

**The Anxious Generation**  
**Part 2**  
**The Back Story**  
**The Decline of the Play-Based Childhood**

Part 2 consists of three Chapters. (Chapters 2-4)  
Chapter 2- *What Children Need To Do in Childhood*

In Summary

- Human childhood is very different from that of any other animal. Children's brains grow to 90% of full size by age 5, but then take a long time to configure themselves. This slow-growth childhood is an adaptation for cultural learning. Childhood is an apprenticeship for learning the skills needed for success in one's culture.
- Free play is as essential for developing social skills, like conflict resolution, as it is for developing physical skills. But play-based childhoods were replaced by phone-based childhoods as children and adolescents moved their social lives and free time onto Internet-connected devices.
- Children learn through play to connect, synchronize, and take turns. They enjoy attunement and need enormous quantities of it. Attunement and synchrony bond pairs, groups, and whole communities. Social media, in contrast, is mostly asynchronous and performative. It inhibits attunement and leaves heavy users starving for social connection.
- Children are born with two innate learning programs that help them to acquire their local culture. Conformist bias motivates them to copy whatever seems to be most common. Prestige bias motivates them to copy whoever seems to be the most accomplished and prestigious. Social media platforms, which are engineered for engagement, hijack social learning, and drown out the culture of one's family and local community while locking children's eyes onto influencers of questionable value.
- Social learning occurs throughout childhood, but there may be a sensitive period for cultural learning that spans roughly ages 9 to 15. Lessons learned and identities formed in these years are likely to imprint, or stick, more than at other ages. These are the crucial sensitive years of puberty. Unfortunately, they are also the years in which most adolescents in developed countries get their own phones and move their social lives online.

Upcoming      Ch. 3- Discovery Mode and the Need for Risky Play  
                    Ch. 4- Puberty and the Blocked Transition to Adulthood