MTS 2026 – Gaming & Social Media

Benefits Associated with Gaming

Improved mood	Enhanced problem- solving skills	Increased prosocial behaviours
• Gaming **elevates mood** and may relieve stress and anxiety. • Immersive experience that games provide may trigger a **stage of flow**, in which players experience being highly absorbed and focused. • Games have also been used to **promote emotional intelligence and well-being** among adolescents.	• Many strategy-based games involve **problem-solving** as a key feature of gameplay. • Offer opportunities to develop and sharpen problem-solving skills. • A longitudinal study found that adolescents who played more strategy-based games had greater improvements in their self-reported problem-solving skills.	• Several studies conducted across Singapore, Japan and the United States have provided evidence that playing **games with prosocial elements** was **associated with helping behaviours** among children, adolescents, and young adults. • These effects were observed both immediately after the study, and at 3 to 4 months follow-up.

Why is gaming attractive to our students?

Self-Determination Theory

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985)

Self-Determination Theory

| AUTONOMY | RELATEDNESS | COMPETENCE |

Motivation

Self-Determination Theory

Autonomy

- People have the need to feel that they are masters of their own destiny and that they have at least some control over their lives
- People need to feel that they are in control of their own behaviour

Relatedness

- People need to have a sense of belonging and connectedness with others
- Each of us need other people to some degree

Competence

- Achievements, knowledge and skills
- People need to build their competence and develop mastery over tasks that are important to them

Autonomy

- Game design enhances autonomy in what player can do in-game. They can choose what strategies to adopt when playing a game.
- Games with character customization allow players to exercise autonomy in how their avatar will look in-game.
- Games provide a **safe space** for gamers to try out different personalities or decision-making processes.

Relatedness

- Gaming provides a platform for youth to **connect and form relationships online**.
- Gaming nowadays are very much a social activity where friends meet up in-game to have fun and hang-out.
- Certain games have clans and guilds. Players address their need for relatedness and sense of belonging by joining these clans/guilds.

Competency

- Game controls are intuitive and readily mastered.
- Sense of accomplishment is met through **continuous and immediate positive feedback** – you can visually see that you are doing well in-game.
- Leaderboards and quest logs provide **a sense of achievement and completion**.

How gaming hooks you?

Using a biopsychosocial frame

Fava & Sonino (2017)
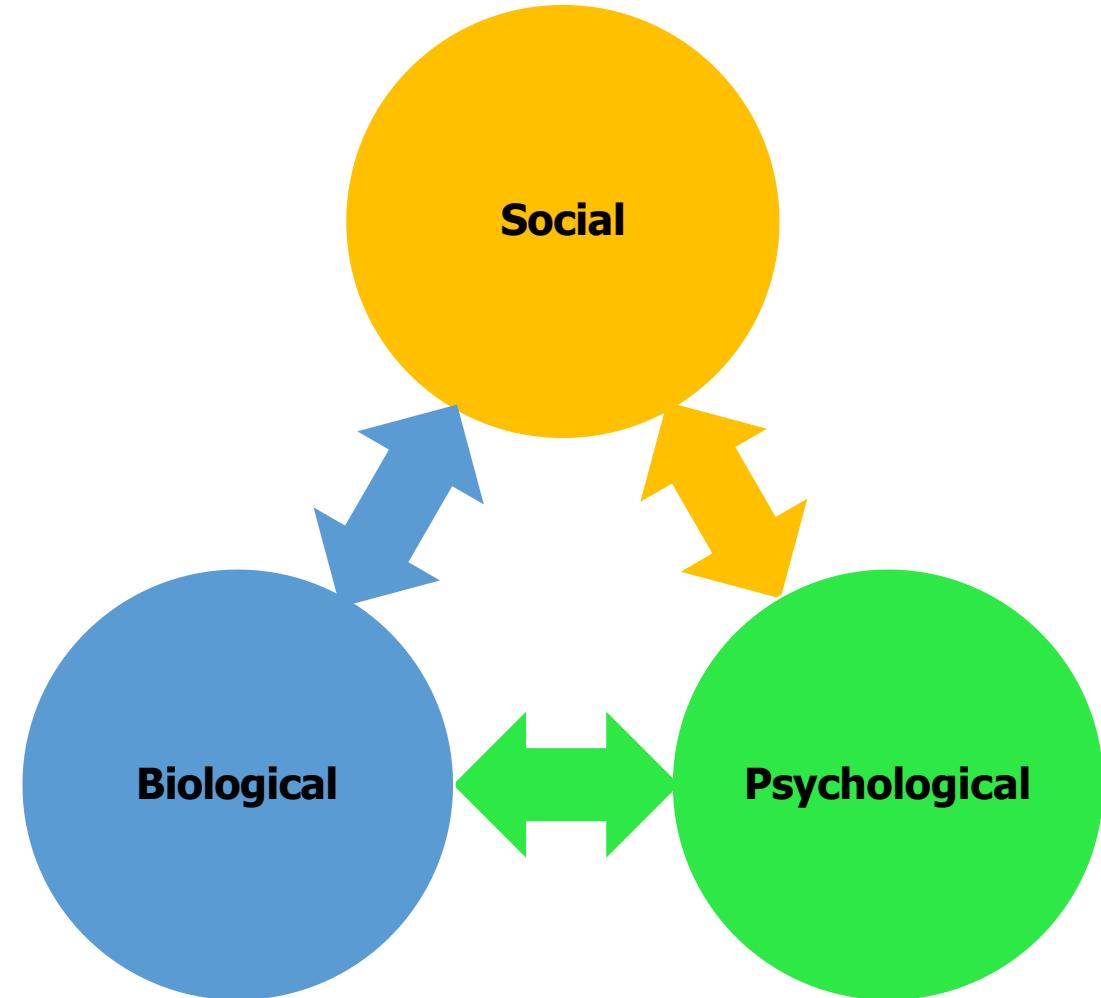
Psychological and Social Factors

- Problems arise when <u>people rely on gaming as their primary method for meeting their basic psychological needs</u>
  - Problematic gaming symptoms are highest when real-world need satisfaction is low and need satisfaction through games is high.
- **Thwarted needs** occurs when a person's ability to feel autonomous, competent, and connected in their day-to-day life is stalled or blocked
  - Struggles athletically or academically
  - Has few friends or supportive family members
- Thwarted needs are a risk factor for problematic gaming

Monley, C. M., Liese, B. S. and Oberleitner, L. M. (2024)
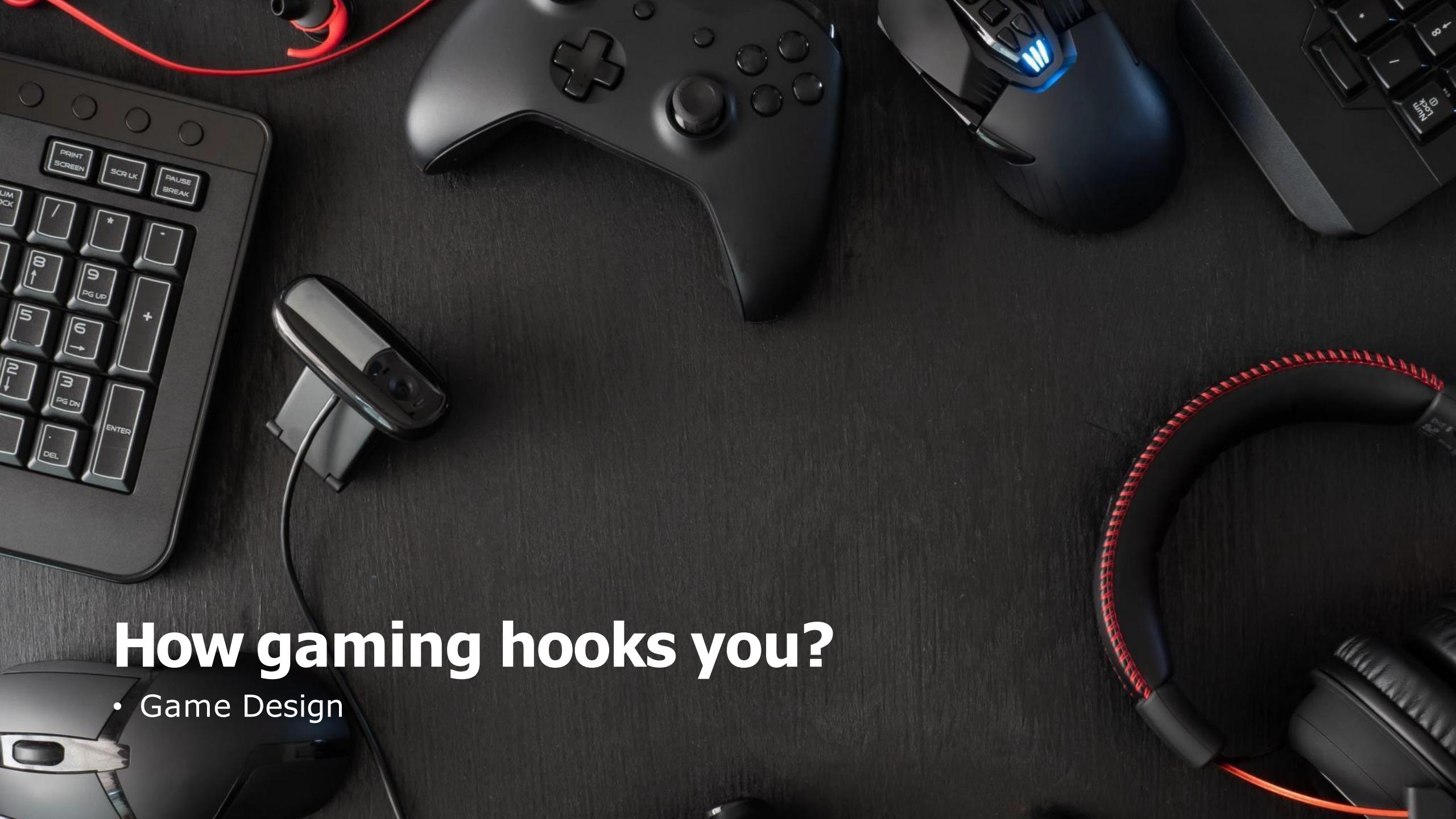
How gaming hooks you?

- Game Design

Game Designs that motivate behaviour – *Deceptive Patterns*

- Game developers are extremely competent at designing games that impact behaviour.

- **Deceptive Patterns** are **design strategies that manipulate users' behaviours, emotions, and cognition** to encourage them to spend more time engaged with a particular product or service.

- Take advantage of people's natural psychological biases to achieve specific outcomes, such as increased engagement or play inside a video game.

- In video gaming, developers use deceptive patterns to **increase player engagement and spending**.
  - Examples include loot boxes, gacha systems, systems that limit progress, and notifications that trigger FOMO (fear-of-missing-out)

- However, deceptive patterns can also be found in environments outside of gaming, including e-commerce and social media.

Deceptive Patterns in Gaming

Gacha Systems

Daily Login Rewards

Excessive Gaming

Common Signs of Gaming Dependency

- Increasing gaming time to the extent that normal activities like school and home responsibilities are neglected;

- Constantly thinking about gaming or getting more time to game

- Unable to reduce time spent gaming

- Unwilling to stop gaming

- Telling lies about gaming, or telling lies to get more gaming time

For Early Identification

- Having poor sleep quality and quantity

- Displaying anti-social responses or behaviours to get more time to game

- Having poor emotional regulation such as anger and depressive symptoms

- Throwing extreme tantrums when unable to game (i.e. displaying abnormal levels of irritability and restlessness when not gaming)

- *Adapted from MOH's Guidance on Screen Use in Children*

Suggested follow-up

Parents are encouraged to **discuss** with their child on their screen use habits, and **develop a realistic screen use timetable** to balance their device use with other activities **that the child agrees to adhere to and to review the plan regularly**.

If there is no improvement and the behaviour continues to cause impairment in the child's life, parent may want to seek help from school or other community partners.

Severe cases may require professional intervention and counselling.

Adapted from MOH's Guidance on Screen Use in Children

Having Regular Conversations

- Have regular conversations with your children to better understand what they do online as well as build positive relationships with them.

Useful Conversation Starters	
• What do you think is a reasonable amount of time to spend on gaming?	• That game you mentioned sounds interesting. Can you tell me what it is about?
• What responsibilities do you need to complete before you start gaming?	• Have you ever come across content or interactions that made you feel uncomfortable while you were gaming? What about it was uncomfortable? What did you do about it?

Having Regular Conversations:
Replacement Activities

As you are having conversations with your children, help them recognize:

- When they usually game?

- What needs they may be addressing through gaming?

- What other activities they can do to meet those needs, aside from gaming?

When do I usually game?	What else can I do instead of gaming	SDT Needs Met
Going home from school	Listen to favourite music, talk with your friend you are travelling with	Relatedness, Autonomy
When my friends ask me to join them online to game	Do a video call, suggest going out together	Relatedness
After a difficult day in school	Go for a quick jog, play sports	Competence, Autonomy
Bored during the weekends	Go out with your friends, read a book, watch a movie	Autonomy, Relatedness

Having Regular Conversations:
Coping Strategies

- Sometimes children play games as a way to help them cope with difficult situations or emotions.

- **BASIC Ph** is taught at Sec 1 CCE (Bouncing Back Stronger), highlighting a diverse range of coping strategies that students can use to help them cope with stress or challenges.

- Having multiple coping strategies, aside from gaming would serve as an important step to reduce gaming behaviours.

Suggest a Gaming Log

- Youths who game are often surprised at the amount of time they spend gaming.

- Use this to start a conversation about how much time they think they should spend gaming.

- Ask them '*Was there anything that surprised you about your gaming log?*'

Our Family's Screen Use Agreement

1. We will not use our screens during meal times.

2. We will not use our screens 1hr before going to bed.

3. We agree not to share personal information without checking with _____ [Parent].

4. We agree not to view or send inappropriate content [e.g. violent, pornographic content].

5. We agree not to physically meet anyone we have "met" online without checking with _____ [Parent].

6. We balance our screen use with non-screen family activities such as _____ (eg. going to the park).

7. _____

8. _____

9. We agree to be honest and own up if we break any of the rules in this agreement.

10. If someone in our family repeatedly breaks the family contract, _____ [Consequence]. (e.g. devices will be taken away)

Agreed by:

_____   _____
Mum/ Dad/ Caregiver's signature   Child(ren)'s signature

The content has been adapted from Media Literacy Council's Clique Click: Bringing Up Children in the Digital Age.

Encourage using a Screen Use Plan (Sec)

- Encourage a discussion with your children about setting up rules around screen use and staying safe online.

- Having such agreements within the family is a useful way to have conversations about gaming and time spent gaming.

- Examples of screen use plans can be found on https://go.gov.sg/screen-use-agreement
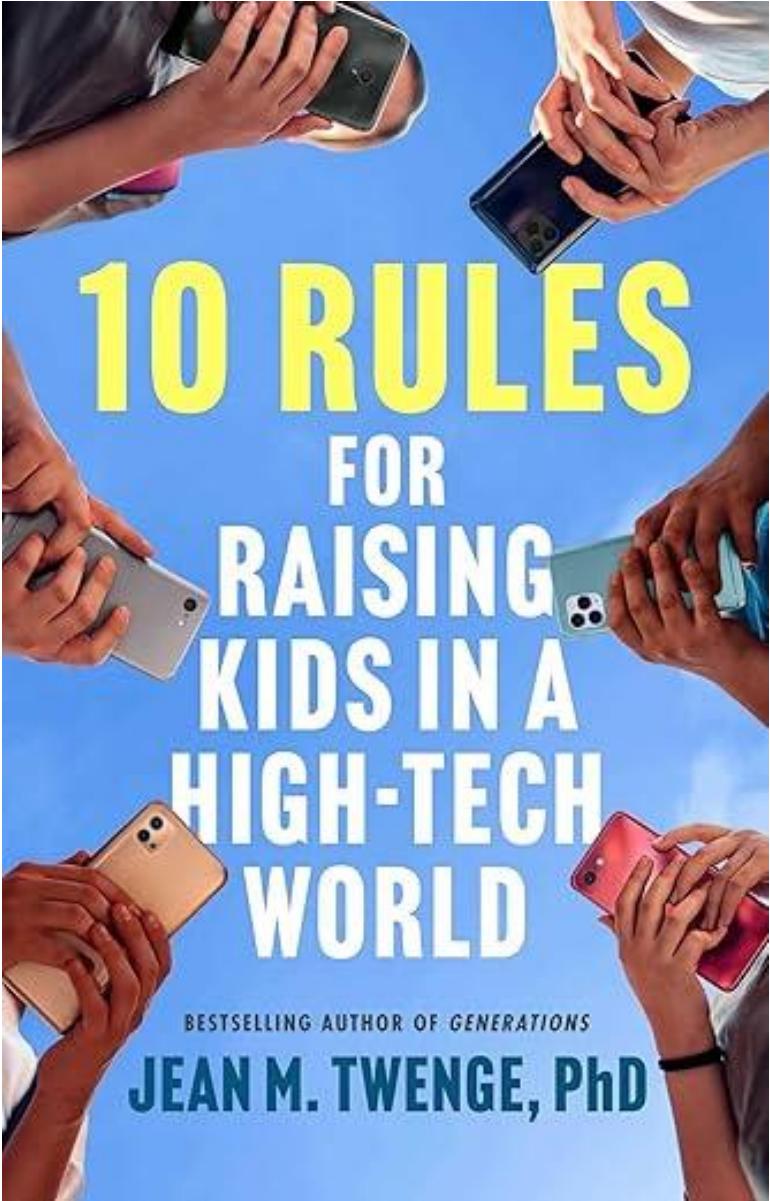
Social Media

10 Rules for Raising Kids in a High-Tech World
by Jean M. Twenge, PhD

Social media is a dangerous place

- Social media operates on the basis of "making their products as addictive as possible" (Twenge, 2025)

- Social media is unregulated – sign up age (no age verification), content (anything can go online. Policing of dangerous content is also left up to the companies)

10 rules to ensure your children are ready

- Rule 1: You're in charge
- Rule 2: No electronic devices in the bedroom overnight
- Rule 3: No social media until Age 16 or later
- Rule 4: First phones should be basic phones
- Rule 5: Give the first smartphone at 16
- Rule 6: Use parental controls
- Rule 7: Create no-phone zones
- Rule 8: Give your kids real-world freedom
- Rule 9: Beware the Laptop, gaming console, tablet etc
- Rule 10: Advocate for no phones during the school day

Grow Well SG

- Sleeping well
- Being active
- Screen use
- Building bonds

A Singaporean mum's success story

https://go.gov.sg/teen-screentime-use

Thank You

https://go.gov.sg/pfw-landing-page

Health Hub: Parenting for Wellness with modules
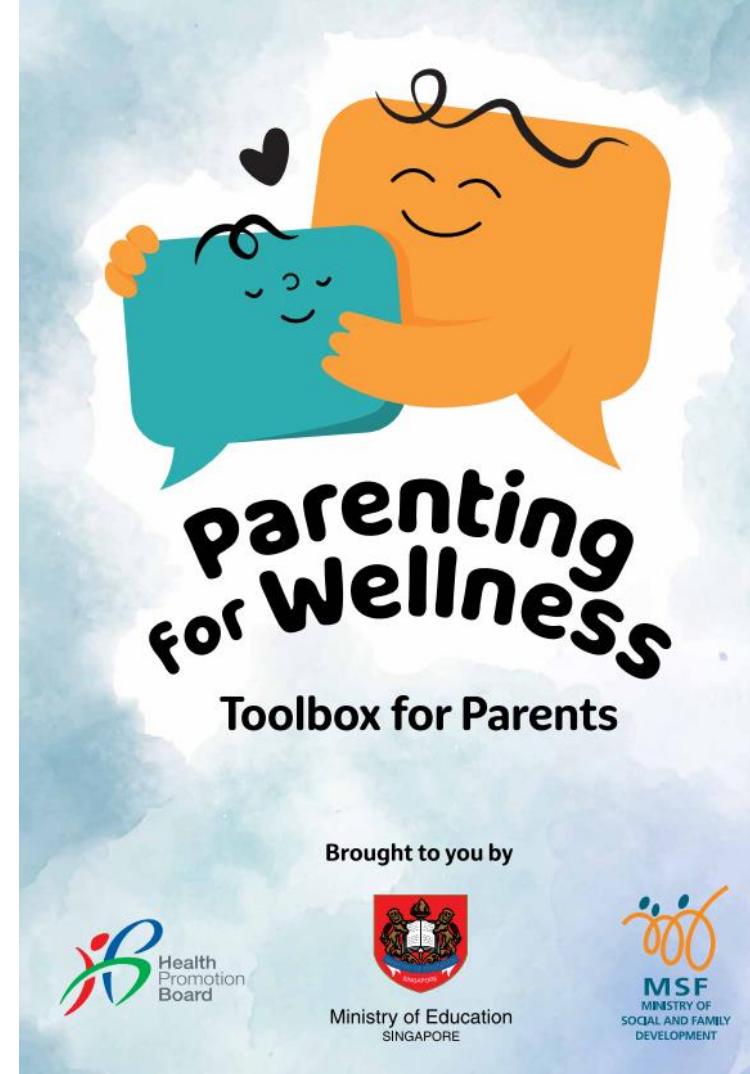
Parenting for Wellness Toolkit – PDF version

https://file.go.gov.sg/pfw-toolbox-for-parents.pdf