

The Practice of Digital Wellness

Connecting with Reflection, Intention, and Critical-Thinking



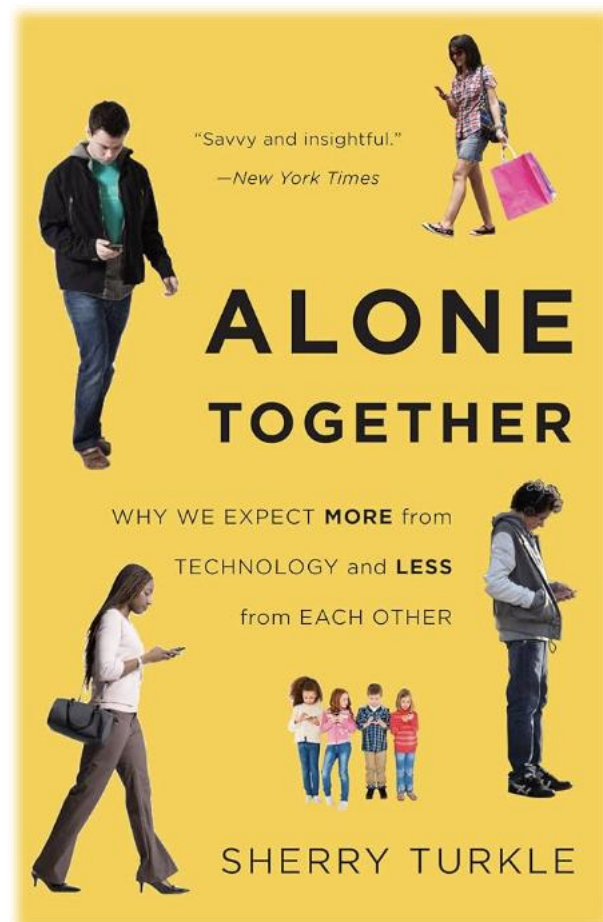
Leah Jacobs, MS, LMHC



“WE HAVE TO BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO EVOLVE WITH THE TECHNOLOGY BUT CHOOSE HOW TO USE IT RIGHT. FIRE WAS A GREAT DISCOVERY TO COOK OUR FOOD, BUT WE HAD TO LEARN IT COULD HURT AND KILL US AS WELL.”

-Dr. Michael Rich, Pediatrician, Harvard Medical School

DIGITAL WELLNESS PIONEERS



DOMAINS OF DIGITAL MEDIA IMPACT

Relational (social relationships, communication, connection with others)

Emotional (mental health, mood regulation, well-being)

Cognitive (attention, memory, learning)

Sociological (safety, cultural norms, societal impact)

Digital Media Risks and Rewards



Social Media

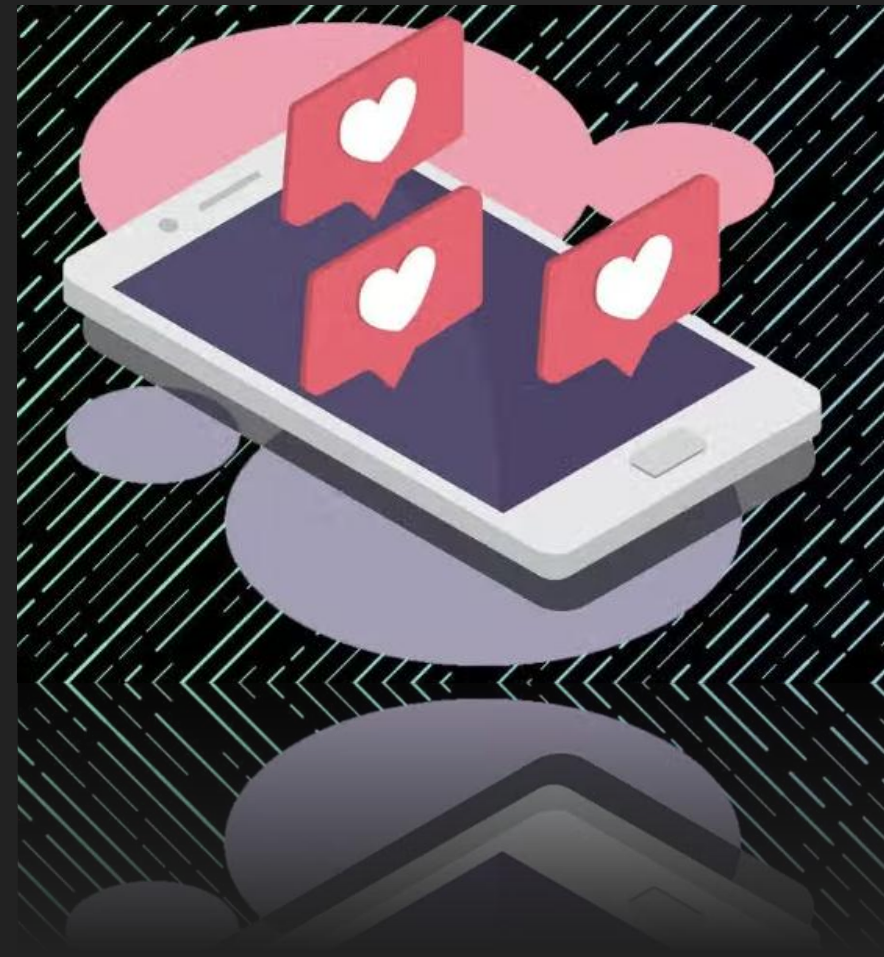
Video Games

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Discussion Forums

SOCIAL MEDIA REWARDS

- ▶ Entertainment
- ▶ Creative outlet
- ▶ Tool for connection, community building, and support



SOCIAL MEDIA RISKS

Technology Org defines algorithms as “sets of rules and calculations used by social media platforms to determine the content that users see in their feeds, search results, and recommendations” (Noreika, n.d.)

Social Media Ecosystem

i.e. algorithmic manipulation, intentional cultivation of tech addiction

Social Media Misconduct

i.e. individuals or groups engaging in online offenses that cause harm to others

Social Media Misuse

i.e. an individual's online behaviors that cause harm to self

that cause harm to others
engaging in online offenses

behaviors that cause harm to self

VIDEO GAME REWARDS

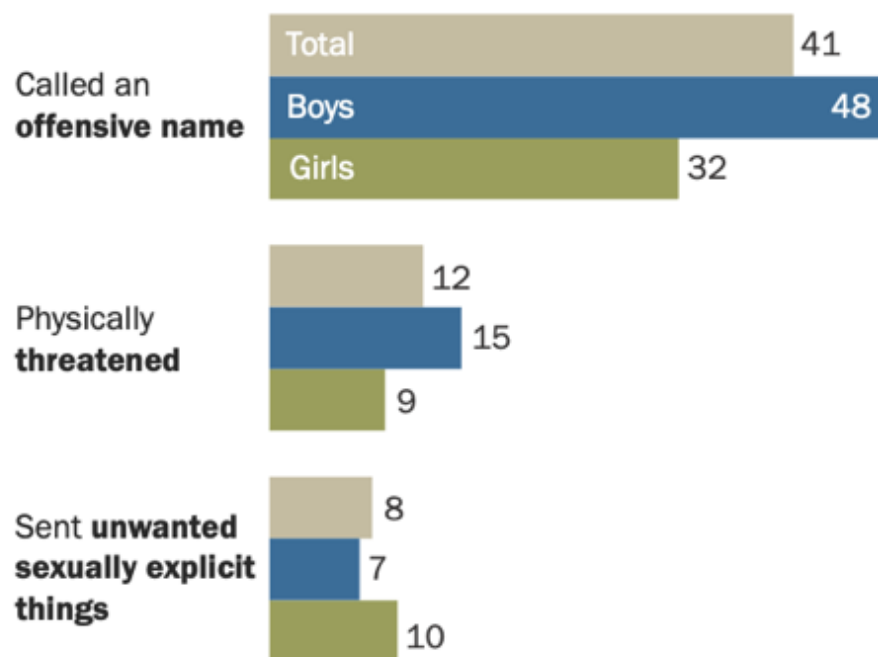
- ▶ Problem-solving
- ▶ Relaxation
- ▶ Potential for brain engagement



VIDEO GAME RISKS

About half of teen boys who play video games say they have been called an offensive name while playing

Among U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who play video games, % who say they have experienced the following when playing video games

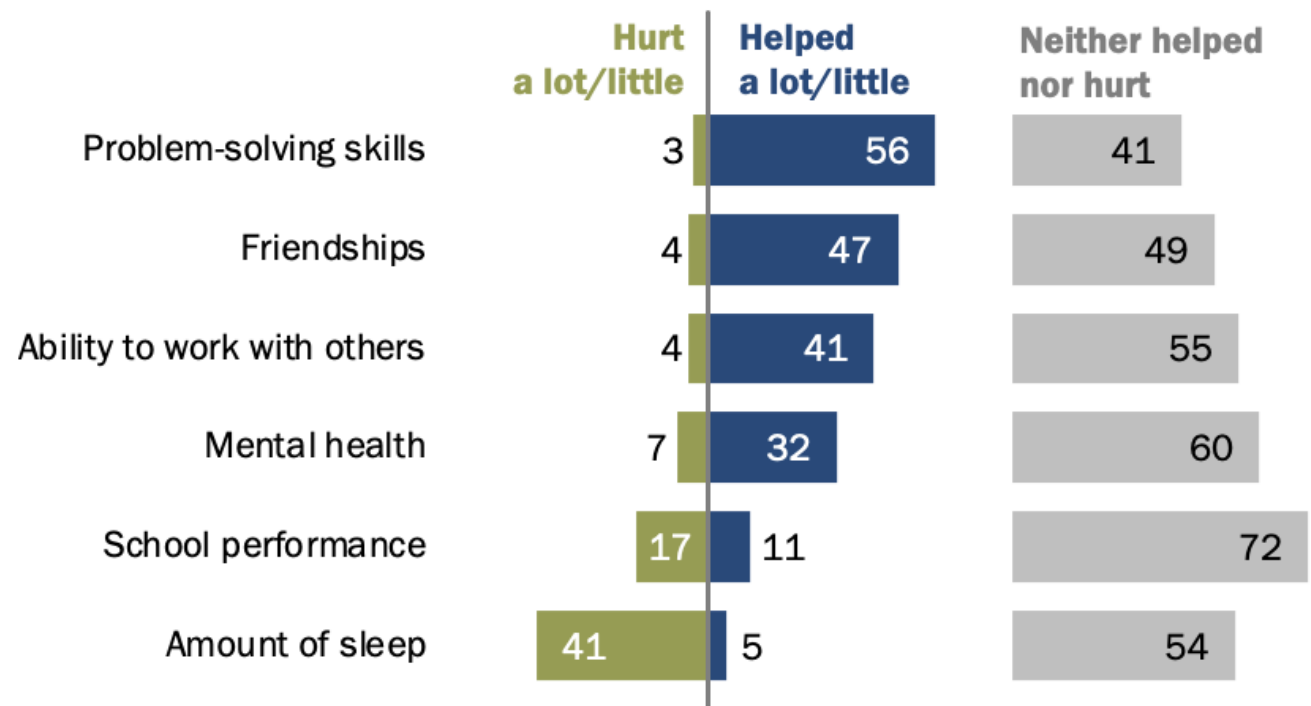


Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Sept. 26-Oct. 23, 2023.
"Teens and Video Games Today"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

More than half of teens who play video games say it helps their problem-solving skills, but many say it negatively impacts the amount of sleep they get

Among U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who play video games, % who say playing them has helped or hurt their ...



Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Sept. 26-Oct. 23, 2023.
"Teens and Video Games Today"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

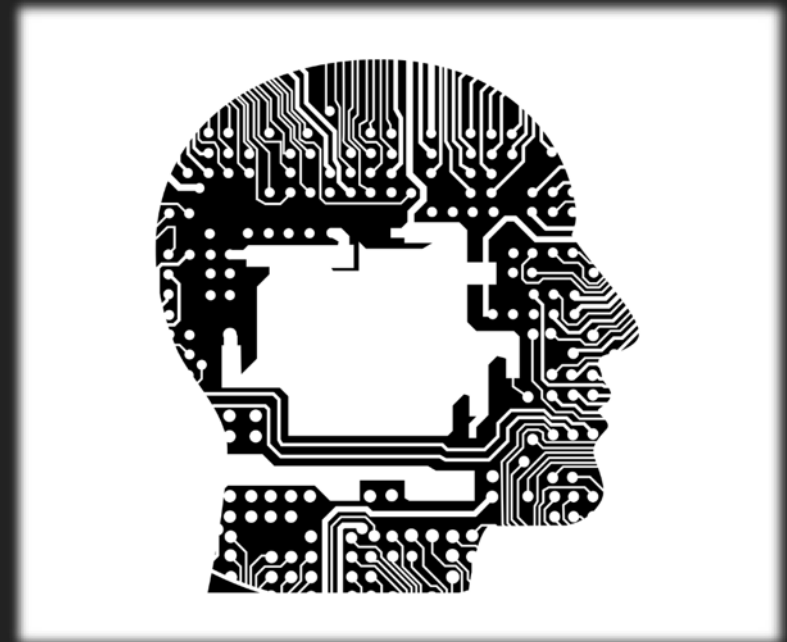
VIDEO GAME RISKS

“Swatting is a malicious act that can involve placing false emergency calls to emergency responders, often reporting a (false) severe, ongoing crisis at a specific location. The goal of swatting is to provoke a significant law enforcement response, creating chaos and potentially resulting in violence.”

-Department of Homeland Security

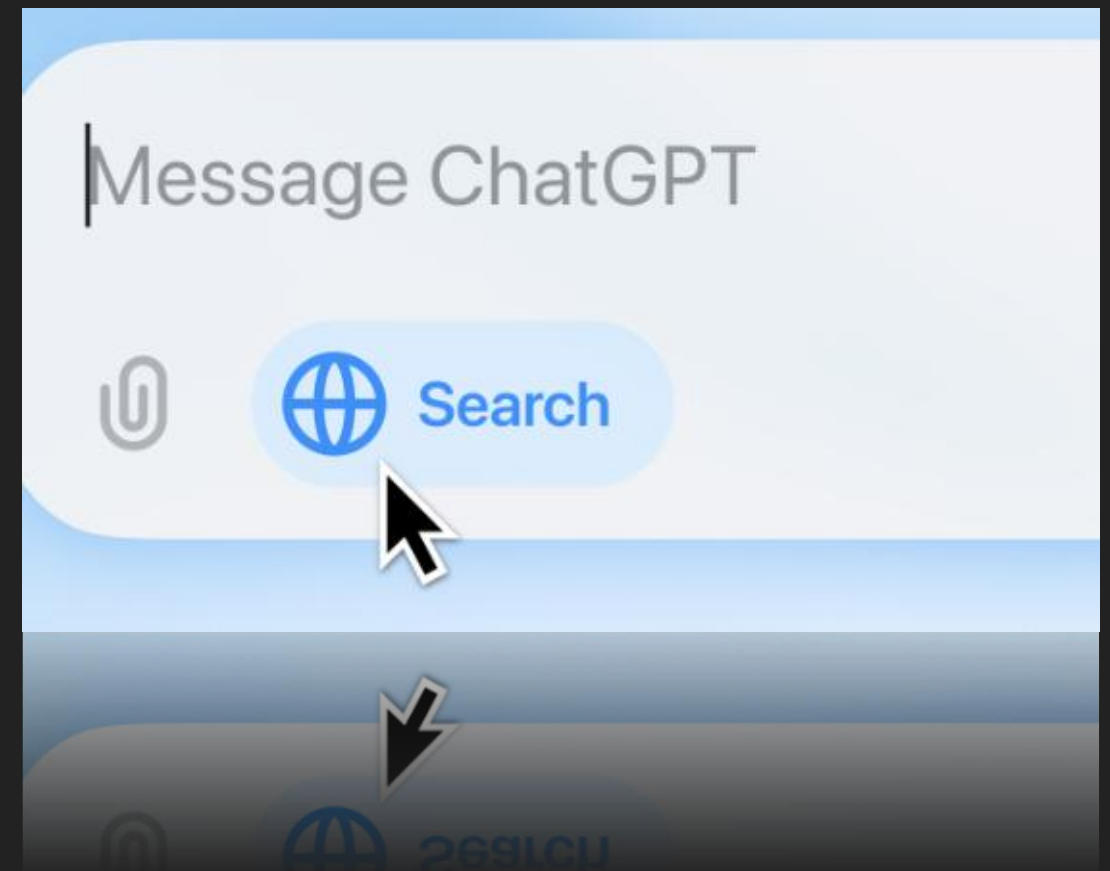
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) REWARDS

- ▶ Accessible and personalized information (Adelakun, 2024)
- ▶ Collaborative tool for learning and problem-solving
- ▶ Responsiveness and efficiency
- ▶ Assistive literacy tool and real-time text-to-speech capabilities (Digital Learning Institute, n.d.)



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) RISKS

- ▶ Misinformation (GAO, 2020).
- ▶ Potential for reliance
- ▶ Potential for biases in information (Gordon, 2023)
- ▶ AI-based relationships



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) RISKS

How will humans' social skills decline?

Will human connection as a whole be affected?

Will AI companionship “demotivate” humans to pursue human-to-human relationships?

How will human morals be impacted?

Will AI companionship turn into an unhealthy dependency?

Will feelings of loneliness emerge in real-life interactions/relationships due to decreased social skills?

Will youth become accustomed to “simulated emotion?”

(Malfacini, 2025)

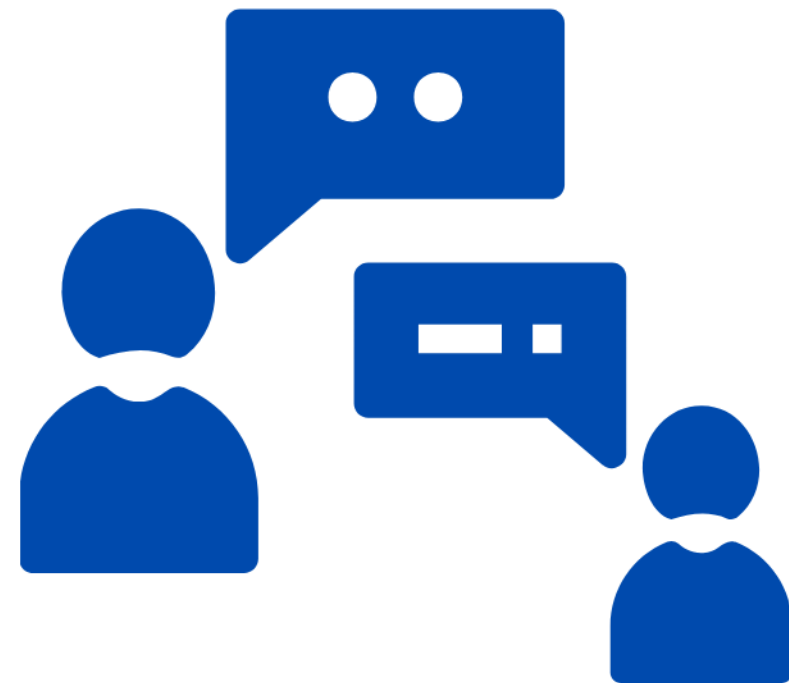
DISCUSSION FORUM REWARDS

- ▶ Connection to niche interests
- ▶ Diverse perspectives
- ▶ Connection to resources and support



DISCUSSION FORUM RISKS

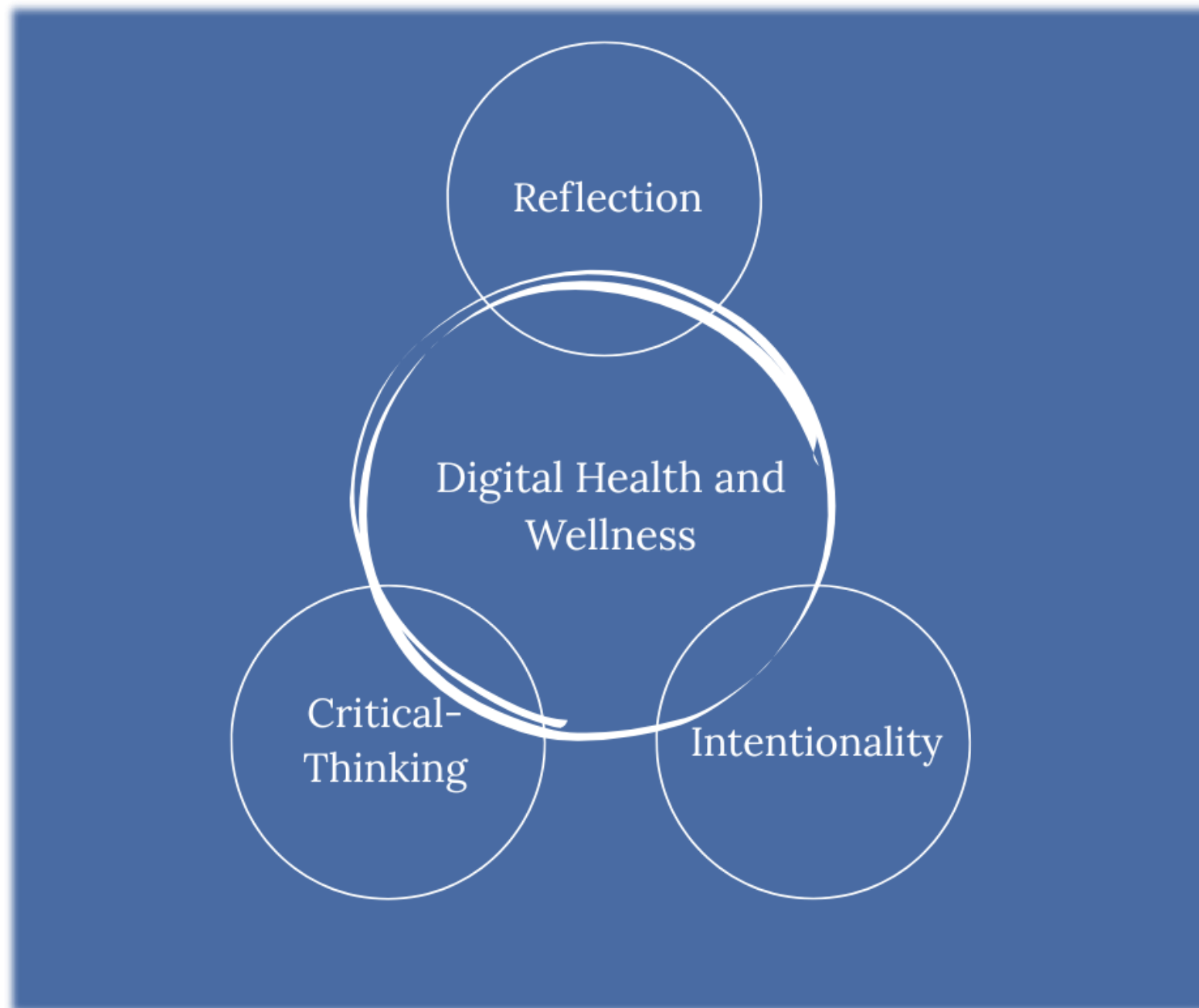
- ▶ Online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004)
- ▶ Lack of moderation
- ▶ Echo chambers



DIGITAL MEDIA + CULTURAL SHIFTS

- ▶ Doom-scrolling
- ▶ Digital overload
- ▶ Digital offloading
- ▶ Displaced boredom and creativity
- ▶ Revenge bedtime procrastination (Godoy & Nguyen, 2022)
- ▶ Algospeak (i.e. **5elf h@rm or \$elf h@rm instead of self-harm or ED instead of eating disorder**) (Steen, Yurechko, & Klug, 2023)
- ▶ Normalization of cosmetic procedures (influencer culture)

WHAT IS DIGITAL WELLNESS?



DIGITAL WELLNESS IN ACTION

▶ **Reflection:**

- ▶ Do the influencers I follow on Instagram cause me to feel poorly about myself?
- ▶ Has my digital media use taken away from activities I once enjoyed?
- ▶ Have I checked my text messages while in the middle of a conversation with someone?
- ▶ Do I use my phone primarily at night before I go to sleep?

DIGITAL WELLNESS IN ACTION

- ▶ **Intentionality:**

- ▶ Engaging with digital media for entertainment or relaxation
- ▶ Using Snapchat to connect with friends
- ▶ Limiting time to only 15-minutes on TikTok
- ▶ Posting travel photos to Instagram to share with family and friends

DIGITAL WELLNESS IN ACTION

- ▶ **Critical-Thinking:**

- ▶ Evaluating content by uncovering where the information is coming from
- ▶ Analyzing information by not accepting content at face value
- ▶ Recognizing biases or inauthenticity online (i.e. clickbait or filtered photos)

DIGITAL WELLNESS APPROACH



Self

Family

Clientele

DIGITAL WELLNESS AND SELF

▶ Self-Reflection:

- ▶ Reflecting on how you feel before, during, and after digital use (i.e. energized, drained, distracted)
- ▶ *Am I using tech to avoid something? What am I gaining or losing from my digital habits?*

▶ Intentionality:

- ▶ Setting clear boundaries with self (i.e. phone off an hour before bed, audit your feed)
- ▶ Choosing digital tools and platforms that align with your values and goals

▶ Critical-Thinking:

- ▶ Practicing discernment: Is this information credible? Is this content enhancing my life?

DIGITAL WELLNESS AND THE FAMILY

- ▶ Reflection:

- ▶ How does digital media show up in the home? When are we connected versus disconnected?
- ▶ Initiating conversations that lead to reflection

- ▶ Intentionality:

- ▶ Modeling
- ▶ Boundaries
- ▶ Framing as connection rather than restriction
- ▶ Co-engagement

- ▶ Critical-Thinking:

- ▶ Evaluating the credibility and impact of digital content as a family

DIGITAL WELLNESS AND THE FAMILY

▶ **Conversation Starters:**

- ▶ What social media apps do you feel good about using? Are there any that drain you?
- ▶ Do you ever scroll out of habit? What do you think triggers that?
- ▶ What content do you want more of in your feed?
- ▶ What do you think is a fair amount of time to spend playing video games?

DIGITAL WELLNESS AND THE FAMILY

- ▶ **Key Considerations:**

- ▶ Non-judgmental stance
- ▶ Allowing for whole family input
- ▶ Strength-based versus fear-based approach
 - ▶ *“How can we use tech in a way that supports our wellbeing, creativity, and relationships?” instead of “How do we limit screen time?”*

DIGITAL WELLNESS AND CLIENTELE

▶ Reflection:

- ▶ Considering the role digital media might play in clients' lives: *How does digital media impact relationships, feelings of self worth, safety, etc?*
- ▶ Awareness building

▶ Intentionality:

- ▶ Goal setting

▶ Critical-Thinking:

- ▶ Fostering autonomy and better digital decision making

DIGITAL WELLNESS & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- ▶ Weaving concepts like algorithmic manipulation into sessions or groups
- ▶ Tasking clients with re-connecting with a hobby they stopped engaging in due to digital media consumption
- ▶ Boundary setting with digital triggers or screen time
- ▶ 5-10 minute check-ins during appointments or sessions
- ▶ Mood logging around digital habits
- ▶ Integrating digital wellness into coping skills (i.e. “pause and post with purpose”)

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