

# Sharpening Our Focus to Deepen Our Impact



**Boston Children's**  
Digital Wellness Lab



HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL  
TEACHING HOSPITAL



**Boston Children's Hospital**

Unlike those in generations before them, kids today are growing up in a digitally-saturated environment that provides them with nearly unfettered access to the best and worst the world has to offer. We are only just beginning to understand how this connectivity affects young people's mental, social, and emotional health; their development; and their ability to thrive.

More research is needed to truly understand how young people interact with, and are affected by, their screens and devices, but what we do know is their use can have both positive and negative effects, depending on how and why they use them. As technology and interactive media are further embedded into our daily lives, it becomes increasingly important that **we use science, rather than emotion**, to make decisions about their design and use.

At the Digital Wellness Lab, **we create impact by conducting rigorous, independent, multi-method research**, and disseminating our findings through:

- Research reports, academic presentations and papers, and public-facing content;
- Engaging with the tech/media industry to embed what we're learning into the decisions leaders make about product, policy, and user supports to ensure young people's wellbeing is at the forefront; and
- Supporting the healthcare industry in their ability to understand the effects of interactive media on children and teens, to recognize and treat problematic use, and to help young people and their families learn and adopt healthy behaviors.

We are particularly interested in understanding the positive and negative effects of tech engagement on **young people's mental, social, and emotional health and prosocial development** through the lens of visual social media, video games, and artificial intelligence (AI), as these are the technologies most often used by youth and most likely to have the greatest impacts.

Through our work, we aim to identify opportunities to mitigate or eliminate harms, and to elevate positive experiences for short and long term mental health outcomes for all young people. We also seek to identify how technology and interactive media can be used in innovative ways to promote children's, teens', and young adults' sense of belonging, prosocial behaviors, and their development of social-emotional competencies.

Through our close engagement with the Clinic for Interactive Media and Internet Disorders (CIMAID), other speciality clinical departments at Boston Children's Hospital, and Harvard Medical School, we are working to identify the characteristics and risk factors of Problematic Interactive Media Use (PIMU), and to design and disseminate impactful intervention and treatment strategies for use in front-line settings (such as pediatric clinics).

Ultimately, our expertise in rigorous child health and development science enables the application of our research to both the design and use of technology and interactive media. We look forward to playing an active role in what comes next.

To learn more about our work, visit [DigitalWellnessLab.org](https://DigitalWellnessLab.org)  
To join us on our mission, please contact Cori Stott, Executive Director, at [dwl@childrens.harvard.edu](mailto:dwl@childrens.harvard.edu)

## HOW WE DEFINE DIGITAL WELLNESS

Digital wellness is a positive state of mental, physical, and social-emotional health pursued through intentional, authentic, and balanced engagement with technology and interactive media.

## THE CHALLENGE

Kids today live in a digitally-saturated world, but we are only just beginning to understand how technology and interactive media affect their mental, physical, and social-emotional health and development and their ability to thrive. As technology is further embedded within our daily lives, it becomes increasingly important that we use science, rather than emotion, to make decisions about the design — and use — of interactive media.

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## OUR VISION

We believe that by following the science, we can create an empathetic and respectful world in which our kids can grow up healthy, smart, and kind.

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## OUR MISSION

The Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School seeks to understand and promote positive and healthy digital media experiences for young people, from birth through young adulthood.

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## OUR CORE VALUES

We are **ambitious & optimistic**. We believe we can change the paradigm for how young people use technology and interactive media.

We follow the data and base our guidance on a foundation of **scientific evidence**.

We are **open-minded & nimble**. We are willing to change our approach based on research outcomes, innovations in technology, and needs voiced by young people and their families.

We rely on the diverse experiences and expertise of our team, colleagues, and collaborators and strive to make our work **inclusive** of, and **relevant** for, all young people.

We are **relentlessly focused** on identifying and following the most impactful paths for change.

We are **introspective & empathetic**. We learn from our mistakes and show up for each other without judgment.

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**?** **Develop an Evidence Base for Digital Wellness**

We seek to develop an evidence base for digital wellness by conducting, translating, and distributing rigorous research on the effects of technology and interactive media use on young people to inform our progress towards positive health and development for every child, teen, and young adult.

**#** **Advance Digital Wellness Focused Practices in the Tech Industry**

We advance health- and safety-focused design, delivery, and marketing practices in the tech and media industry by working to understand their current and future challenges, and to translate our research outcomes into actionable insights to share with key decision-makers.

**Bring Stakeholders Together**

As no one stakeholder holds the solution for making the digital ecosystem a positive and healthy space for young people, we rely on the diverse experiences and expertise of our team, colleagues, and collaborators to make our work inclusive of, and relevant for, all young people.

**Embed Digital Wellness in Healthcare Structures**

We embed digital wellness in healthcare strategies by providing evidence-based knowledge and tools designed to move towards a more standardized understanding of, and approach to, digital wellbeing; and to empower clinicians in their ability to help young people and their families build and maintain healthy behaviors.

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