



APRIL/MAY 2026

ST. RAPHAEL COMMUNITY OF CATHOLIC MOMS

NEWSLETTER

What's News

Playgroup

Mondays are Better Together!
Only a few more gatherings before
we break for Summer Vacay

Anxious Generation Night

Our discussion panel night was an amazing turnout of parents and teachers ready to take a stake in the "collective action" that Jonathan Haidt calls imperative to resisting the way phones are "re-wiring" us. According to Haidt, there's GOOD news! Many of the most powerful influences in a child's life are still the same as they've always been—kids and teens need engaged parents, caring teachers, strong communities, and opportunities to develop independence and resilience.



Upcoming Events

May 12th - Meeting Night - Flyer, p. 8
June 14th - Family Social Outing to the
Ballpark - Flyer p. 9

March 24th Lenten Praise & Worship Evening



Shout-out to the Knights of Columbus for funding an awesome pizza dinner for parish families! And huge shout-out to several musically talented families for sharing their remarkable musical gifts at a night of Adoration on March 24th!

Musicians left to right: Daniel Moctezuma (piano); Mark Ziegler (vocals & guitar); Michael Patti (vocals & guitar); Zachary Bowers (percussion);
not pictured: Alex Ziegler (vocals)



Almsgiving for every season

Sharing Connections needs your old dishes! When Megan Barnhart came to our October meeting to tell us about WaterLeaf Women's Center, she encouraged us to donate our second-hand household wares and clothes to Sharing Connections in Downers Grove. Sharing Connections is a well-run organization and they are in need of plates and other kitchen wares, like pots and pans. Your donations will go to people who are at or below the poverty line. The "Show Room" is re-staged for each client to browse, one family at a time, as part of the program's goal to provide dignity to those they serve. Please consider—they're just a short drive away!

If you're receiving this through the grapevine, [visit our website](#) for more information. If you're a Catholic mom raising your kids in Naperville, we would be so happy to have you join us!



ST. RAPHAEL COMMUNITY OF CATHOLIC MOMS

Playgroup

May Dates

Mondays are better together!

If you're home with littles, come enjoy an hour of connection for moms and kids! We gather starting at 9:20 and finish around 10:20. It's a relaxed way to meet other families, share some conversation, and grow in community. Find us in Room 157 at the end of the hall - just follow the strollers!

May 4th, May 11th, May 18th

*****NO on-campus playgroup on, nor after Memorial Day (May 25th). Stay tuned to the WhatsApp channel for some impromptu summer meet-up opportunities!**

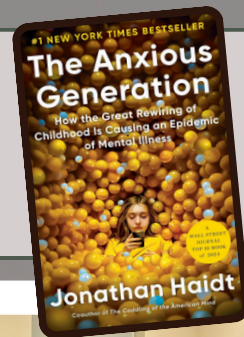


When the weather's been in our favor, we're venturing outdoors—on campus, and nearby. Use the QR to join the WhatsApp Channel for real time updates and date reminders.



ST. RAPHAEL COMMUNITY OF CATHOLIC MOMS

Anxious Generation Meeting Night



It was so lovely to have a room filled with engaged parents from our school and parish participating in this book and subject exploration!

We had four educators on the panel, and nearly 60 parents in attendance.

Our panel brought together educators who have spent decades walking alongside children and families, while also raising their own. We are so grateful to Debbie Curtis, Dan Gallagher, Lauri Riggen, and Sean Williams for sharing their time, expertise, and insights for this special evening of reflection and resolution.

The night was engaging and encouraging, and everyone left with many insights to take home. Summary of the book to the right, into the next page; followed by highlights from the discussion panel; and some follow-up links from Mr. Gallagher at the end.



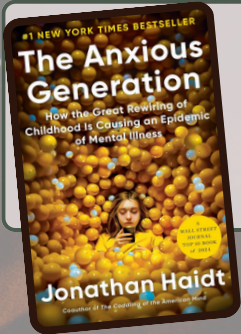
Jonathan Haidt's book captures that we're living through an incredible moment in the story of childhood, and truly, the story of the whole of the human experience. He highlights how technology has transformed our day to day living in ways our grandparents and their parents could have never imagined. He hits hard on how tech--and smartphones specifically--have changed how kids grow, play, learn, and connect.

Haidt quotes that "We are forever elsewhere" when we fret, monitor, or spend time wondering about social media status and other phone responses, even when we aren't ON our phones and he points to this re-wiring as what has hijacked our ability to focus, and engage with others. (At one point during our panel discussion, the teachers also attested to their own experience of feeling "re-wired." As Mr. Gallagher put it: there's no way he could sit still and write computer code with nearly the attention span he had 30 years ago, because the distraction of his phone has altered his ability to focus to the extent he used to be able.)

(CONT'D -->)



ST. RAPHAEL COMMUNITY OF CATHOLIC MOMS



Anxious Generation Meeting Night

Haidt's central contention is that overprotection in the real world, and underprotection in the virtual world are the major reasons why children born after 1995 became the "anxious generation," a generation experiencing hugely different mental health statistics of depression, anxiety and other adverse states, compared to children of any other generation. Haidt asserts there are Four foundational harms of disrupted childhood development that the phone-era is causing: sleep deprivation, social deprivation, attention fragmentation, and addiction. He then challenges his readers--implores them, really: Now that we recognize this transformation is happening, lean into this concept of collective action.

Jonathan Haidt strongly encourages all of us to prioritize what he calls, "Four Foundational Reforms," to move forward, and reminds us: we can't just mandate our own children to follow these reforms or they'll be isolated. But we can start thinking about how we will ultimately accomplish these goals:

1. No phones before high school
2. No social media before 16
3. Phone-free schools
4. Far more unsupervised play and childhood independence



Questions Posed & Answer Highlights

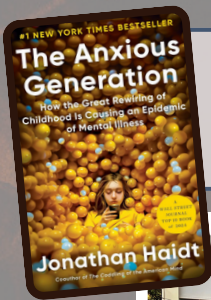
1. What did a "play-based childhood" look like for you?

Mr. Gallagher & Ms. Riggen fondly recalled long hours of unsupervised neighborhood play, building independence, creativity, and confidence in ways that are less common today.

2. Haidt details the ways in which a "phone-based childhood" perpetually distracts kids. What observations do you have about children's attention span and imagination today, compared with years ago?

Teachers are seeing diminished curiosity and creativity. Fewer "why" questions, more fixed answers. Mrs Curtis shared her observations that imaginations and a sense of curiosity have declined significantly in her Pre-K classes. Kids come in wanting to talk her ear off and craving attention.

(CONT'D -->)



Anxious Generation Meeting Night



(Question 2, Cont'd)

...She notes that the first few months she teaches them how to play. She provided an example: she brings out her box of "whatchamacallits" (an assortment of random things, and asks her students to imagine what they could be or what purpose they could serve). Mrs. Curtis said that some students see a ribbon to which she'll respond, "Well, could it be a ribbon or how about maybe-look! Could it be a river?" ...Now, more often, she hears pushback from them saying, "nope. It's just a ribbon."

Sean Williams also touched on how the "Gamification of Learning" by "entertaining" students is problematic; that teachers are increasingly encouraged to transition lessons FAST in order to keep their attention. Sean then noted, "but we need to create responsible adults who can focus on real-world tasks for longer than 12 seconds."

3. The book asserts that social media-induced "defend mode" and a culture of "safety-ism" have degraded kids' confidence and competence in navigating situations. Can you give an example of a change in kids' attitudes toward trying new things, or their ability to trouble-shoot?

A growing culture of "safety-ism" may be limiting resilience. Mr. Gallagher quoted from a recent Word on Fire journal, "Salvation is an adventure!" to which he added: "the stories of the Saints are a great testament against safetyism." Growth—and even faith—requires a sense of adventure, not constant risk-avoidance.

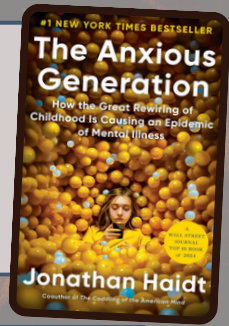
Phones have also reshaped social dynamics. Sean Williams pointed out that "phones really were a TRUE communication tool in the early 2000s--the iPod was the problem! But then kids started cyber-bullying and using burners and the whole thing with Snapchat about it disappearing meant things couldn't be proven... so kids truly became afraid to talk or participate in class."

4. The book contains excerpts of kids describing their thoughts and emotions regarding the "phone-based childhood". As adults working in schools, what do you hear kids express, in terms of thoughts or feelings toward devices and social media?

Many are conflicted. Some openly admit their favorite activity is being on a device, while others express frustration with the pressure and judgment that comes with it.

(CONT'D -->)

Anxious Generation Meeting Night



(CONT'D)

5. Catholics know the importance of prayer and a relationship with Christ. How do you think a "phone-based childhood" might impact the development of a child's values and spiritual life?

Students benefit from quiet and reflection—but many now struggle with stillness. Teachers of older students noted increased difficulty with prayer, meditation, and even brief moments of silence and/or stillness. Mrs. Curtis was encouraging: "When I take the kids to school Mass every Tuesday morning, they're AMAZING! They can do it, and yes they are excitable, but they do sing and engage in the Mass! They need opportunities for calm and quiet."

6. Haidt offers several suggestions for countering the "phone-based childhood", including within schools. What strategies have you and your colleagues brainstormed and/or implemented within your school, and what successes or obstacles have been identified?

Post-COVID, many students returned with weaker social skills. Schools continue to adapt to rapidly evolving technology, often playing catch-up with new challenges. Sean Williams pointed out that for several years, ~2018 through post-COVID, many of the write-ups for detention were for phone use, but now this past school year, with stricter rules of using deposit boxes for phones during classes, there's a change: a marked pattern of detentions starting to go to those who are talking in class-- as Sean put it, "a good problem to have!"





Anxious Generation Meeting Night

7. Encouraged by the author is more "free play", in which adults do not organize the activities, and they intervene only to manage emergencies. What do think are pros and cons of allowing this type of play?

Unstructured play remains critical. Simple tools like conflict-resolution language ("what's bugging you and what do you wish?") help build communication and problem-solving skills. Ms. Rikken noted that she tries during the school's aftercare program to be very hands-off and let the kids figure out how to occupy themselves. She also recalled an experience of her then-teenage daughter struggling to complete the simple task of calling a restaurant to make reservations for her friend group after prom. The conclusion: Without opportunities for free play and independence, kids may struggle with basic responsibilities later in life.

Special Thanks to Mr. Gallagher for following-up our discussion night with links to these resources!

Bishop Barron's Word On Fire: The latest issue of the Word On Fire Journal is all about Social Media. People can get this issue for free, by starting a free trial of the Journal. [Here's a link for seeing info about that "Social Media" issue.](#)

[Here is a homily by Fr. Mark Bernhard](#), entitled "Anxious Generation - Taking Action for Our Children". He talks specifically about the book starting at about 6:45.

And [here is a homily by Bishop Robert Barron](#), entitled "The Adventure of Salvation". He talks specifically about Safety-ism between 1:30 and 4:30.



COMMUNITY *of* CATHOLIC MOMS TUESDAY, MAY 12TH

St. Raphael Catholic Church
1215 Modaff
Sts. Ann & Joachim Room
Doors open 7:30pm, Rolling start
Seated at 8:00pm for guided discussion

THE VIRTUE OF LOVE

Join us for an evening of reflection, connection,
and inspiration!

“Love” may be one of the most overused words in the English language. Has it lost its meaning? Fr. Max Behna, pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church, will lead us in thoughtful conversation on how the early Christians understood love, how it transformed the world, and how love in its richest form has the power to transform *your* heart, home, and the lives of those you cherish.

Arrive late, leave early, all good. Father Max aims to speak for 10-15 mins, then have us break out into table groups for 20-30 mins. to work out practical ways to apply concepts in our day to day. We'll have some Q&A time with him around 8:45, and wrap-up around 9pm.

Last meeting night before we break for summer--hope to see you there!



RSVP



Let us know you're coming!

ST. RAPHAEL MOM'S
MINISTRY

OPEN TO ALL CATHOLIC
MOMS OF INFANTS
THROUGH COLLEGE
AGED KIDS

COMMUNITY *of* CATHOLIC MOMS
SUMMER SOCIAL

**FAMILY MEET UP
AT THE BALL PARK**

LAWN TICKET

\$5

SUNDAY

**14
JUNE**

COUGARS

VS

RAILCATS

NW MEDICINE FIELD

34 W 002 Cherry Lane

GENEVA, IL

GAME STARTS @ 1:00PM

MEET AT LAWN - 1ST BASE SIDE

Let us know you're coming!



SCAN TO
RSVP



ST.
RAPHAEL
MOM'S
MINISTRY

OPEN TO ALL
CATHOLIC MOMS OF
INFANTS THROUGH
COLLEGE AGED KIDS