

NEWSLETTER



Total Communication
Changing Lives. Touching Futures

Edition - The Anxious Generation

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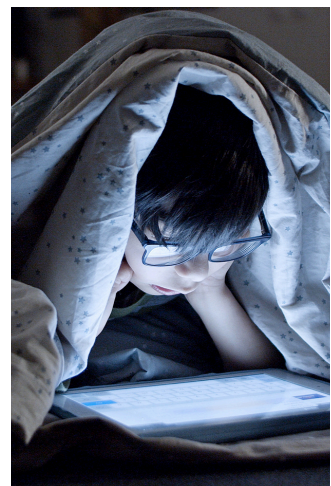
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RETHINKING CHILDHOOD IN A DIGITAL AGE



Prudence Low
*Speech Language Pathologist
& Clinical Director*

Over the past year, I've been reflecting deeply on what it truly means to help children grow, not just in their speech and language, but in their confidence, resilience, and joy. Jonathan Haidt's book **The Anxious Generation** has given me both a sobering warning and a hopeful challenge. He writes about how the combination of overprotection in the physical world and overexposure in the digital world has reshaped childhood and not always for the better.

In our work, I've seen firsthand how children blossom when they are given space to explore, solve problems, and engage face-to-face. Something shifts when a child realises they can take a small risk, make a mistake, and still be okay. It's in those moments that resilience is born.

This year, our programmes will lean even more into creating these kinds of opportunities, whether through pretend play, real-world problem-solving, or connecting children with peers in meaningful ways.

In this issue, Jerlyn reflects on the power of real conversation and how play-based interaction can reshape a child's communication journey.

Bethany shows us how small challenges like finishing a story or teaching a skill—build a mindset of growth. And I share why Protective Mode starts at home, with rhythms that restore connection and calm.

Let this issue be a gentle nudge to pause, to reflect, and to realign with what truly matters. Let's be courageous in reclaiming childhood, one conversation, one moment of play, and one real-world challenge at a time.

With Warm Regards
Prudence Low



THE MENTAL HEALTH COST OF GROWING UP ONLINE

Why Parents Must Shift into Protective Mode

Over the past decade, a quiet but powerful shift has reshaped childhood. Researchers call it the “Great Rewiring” a term that captures how today’s children, especially those born after 2010, are growing up immersed in digital worlds. Their social lives, sense of identity, and daily rhythms are now mediated through smartphones, social media, and screens often at the expense of real-world connection and developmental grounding.

In the U.S., rates of anxiety, depression, and self-harm particularly among girls began rising sharply from 2010 onward.



Singapore has not been spared. In 2022, our youth suicide rates reached a ten-year high, with preteen and teenage girls especially vulnerable. Experts link this rise to early screen exposure, digital overstimulation, social comparison, and disconnection from embodied, in-person experiences.

It’s time for us as parents and caregivers to shift into Protective Mode not from panic, but from purpose. **Protective Mode** means creating intentional environments that prioritise emotional safety, mental clarity, and connection while the brain is still forming.

Whether your child is two or seventeen, you can begin with small but meaningful changes:

- Establish tech-free routines at mealtimes and before bed
- Prioritise outdoor play, face-to-face time, and unstructured downtime
- Use emotion coaching to help your child name and manage feelings
- Encourage real-life friendships and mentorships
- Model digital boundaries in your own habits

It’s not about perfection but presence. These consistent, everyday choices help children develop the resilience, identity, and joy.

Prevention starts early and continues through the rhythms of daily family life. Together, let’s raise a generation that isn’t just tech-savvy but emotionally grounded and mentally strong.

THE POWER OF REAL CONNECTION



Jerlyn Tong
*Educational-Developmental
Therapist*

As we think about raising a generation that is grounded and less anxious, one of the most powerful tools we often overlook is real conversation. Not just casual talk but rich, face-to-face exchanges where children feel heard, engaged, and emotionally safe. In *The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt reminds us that children today aren’t lacking stimulation, they’re lacking meaningful connection. As language therapists and educators, we see this clearly: the richest language learning doesn’t come from apps or videos, it comes from people.

In our sessions, we’ve seen how children thrive when we reduce digital noise and reintroduce imaginative play and dialogue.

One student who struggled with conversation began to blossom when we swapped passive screen time for storytelling and pretend play. She grew confident through activities like “playing restaurant,” where she had to listen, respond, negotiate, and make decisions, just like in real life. Another child became more expressive when given roles in group play, taking on new vocabulary and social turns without being prompted.

At home, even small moments can make a big difference. Try:

- Cooking together - describe each step and invite your child to narrate too.
- Going on a “story walk” - take a walk and invent a tale based on what you see.
- Establishing a tech-free mealtime, spark conversation with simple prompts like “What made you smile today?”

Conversation isn’t just about language; it’s about connection, confidence, and calm.

The children who flourish are not the ones with the most words, but the ones who know how to use them in real time, with real people.

By protecting these moments, we’re not just teaching children to speak, we’re teaching them how to relate, reflect, and belong.

GROWING RESILIENCE THROUGH REAL-WORLD CHALLENGE



Bethany Yu
Educational-Developmental Therapist

In today’s world, many children find themselves caught between two extremes: being overly protected in the physical world, and overly exposed to the digital one.

As Jonathan Haidt warns, this combination leaves them with fewer opportunities to practise life’s most essential skill - resilience.

Children need practice in navigating failure, discomfort, and uncertainty. But instead, they are often shielded from real-world challenges and overwhelmed by digital stimulation that offers constant entertainment without effort. This imbalance can erode their confidence, leaving them anxious when faced with even small setbacks.

One of my students exemplified this. He avoided reading for pleasure and saw long fiction as pointless. He preferred tasks with clear outcomes - checklists, grades, and right answers. When we introduced *Holes* by Louis Sachar, he initially treated it like another assignment. But through visualising, verbalising, and slow reading, he gradually began to enjoy the narrative. He made connections, saw patterns, and experienced emotional growth not just academic success.



At home, you can nurture this kind of resilience through small, real-life stretch experiences:

- Plan a meal together, let your child take charge from recipe to table.
- Host a “how-to” session encourage them to teach a skill to someone else.
- Organise a family event, give them ownership over game night or picnic prep.

These moments stretch children in safe, age-appropriate ways. They learn that trying is valuable even if they stumble. And they discover that courage doesn’t come from knowing everything, but from being willing to try again.

By allowing room for small risks, reflection, and recovery, we help children grow not only in skills but in strength.

FOR PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN (AGES 0-5)



Prudence Low

*Speech Language Pathologist
& Clinical Director*

Start Protective Mode Early

The early years are critical for building the brain's foundation for lifelong learning and emotional health. You don't need to be perfect, but intentional early choices make a big difference. Here's how to shift into Protective Mode early:

Build a Secure Attachment Base

- Be consistently warm, responsive, and available.
- What young children need most is time with loving adults and unstructured play with other children.
- Don't over-optimise every moment; what they need is your presence, not perfection.

Choose Real-World Play Over Screens

- Let children play with a mix of age groups; they learn best by observing slightly older peers.
- Encourage free play, not just adult-directed activities.
- Children under 2 should avoid screens entirely; under 5 should have very limited noneducational screen time.

Model Healthy Tech Habits

- Your phone habits matter, what you do speaks louder than what you say.
- Avoid giving partial attention split between your phone and your child.
- Turn off screens during family meals and 30-60 mins before bedtime.

Encourage Contribution

- Even toddlers love to help. Giving small household responsibilities builds confidence and purpose.
- Children who feel useful and needed are more emotionally resilient as they grow.

Protecting childhood doesn't mean bubble-wrapping it. It means building strong roots for emotional growth, learning, and lifelong mental health.

WANT TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

At Total Communication, we've designed programmes that put these principles into practice. From Pretend Play sessions that spark imagination and conversation, to Literacy Lab, Social Skills Groups, and Parent Coaching, we are here to support your child's growth in real, joyful, and connected ways.

If you're wondering where to start or how to create screen-free, stretch-rich opportunities at home, we'd love to journey with you.

Reach out to our team for a no-obligation conversation.

Let's build a generation that is not just surviving the digital world, but thriving beyond it.





FREE LITERACY ASSESSMENT FOR AGES 3-7

Are you curious if your child is reading at their age level? Our free 15-minute Literacy Assessment checks phonics, blending, word recognition, and sentence reading. You'll gain clear insight into their strengths, growth areas, motor skills, and reading placement using Seeing Stars™.

Perfect for parents wanting clarity on school readiness, our educational specialists will also share simple, effective strategies to boost literacy at home. Give your child the gift of confident reading and book a free screening today!



PRETEND PLAY PROGRAMME

Step into a world where imagination takes the lead! Our Pretend Play Programme invites children from ages 3 to 8 to create, act, and explore through themed adventures. Running a bakery, exploring outer space, or solving mysteries together.

Along the way, they build language, social skills, and problem-solving abilities in a fun, low-pressure setting.

Guided by our therapists, each session is a safe space for children to express themselves, collaborate with peers, and discover the joy of turning ideas into playful, shared stories.



LANGUAGE STIMULATION PROGRAMME

Help your child grow their language and imagination while building skills that matter for life. Through role-play, storytelling, and creative games, they'll learn to solve problems, understand others, and believe in themselves.



LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IS RICHER IN PERSON THAN VIA DIGITAL CONTENT



Children who spend more than 3 hours/day on social media are twice as likely to experience depression/anxiety.



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