

THE ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF ANXIETY DISORDERS AS CRIME PREVENTION

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Nebraska CIP Children's Summit
September 24, 2025

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- The initials
 - BS, MS, PhD, CTM, MGCP
- The work & the warnings (sex, violence, generalizations; no \$ interests)
- Johnny Cash
 - Walla Walla, McNeil Island, Maple Lane, Green Hill School, and Echo Glen
 - D&E, LCC, NSP, TSCI, NCCW, NCYF, CCC-L, CCC-O, JJC, YAC, DCYC, & YRTC
 - Yankton, Deadwood, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Brookings, Pierre, Harrison, Pottawattamie, Black Hawk
 - Federal Court, County Court, District Court, Mental Health Board, & Courts Martial
 - Kansas, Iowa, Texas, Washington, Nebraska, South Dakota, New Mexico
- Why are we here?

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OVERVIEW

- Physiology of behavior
- Dopamine
- Watson, Thorndike, & Skinner
- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Assessment & Treatment
- Getting it wrong
- Exploitation
- Bluey

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PHYSIOLOGY OF BEHAVIOR

- Senses
- Pathways
 - Sensory, motor
- Central processing
- Chemistry
- Neurotransmitters
- Dopamine
- Glutamates
 - Decision-making & inhibition of behavior

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PHYSIOLOGY OF BEHAVIOR

- Brain's self-talk is like play-by-play announcer
 - Like Brent Musburger calling a Husker game
- Illusions
- Magic
- Animation
- Hallucinations
- Phantom Limits
- Dr. Newring's telekinesis

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DOPAMINE

- The cause of, and solution to, all of life's problems
- Learning and memory
- Movement and goal-directed behavior (volition)
- Cognitive function
- Task persistence
- Mood regulation
- Above all: pleasure and reward

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DOPAMINE



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DOPAMINE



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DOPAMINE



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DOPAMINE



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DOPAMINE



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WATSON, THORNDIKE, & SKINNER

- Anxiety as instinct
- Anxiety as a behavior
- Behavior is controlled by the variables of which it is a function
- Conditioning

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WATSON, THORNDIKE, & SKINNER

- Actions that lead to favorable outcomes persist
- Actions that lead to unfavorable outcomes desist
- Actions that used to work, but don't now, led to variations
- Works = addition of feels-good stuff
- Works = removal of feels-bad stuff

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ANXIETY

- Brain's job: keep you alive
- Find danger
- Avoid danger
- When brain gets it right, dopamine!
- The avoidance trap

- Bear Patrol
 - [The Simpsons - The Bear Patrol and Lisa's Tiger-Repelling Rock](#)

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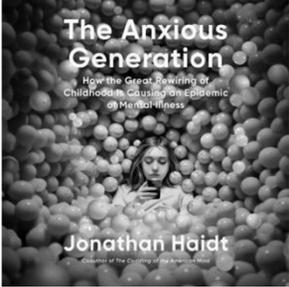
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ANXIETY: IRL

- Anxiety Brain:
 - That didn't work, so don't do that anymore
- Get sick after eating food
 - Avoid that food
- Get injured
 - Avoid that area
- Get hurt emotionally
 - Uhm...
- Generalization
 - Avoid those foods and those areas

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ANXIETY

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THE ANXIOUS GENERATION (2024)

- Social media
 - Peer esteem
 - Feedback
 - Negative comparison
 - Negative expectations
- Social deprivation
- Sleep deprivation
- Attention fragmentation
- Addiction

• More harmful to girls than boys

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MAN (DIS)CONNECTED (2015)

AUTHOR OF THE GOOD EFFECT

PHILIP ZIMBARDO

A MINDS EDUCATOR

Man (Dis)connected

How technology has sabotaged what it means to be male



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MAN (DIS)CONNECTED

- Toxic masculinity
- Excessive on-line gaming
 - Discord
- On-line radicalization
- The Internet is for porn
 - Asocialization
- Over-medicalization
- Arousal addiction

- Avenue Q - "The Internet is for..."
- Want heterosocial interactions
- Lack the skill set

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A QUICK TANGENT ON LANGUAGE

- Persistently on-line youth do not use language like lawyers do
- He basically raped me last night.
- What does that mean to:
 - A 15-year-old gamer?
 - A 14-year-old on TikTok?
 - A prosecutor?

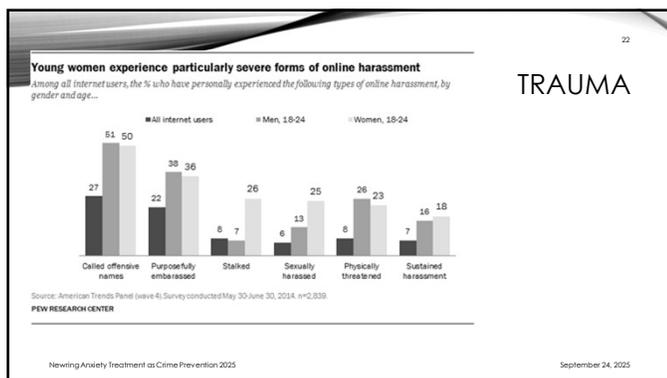
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TRAUMA

- DSM-5-TR says what?
- Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:
 - Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s)
 - Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others
 - Learning that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend...
 - Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s)

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TRAUMA

- DSM-5-TR says what?
 - Persistent avoidance
 - Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with event(s)
 - Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the event(s)
 - Duration of disturbance
 - Disturbance causes distress or impairment

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TRAUMA

- Acute
- Chronic
- Observed
- Second-hand
- Autogenic
- What would Darwin say?
 - How is a trauma response adaptive?
 - Disordered response to trauma

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WHAT DOES ANXIETY LOOK LIKE

- Inability to experience positive emotions
- Distressing memories/intrusive thoughts
- Physiological distress when cued
 - Palpitations, sweating, trembling
 - SOB, chest pain, choking feelings
 - Nausea, dizziness, hot/cold, derealization
 - Numb/tingling, fear of loss of control

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WHAT DOES ANXIETY LOOK LIKE

- Cognitive distress when cued (catastrophizing)
- Avoidance/escape
- Anticipatory distress
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Sleep disturbance

...socially anxious, seeking social approval/acceptance, & lacking the skills

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IN THE CLASSROOM

- Easily distracted
 - Intrusive thoughts
 - Divided focus
- Restlessness
- Physiological distress
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Sleep disturbance
- Poor academic performance

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ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT

- Clinical interview
- Structured clinical interview
- Self-report assessments
- Dr. Google
- Collateral assessments

- No blood tests

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ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Specific Learning Disorder
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Borderline Intellectual Functioning
- Diagnostic Stew

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GETTING IT WRONG

- How do we treat ADHD?
- How do we treat Anxiety Spectrum Disorders
- How do we treat Learning/Intellectual Disorders
- Do we treat girls and boys differently?
- Do we treat cultural trauma?

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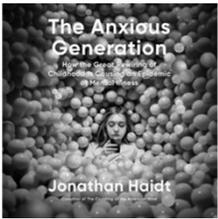
YOU GOT YOUR CHOCOLATE IN MY PEANUT BUTTER!



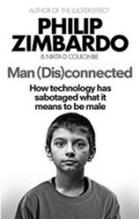
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WHEN THESE GIRLS MEET THESE BOYS



The Anxious Generation
Jonathan Haidt



PHILIP ZIMBARDO
Man (Dis)connected
How technology has sabotaged what it means to be male

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THESE GIRLS AND THESE BOYS

- Social media
 - Peer esteem
 - Feedback
 - Negative comparison
 - Negative expectations
- Social deprivation
- Sleep deprivation
- Attention fragmentation
- Addiction

- Toxic masculinity
- Excessive on-line gaming
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Farmington Hills man arrested in FBI probe into child exploitation, links to violent online network

The complaint alleges a timeline of activity stretching at least from March 1, 2024, through Sept. 10, 2025

764

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FARMINGTON HILLS, MICH. – Justin Miller, 23, of Farmington Hills, was arrested this week as part of an FBI investigation into the online distribution and production of child sexually abusive material and connections to the violent 764 terror network, according to a federal complaint.

The complaint alleges a range of serious offenses, including production and possession of child sexually abusive material, coercion and enticement of a minor, and interstate transmission of extortionate threats.

Miller was charged in a federal criminal complaint, which detailed his participation in online groups as a Nihilistic Violent Extremist (NVE).

NVEs are individuals who engage in criminal conduct in furtherance of political, social, or religious goals that derive from the hatred of society and a desire to bring about its collapse by encouraging social instability.

As detailed in the criminal complaint, Miller was an administrator of an online group that facilitated and encouraged self-harming.

Miller is accused of encouraging victims to inflict “suicigs”—the process of cutting his screenname into their flesh. Miller also allegedly groomed and coerced underage girls to produce and send him sexually explicit videos and images.

Allegations and timeline

According to the FBI, on Sept. 10, 2025, agents traced online activity tied to multiple aliases, including variations of the usernames “swampy” and “sugarsniffer,” across platforms such as Telegram, Kik, Snapchat, and X.

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Public Service Announcement
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Alert Number: I-030625-PSA
March 6, 2025

Violent Online Networks Target Vulnerable and Underage Populations Across the United States and Around the Globe

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is warning the public of a sharp increase in the activity of "fear" and other violent online networks which operate within the United States and around the globe. These networks methodically target and exploit minors and other vulnerable individuals, and it is imperative the public be made aware of the risk and the warning signs exhibited by victims. These networks use threats, blackmail, and manipulation to coerce or extort victims into producing, sharing, or live-streaming acts of self-harm, animal cruelty, sexually explicit acts, and/or suicide. The footage is then circulated among members of the network to continue to extort victims and exert control over them.

VIOLENT ONLINE NETWORKS

Some of the violent actors in these online networks are motivated by a desire to cause fear and chaos through their criminal conduct. However, motivations are highly individualized, and some threat actors may be engaging in criminal activity solely for sexual gratification, social status or a sense of belonging, or for a mix of other reasons that may not be ideologically motivated.

TARGETING

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TARGETING

These networks exist on publicly available online platforms, such as social media sites, gaming platforms, and mobile applications commonly used by young people. Many threat actors systematically target underage females, but anyone — juveniles, adults, males, and females — can be targeted. Victims are typically between the ages of 10 and 17 years old, but the FBI has seen some victims as young as 9 years old. These violent actors target vulnerable populations to include children as well as those who struggle with a variety of mental health issues, such as depression, eating disorders, or suicidal ideation. Threat actors often groom their victims by first establishing a trusting or romantic relationship before eventually manipulating and coercing them into engaging in escalating harmful behavior designed to shame and isolate them.

EXTORTION AND SELF-HARM

The networks use extortion and blackmail tactics, such as threatening to swat¹ or doxx² their victims, if the victims do not comply with the network's demands. The actors can manipulate or coerce victims to produce Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and other videos depicting animal cruelty and self-harm. Self-harm activity can include cutting, stabbing, or fangsinging.³ Members of the networks threaten to share the explicit videos or photos of the victims with the victims' family, friends, and/or post the photos and videos to the internet. The networks control their victims through extreme fear and many members have an end-goal of forcing the victims they extort or coerce to live-stream their own suicide for the network's entertainment or the threat-actor's own sense of fame.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The FBI urges the public to exercise increased vigilance when posting personal photos, videos, or personal identifying information, or direct messaging online. Although seemingly innocuous when posted or shared, the images and videos can provide malicious actors an abundant supply of content to exploit and manipulate or alter for criminal activity. Victims are vulnerable to embarrassment, harassment, extortion, or continued long-term re-victimization. The FBI recommends looking for warning signs indicating a victim may be engaging in self-harm or having suicidal thoughts.

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The FBI recommends that family, friends, and associates consider the following potential indicators and warning signs:

- Sudden behavior changes such as becoming withdrawn, moody, or irritable.
- Sudden changes in appearance, especially neglect of appearance.
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits.
- Dropping out of activities and becoming more isolated and withdrawn.
- A new online "friend" or network prospective victims seem infatuated with and/or scared of.
- Receipt of anonymous gifts, such as items delivered to your home, currency, gaming currency or other virtual items.
- Scars, often in patterns.
- Fresh cuts, scratches, bruises, bite marks, burns, or other wounds.
- Carvings, such as words or symbols, on the skin.
- Wearing long sleeves or pants in hot weather.
- Writing in blood or what appears to be blood.
- Threatening to commit suicide and openly talking about death, not being wanted or needed, or not being around.
- Idealization of mass shooting or mass casualty events.
- Family pets or other animals being harmed or dying under suspicious circumstances.
- Family pets uncharacteristically avoid or are fearful of your child or you.
- Law enforcement being called to the home under false pretenses (known as swatted or doxxed) by an unknown person.

The FBI recommends the public consider the following when sharing content (e.g., photos and videos) or engaging with individuals online:

- Monitor children's and other vulnerable individuals' online activity and discuss risks associated with sharing personal information.
- Use discretion when posting images, videos, and personal content online, particularly those that include children or their information.

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BLUEY

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Psychologists Watched 150 Episodes of Bluey. Here's What They Learned.

HUMANS 11 September 2025 By BRADLEY SMITH THE CONVERSATION



(Still from Season 1 of Bluey)

She's six years old, lives in Brisbane and might just be one of the best resilience coaches on television.

We're talking about Bluey, the animated Aussie pup whose adventures have captured the hearts of families around the world.

But as our new study reveals, Bluey isn't just entertaining kids, she's modelling how to deal with life's ups and downs.

Why is resilience so important?

Resilience isn't just about "toughing it out". It's the ability to cope with

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BLUEY

- <https://youtu.be/XpNH2Mdkpok?si=KlIM9W-Zu0uGINJD>
- Not Giving Up Just Yet

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THE WHITNEY HOUSTON QUESTION

- Are children our future?
 - The actual lyrics: Can't count on adults, have to love yourself
- Can a child ever fail?
 - The sexually perseverative 13-year-old on methylphenidate
- Do we have the resources to help this child?
 - Time
 - Money
 - Will
 - Health & behavioral health
 - Open mind
 - Open heart
- This kid just ain't getting it
 - Adult extinction bursts

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DO THE DIFFICULT WORK

- Assessment takes time
- Treatment takes time
- There may not be a medication for that
 - The medication might make it worse
 - The medication might make more problems
- Pain is a part of life
 - Suffering is an active and ongoing choice
- Resiliency is a skill
- Health children and adolescence are a social good
 - Intervention left of boom

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TED

- Thank you for coming to my TED Talk
- Discussion time

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