

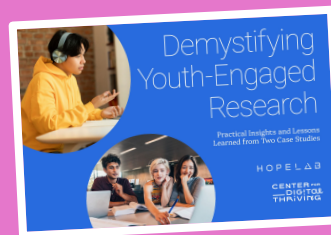
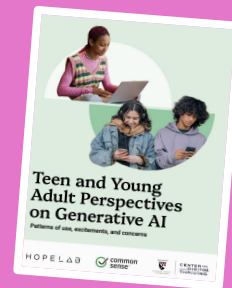
2024 IMPACT REPORT



CENTER FOR
DIGITAL
THRIVING



EMPATHY
EYEROLLING
CENTERFORDIGITALTHRIVING.ORG



CENTER FOR DIGITAL THRIVING

We're a [research and innovation](#) center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, dedicated to helping young people thrive in a tech-filled world. Proudly based at [Project Zero](#) – a pioneer in educational research since 1967 – we focus on translational science; bridging research and practice to create knowledge and resources that empower teachers to meet the moment.



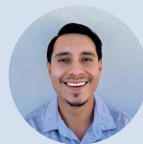
Emily Weinstein
Co-Founder,
Executive Director



Carrie James
Co-Founder,
Managing Director



Beck Tench
Co-Founder,
Research + Design



Eduardo Lara
Research Specialist



Lauren Palazzo
Strategy +
Communications



Margaret Corona
Communications
Assistant



Destinee Ramos
Research Assistant



OUR VALUES

Critical Optimism: We take a solutions-focused approach to digital well-being, recognizing both tech's benefits and harms while staying genuinely hopeful about the future.

Brave Action: We make bold choices and take courageous steps, even in the face of uncertainty or obstacles.

Learning Through Listening: We believe listening to youth isn't just valuable, it's essential to understanding and improving digital well-being.

Thriving for All: Everyone deserves to thrive in our digital world, and we're committed to reflecting diverse experiences and fostering a sense of belonging through our work.

Actually Helpful: We create timely, practical resources designed to make a real difference in people's lives.

LEAD WITH LISTENING

It's more than a concept we champion in our work on teens and tech – it's a principle we live by at the Center for Digital Thriving. By amplifying youth voices, we empower teens and caring adults to make informed, intentional decisions about tech in their lives.

In 2024, this commitment to listening shaped everything we did. And it inspired our efforts to craft research and resources designed to help others listen to teens, too.

We shape new, critically optimistic conversations about youth well-being and technology by sharing evidence-based, youth-led research and translating it into resources that everyone can access, understand, and use. We involve teens along the way as we strive to stay close to their rapidly changing experiences.



I felt very uplifted
and very welcomed
to speak and
participate without
judgement.



TEEN ADVISOR

ON THEIR EXPERIENCE OF
CDT YOUTH ADVISORY SESSIONS






WHAT WE HEARD

Teens urged us to broaden our perspective *beyond* tech to more fully understand how it fits into their lives.



WHAT WE DID

We followed their lead to shape [Unpacking Grind Culture in American Teens](#), a national study carried out alongside teens in collaboration with Common Sense Media and Indiana University.





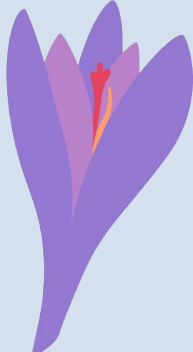

WHAT WE HEARD

Peers told us repeatedly that there was something distinct about our approach to youth engagement.



WHAT WE DID

We co-created and launched the interactive [Youth Voice Playbook](#) with Hopelab, Character Lab, and In Tandem to empower others to integrate youth advisory into their work.



WHAT WE HEARD

Educators told us they craved more flexible, interactive learning opportunities. (Plus, we continued to see the importance of educator mindsets to curriculum implementation.)


WHAT WE DID

We created an on-demand, self-paced [professional development course](#) that educators can reference continuously (set to launch in Spring 2025!).





WHAT WE HEARD

When generative AI adoption rose exponentially, we received a steady stream of questions about how to support teens' AI use.



WHAT WE DID

We began a dedicated AI focus in our work, resulting in contributions to a partners' [study on teens and genAI](#). And we launched the [IMAGINE project](#) with new funding to bring youth voice to AI policies in schools.





[I think of burnout] like an overused machine in a factory ... You're just doing the same thing over and over, and you don't feel like you really have a purpose.



ELEVENTH GRADER

THE GRIND STUDY

30+ hours

of formal teen advisory sessions with input from from 40+ teens that shaped our research and resource efforts

1,545 teens

surveyed for a national study – [Unpacking Grind Culture in American Teens](#)

+150

"Listening Tour" interviews with the public to understand how people think about tech and thriving, so we can improve how we talk about it

+\$1M

in new funding secured to launch the AI branch of our portfolio (Thank you [John Templeton Foundation!](#))



We meet people wherever they are, but also **resist** and **insist**: *Resist* oversimplified debates about social media and mental health. *Insist* on deeper conversations – ones that consider how tech fits into young people's diverse lives, why the details they share matter, and how we can orient toward critical optimism for the future.

EMILY WEINSTEIN

CO-FOUNDER + EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ON CDT'S APPROACH TO ENGAGING
PEOPLE IN A MORE NUANCED
CONVERSATION ON TEENS + SCREENS



4

new evidence-based
resources created to turn
research into “actually
helpful” tools – plus 3 more
coming in 2025

7

new content formats for
getting our research into the
public domain in novel
ways, including whitepapers,
webinars, and our first-ever
app

+30

media features to shift
public discourse on youth
mental health and
technology

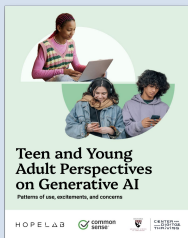


SURFACING NEW, YOUTH-CENTERED INSIGHTS



UNPACKING GRIND CULTURE IN AMERICAN TEENS

Insights from over 1,500 youth shaped [Unpacking Grind Culture in American Teens](#), our national study with Common Sense Media and the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University. The report urges adults to widen their lens and showcases the particular roles of social media.



TEEN + YOUNG ADULT PERSPECTIVES ON GENERATIVE AI

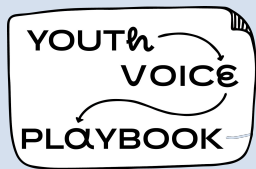
With genAI abuzz, we saw an opportunity to deepen youth insights within our Grind Study. Collaborating with Hopelab and Common Sense Media, we surfaced key findings that [complemented their research](#) by asking teens what adults are missing about genAI use. We also launched IMAGINE with new funding to bring youth voice to school AI policies.



LISTENING TOUR: WORDS MATTER

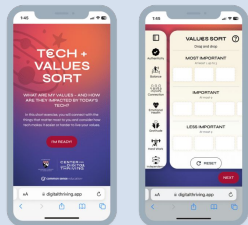
Through our year-long [Listening Tour](#) – 150+ conversations with teens, parents, educators, and experts – we noticed an absence of shared language to talk about different aspects of digital thriving. We are actively wondering about the power of metaphors to bridge this gap. More to come on this 2025!

CREATING USEFUL, USEABLE RESOURCES



THE YOUTH VOICE PLAYBOOK

Launched in collaboration with Hopelab, Character Lab, and In Tandem, our [Youth Voice Playbook](#) is a free, interactive resource to help organizations amplify youth voices. Packed with practical strategies, real stories, and step-by-step examples, it makes integrating youth perspectives more approachable and impactful – growing the field's capacity for meaningful youth engagement.



TECH + VALUES APP

CDT released our first-ever app, the [Tech + Values Sort](#), making it easier for people to reflect on how technology aligns – or conflicts – with their values. More than 3,600 people have used it so far, alongside our new [Values Dot Voting](#) activity, to spark deeper conversations about tech's impact on their lives.



SEED RESOURCES

We started developing a new suite of evidence-based resources to promote digital agency. [These tools](#) span topics from identifying pressures (already available through our collaboration with Commons Sense Education) to understanding algorithms, and coping with traumatic experiences online. Stay tuned for a series of releases in 2025 that offer practical guidance for educators and families!

UPLIFTING A COMMUNITY OF LEADERS

We proudly welcomed our [first cohort of Digital Thriving Fellows](#). Our Fellowship Program exists to help amplify efforts that support young people to thrive in a tech-filled world – particularly through projects that champion teens' voices and experiences. We support innovative researchers, educators, podcasters, artists, and practitioners whose work is shaping a future where young people thrive, however technology fits into their lives. Here's what our first cohort is up to in their fellowship projects:



ALIJA
BLACKWELL

“ I'm co-creating a repository of youth-centered policies, tools, and reimaginings of alternatives to surveillance technologies used in schools. ”



MOLLY
JOSEPHS

“ I'm working alongside teens to produce a podcast while also exploring the qualities of digital havens – online spaces that support emotional wellbeing by fostering authentic connection + a sense of belonging. ”

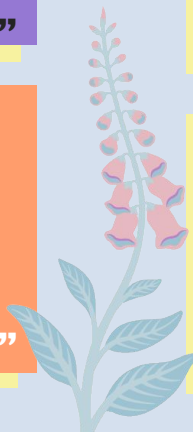


ADRIENNE
JOE

“ I'm building a Generative AI tool that helps young people explore the relationship between their values and tech use. ”



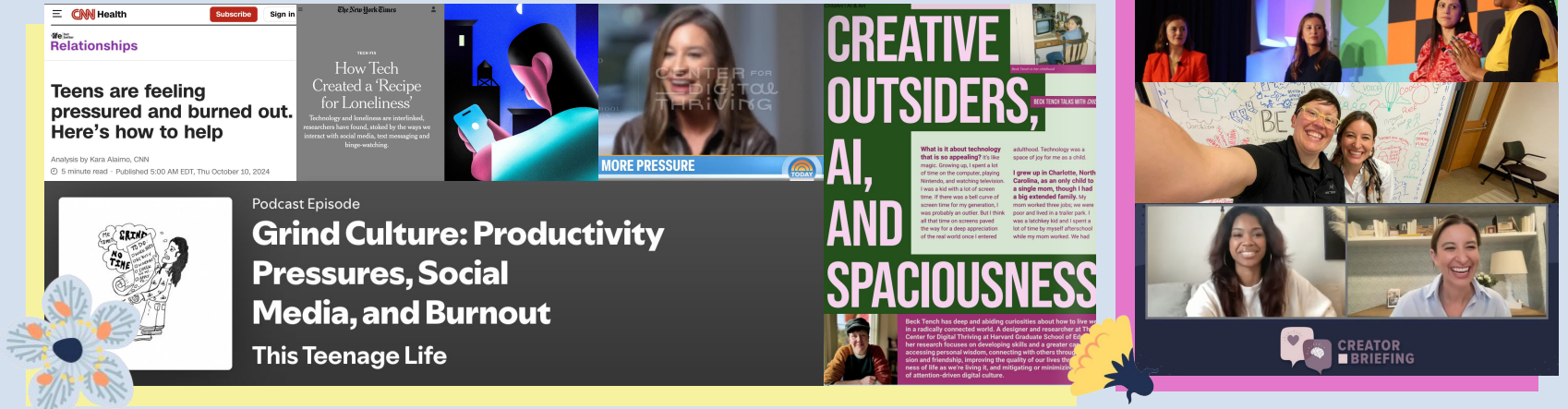
“ I'm developing a comprehensive framework to help make sure that digital products + platforms are designed to support the digital well-being of young people. ”



SHAPING NEW THINKING ON TEENS + TECH

Our insights were featured in more than 30 media stories and we participated in over a dozen speaking engagements to amplify youth voices and surface new, evidenced-based resources that foster curious, nuanced conversations.

We also developed and taught a signature CDT course offered at Harvard Graduate School of Education on “Learning and Teaching for Digital Thriving” during January Term and again in May.



ON THE HORIZON: WHAT'S NEXT

While 2025 holds a remarkable share of unknowns, we're certain of a few things: We'll deepen support for educators, expand our impact through meaningful engagement, and continue to let listening lead the way.

We hope you enjoy this little peek at what's ahead for the Center for Digital Thriving and can't wait to share more as the year unfolds.

Until then, thank you for believing in a future where all young people can thrive in our tech-filled world. 💜

Course for Educators

We'll soon open enrollment for [CDT's first online course](#): *From "Referee" to "Coach" – and Other Game-Changing Mindshifts for Teaching Digital Well-being, Digital Citizenship, & Media Literacy*.

IMAGINE (AI)

We're exploring AI policies in schools and shaping an emerging tool, [Graidients](#), to make thinking visible about AI ethics.

2025

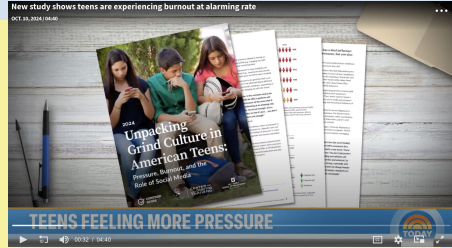
Fellowships

This spring, we'll celebrate and amplify the work of our current Fellows, while preparing to welcome the next cohort of emerging leaders ([applications open!](#)).

Seed Resources

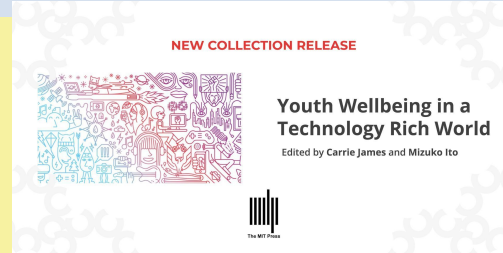
Stay tuned for a series of several new resources on topics like algorithmic awareness and coping with traumatic experiences online.

CURIOUS TO LEARN MORE?



WATCH...

this [TODAY Show segment](#) featuring our Executive Director, Dr. Emily Weinstein, as she shares findings from The Grind Study and encourages adults to widen their lens on social media's impact



READ...

a [collection of new essays](#), published by MIT Press, that explores youth well-being in a technology rich world – co-edited by Dr. Mimi Ito and our co-founder, Dr. Carrie James.

What's designated driving got to do with digital thriving?

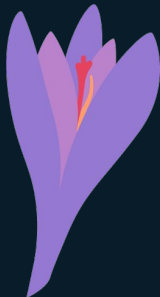
Buckle up folks, 🚗, I've gone down an internet 🐇 rabbit 🕒 hole.

APR 23, 2024 · BECK TENCH, PH.D.

ez'ig nə tōr'ē, -tōr'ē), ac
/er/, n. a person who a
g in order to be fit to driv
ter, n. a player on a ba
bstitutes for the pitcher
bbr.: DH, dh [1970–75, ,
j nē'), n., pl. -nees. a p

CONSIDER...

how terms and practices like “designated driver” go mainstream. What inspiration might we draw for our work on digital thriving? [This substack post](#) from Dr. Beck Tench explores this very question.



WE NEED (YOU)TH TO THRIVE

FOLLOW CENTER FOR DIGITAL THRIVING FOR A
CRITICALLY OPTIMISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON TEENS + TECH



OUR WORK IS MADE POSSIBLE BY GENEROUS FOUNDING GRANTS FROM [SUSAN CROWN EXCHANGE](#) AND [PIVOTAL VENTURES](#).
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