, this could be a warning sign and should be monitored.
2. If social media use is interfering with getting homework done, socializing outside or becoming involved in other activities, have a conversation about how to set healthy limits on social media use.
3. If you notice your child's mood changing after spending time on social media, this could be a warning sign of online bullying or unhealthy comparisons to others.

### What to do

- Consult your pediatrician if your child expresses any suicidal thoughts.
- Discuss your family values and how social media fits in with your life and schedule.
- Make a family plan to keep screen time limited at mealtime and family time.

#### *Did you know?*

*Major phone companies including Apple and Android have built-in parent control settings that you can use to monitor your child's usage, set limits on time spent on specific activities, and restrict access to content.*



After a fun filled summer, getting back to school and a more structured lifestyle can be challenging. Use this time to set some new guidelines for healthy social media use.

### Resources:

<https://www.common sense media.org> a website that provides parents with information about and ratings on a wide range of electronic media including social media apps.

<https://www.healthychildren.org> a website from the American Academy of Pediatrics that provide practical information across a wide range of topics including social media. The site includes a page where you can create a Family Media Plan

[Social Media Toolkit | Homeland Security \(dhs.gov\)](#)



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## CRISIS RESOURCES

**If you feel you or someone you know may harm themselves or someone else:**

**988** Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**

The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQIA+ Youth : **1-866-488-7386**

Veterans Crisis Line: **Dial 988 and Press 1**

**Dial 211:** 211 provides callers with information about and referrals to social services for every day needs and in times of crisis

National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE**

National Sexual Assault Hotline at **1-800-656-HOPE**

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)  
24/7 Hotline **1-800-656-4673**

## ADDICTION RESOURCES

**SAMHSA's National Helpline** is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and [Spanish](#))

[Also visit the online treatment locator.](#) Call: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

**Alcoholics Anonymous** - [Northern New Jersey AA - Meeting Finder \(nnjaa.org\)](#)

**Narcotics Anonymous** - [NA Meetings in NJ \(narcoticsanonymousnj.org\)](#)

**NJ Self Help Clearinghouse** 800-367-6274 - [FIND A GROUP | NJSHGCH \(njgroups.org\)](#)

## Atlantic Behavioral Health

**ACCESS Center:**

**888-247-1400**

Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention

Services **24/7 Hotlines:**

**Chilton Medical Center: 973-831-5078**

**Hackettstown Medical Center 908-454 -5141**

**Morristown Medical Center: 973-540-0100**

**Overlook Medical Center: 908-522-3586**

**Newton Medical Center: 973-383-0973**

**Email:** [Nomorewhispers@atlantichhealth.org](mailto:Nomorewhispers@atlantichhealth.org)

**Website:** [Atlantichhealth.org](http://Atlantichhealth.org)



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