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CBT Seminar Series:

Teens and Screens: Cognitive Behavioral Interventions that Promote Digital and Mental Wellbeing

Presented by Madeline Levitt, PhD



THURSDAY MAY 14TH, 2026



12:00PM - 1:00PM

ABSTRACT

A decade of research has established relationships between social media use and mental health in adolescents; however evidence-based interventions for navigating this relationship are lacking. Existing interventions rely on abstinence-based models which tend to ostracize teens, neglect benefits of social media use, and fail to provide long-term skill acquisition. Research shows that harm reduction and strengths-based treatments are often more effective. This talk will overview a CBT-based intervention to provide psychoeducation and skills training to teens to minimize risks and maximize benefits in social media use and mental health. We will teach and demonstrate the core components of the intervention and their application for social media use, including assessment tools, psychoeducation, self-monitoring, mindfulness, values clarification, cognitive restructuring, behavioral activation, mental health misinformation, and unrealistic body image standards.

SPEAKER

Madeline Levitt, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist specializing in evidence-based treatment for anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), mood, and related disorders in children, adolescents, and young adults. Dr. Levitt is a member of the Center for Youth Mental Health and holds appointments as an Assistant Attending Psychologist at NewYork-Presbyterian and Assistant Professor of Psychology in Clinical Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medicine. Dr. Levitt offers individual and group psychotherapy services including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), exposure and response prevention (ERP), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) for youth with anxiety and related disorders (e.g., social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, OCD, and school refusal). She also provides parent management training (PMT) to further support families in individual and group settings. She is expertly trained in the Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions (SPACE) intervention, a parent-based treatment for youth with anxiety disorders. In her research, Dr. Levitt examines associations among parenting approaches, youth motivation, and anxiety.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify pros and cons of the impact of social media use on teen mental health.
2. Apply CBT skills such as cognitive restructuring and behavioral activation to challenges teens are experiencing with social media use.
3. Discuss topics such as social media misinformation and safety with teens effectively to promote healthy change

REFERENCES

1. Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2019). A systematic review: the influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851>
2. Vannucci, A., Simpson, E. G., Gagnon, S., & Ohannessian, C. M. (2020). Social media use and risky behaviors in adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Adolescence*, 79(1), 258–274. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2020.01.014>
3. Carter, B., Payne, M., Rees, P., Sohn, S. Y., Brown, J., & Kalk, N. J. (2024). A multi-school study in England, to assess problematic smartphone usage and anxiety and depression. *Acta Paediatrica*, 113(10), 2240–2248. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.17317>