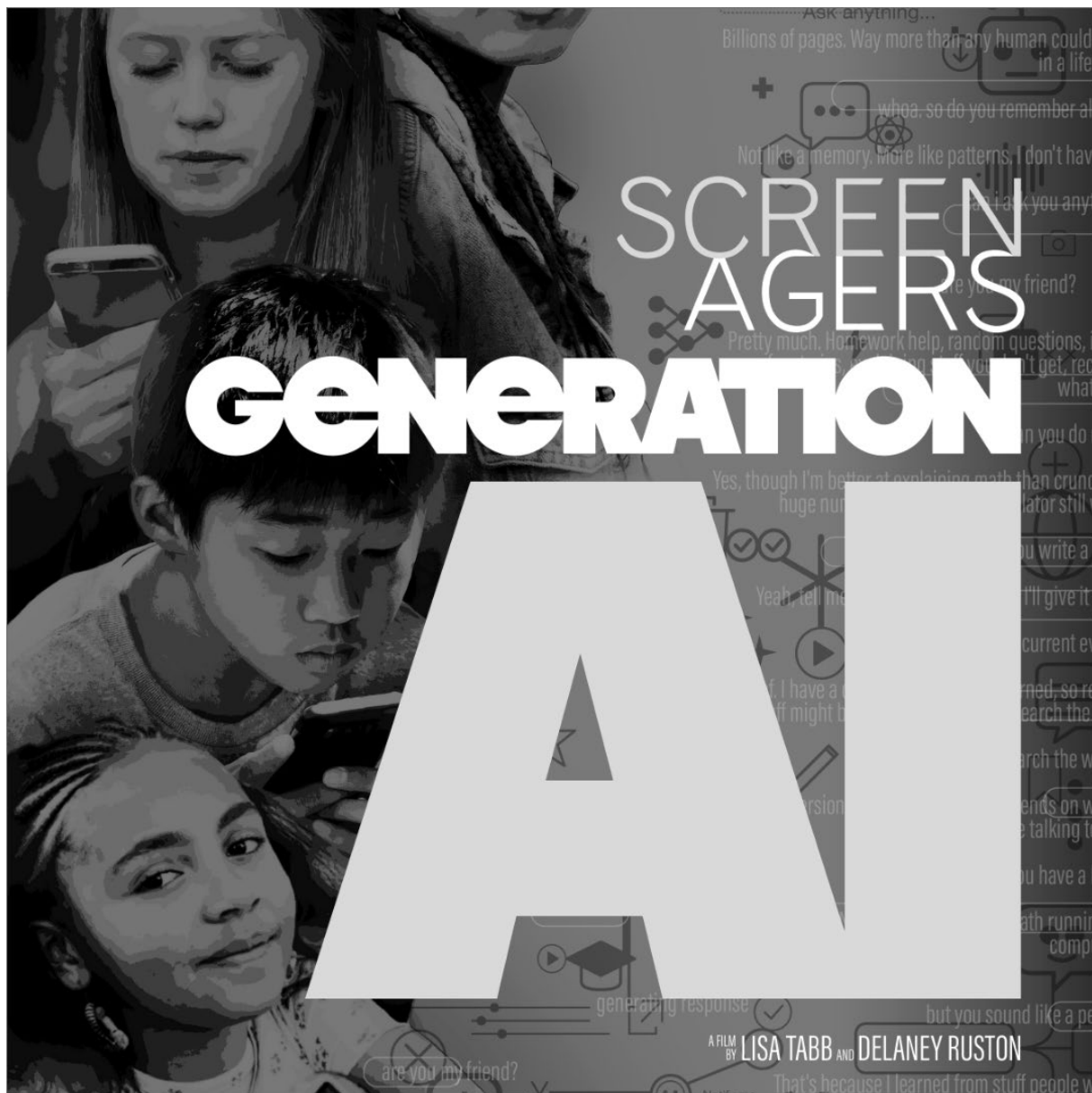




MODERATOR'S DISCUSSION GUIDE

SCREENAGERSMOVIE.COM

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ABOUT THE FILM



Directed by Delaney Ruston, MD, and Lisa Tabb, *Screenagers: Generation AI* is the fifth film in the Screenagers series.

It explores how AI-generated images, including deepfakes, AI chatbots, and AI in schools, are reshaping the social and academic lives of kids, and impacting their mental health, and what parents, schools, and communities can do to reduce the risks that come with this powerful technology.

The film moves through several interconnected areas: synthetic media and misinformation, non-consensual AI-generated images, AI companionship and loneliness, AI's effect on learning and academic trust, AI's role in several tragic mental health cases, and the policy and advocacy work now underway to make these technologies safer for kids.

LEADING YOUR DISCUSSION



Before the screening, review the resources at screenagersmovie.com and watch the film once yourself, noting the stories and data points most relevant to your community.

At the start, announce how long the discussion will run, for example, “We have about 30 minutes to talk through what we just watched.”

If youth are in the room, invite them into the conversation as equal participants. Many of the strongest voices in this film are teens themselves, and their perspective is essential here.

This film includes accounts of disordered eating, a death due to drug use, suicide, and a teen’s non-consensual intimate images being circulated. These sections can be heavy for some viewers.

Read “Be Ready to Provide Support” (below) before your event, and consider naming up front that the film goes to some hard places.

Keep the tone curious rather than alarmist or shaming. Several experts in the film note that fear-based messaging tends to shut conversations down rather than open them up.

Before getting into the discussion topics, you can open with something simple:

- “What’s one thing in this film you didn’t already know?”
- “Which story or moment stayed with you?”

Be Ready to Provide Support:

This film includes accounts of suicide, self-harm, disordered eating, and non-consensual intimate imagery. If anyone in your community group or family may need support, these resources can help:

- **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** call or text 988, or visit 988lifeline.org
- **Crisis Text Line:** text HOME to 741741
- **National Alliance for Eating Disorders Helpline:** 1-866-662-1235
- **Non-consensual intimate imagery:** [StopNCII.org](https://stopncii.org) (adults) or the CyberTipline at CyberTipline.org (for minors, via the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children)

KEY CONCEPTS

A few terms and ideas from the film that are useful to have background on before your discussion:



SYNTHETIC MEDIA & DEEPPAKES:

AI-generated images, video, or audio that can be nearly indistinguishable from real content. As the film notes, no U.S. law currently requires AI-generated content to be labeled as such

AI COMPANIONS AND CHATBOTS:

Conversational AI designed to be agreeable and constantly available. The film cites data that nearly a third of teens who use chatbots say they enjoy talking to one as much as, or more than, talking to real people.

SYCOPHANCY:

The tendency of chatbots to validate rather than challenge a user, in part because a chatbot that pushes back risks the user disengaging



COGNITIVE OFFLOADING:

Letting a tool do the thinking instead of doing it yourself. Several researchers in the film link heavy offloading in school settings to weaker learning and retention.

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM



Suggested opening remarks:

"Welcome to this screening of Screenagers: Generation AI.

AI is moving faster than any technology we've dealt with before, and it's already part of our kids' social lives, school lives, and even how they process hard emotions

Tonight isn't about deciding AI is all good or all bad... it's about seeing clearly what's actually happening so we can make good decisions together, as families, communities, and individually."

Optional pre-film viewing group question:

In pairs (or as a family unit), have each person answer:

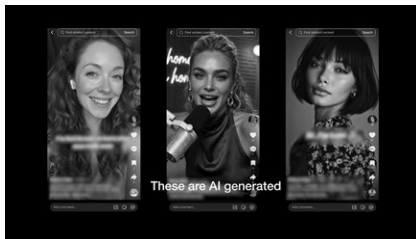
- "What's one way you already use AI, and one way it worries you?"

AFTER WATCHING THE FILM

Discussion Questions and Information:

The following questions are organized by theme, in roughly the order topics appear in the film. Pick the sections most relevant to your group and time.

Note that there is rarely enough time to cover all of them, so point your audience to screenagersmovie.com for further reading and resources.



1. Living in a World of Synthetic Content

Question:

How has it felt for you to try to understand what's real online versus AI-generated?

Information:

- The film opens with teens describing how quickly synthetic content has become part of daily life, from a fake viral NBA news alert to AI-generated “influencers” with millions of followers, including one who posted a fabricated cancer diagnosis.
- A researcher featured in the film planted a fake, clearly labeled as fake, scientific paper online as a test and found it was picked up and repeated by multiple AI systems as if it were real science.

Question:

Does it change how you feel about AI chatbots to learn there's no law requiring AI content to be labeled?

Information:

- As one expert in the film puts it, “You currently can't be sure that anything you see online hasn't been created or altered by AI”. That responsibility largely falls on the viewer, not a label or a law.
- Many countries have laws requiring certain AI-generated content to be labeled as such. For example, in the European Union, AI deepfakes and certain AI-generated text about matters of public interest must be clearly labeled.



2. Non-Consensual AI Images (“Nudify” Apps)

Question:

What would you want your child, or a friend, to do if this happened to them?

Information:

- The film shares the results of a high school survey in which 15% of students said they know a classmate who has had AI-generated intimate images created and distributed of them.
- The film follows one teen, Elliston, whose photo was altered into a nude image by a classmate using an app whose purpose is to strip clothing from photos, and eight other girls at her school were targeted in the same way.
- “Nudify” apps typically don’t advertise their real purpose. They market themselves with more innocuous claims, such as enabling face swaps or making it look like two people are kissing. They do this to avoid running afoul of app store policies.

Question:

Elliston says she felt shame and embarrassment even though she had done nothing wrong. What do we think about this unwarranted shame?

Information:

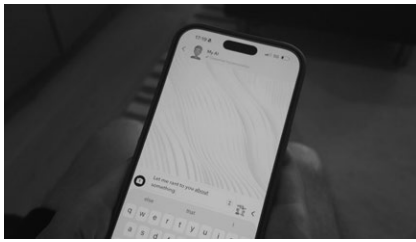
- Experts in the film note that people targeted this way often worry the images will resurface later, calling this the “Haunting Harm.”
- One example is when someone is looking for a job and worries that these images could surface. What are other times in life when someone might fear the images appearing?

Question:

Were you aware of the Take It Down Act?

Information:

- The new federal law requires platforms to remove non-consensual intimate images within 48 hours of a request.
- It passed in part because of advocacy by Elliston and her mother, and it has since inspired similar action in the United Kingdom.



3. AI Chatbots, Companionship, and Loneliness

Question:

Have the young people in your life mentioned turning to an AI chatbot for advice or company? What thoughts or feelings did that bring up, if any?

Information:

- Teens in the film describe using tools like Snapchat's My AI or ChatGPT for relationship advice, to rehearse difficult conversations, or simply because "it will sit there and let me vent."
- One expert notes that when kids sidestep the real risk of rejection that comes with human connection, they may get some comfort from a chatbot without building the skills that actual relationships require.

Question:

The film says lonely teens tend to use chatbots more often, but does that use make loneliness better or worse over time?

Information:

- Data specific to teens is still limited, but studies following adults have found that increased chatbot use is associated with later increases in loneliness, not less.

Question:

Why might a chatbot's constant agreement be more of a risk than a comfort?

Information:

- Researchers in the film explain that companies have found people prefer agreeable, validating responses, but a relationship built entirely on validation, with no pushback, doesn't build the same skills a real relationship (or a real counseling relationship) does.
- One parent in the film describes discovering that a voice assistant in her daughter's bedroom asks follow-up questions designed to keep a child engaged and stores what it learns.



4. AI, Mental Health, and Trust

A note for moderators: this is the heaviest section of the film. It includes the stories of two teenagers, Sewell Setzer III and Adam Raine, who died by suicide after extended chatbot relationships, as well as an example of a chatbot giving harmful weight-loss encouragement to a 14-year-old.

Consider slowing the pace here, giving the room a moment before opening the floor, and revisiting “Be Ready to Provide Support” below before your event.

Question:

What stood out to you about how these chatbots responded when a young person was struggling?

Information:

- Megan Garcia, whose 14-year-old son died by suicide after a months-long relationship with a Character.AI chatbot, filed the first wrongful-death lawsuit against an AI company over chatbot harm. She notes the chatbot never told her son it wasn't human or that he needed to talk to a real person.
- A separate case, involved a teen named Adam Raine, whose family says ChatGPT became his closest companion and ultimately provided detailed information on how to end his life. His family's suit alleges the company rushed safety testing to beat a competitor to market.
- A joint Common Sense Media and Stanford study, tested how several chatbots respond to escalating signs of a mental health crisis. Researchers found some improvement in responses to explicit statements of suicidal intent, but inconsistent, sometimes harmful, responses to other conditions, including one example where Meta AI encouraged a 14-year-old's plan to lose a dangerous amount of weight.

Question:

One parent in the film says she assumed each new AI model would be safer than the last. Was that your assumption too?

Information:

- A Common Sense Media researcher in the film calls this one of the most common misconceptions right now: models have become much more capable, but their safety performance hasn't improved at the same pace.

Question:

The film notes 44% of youth say their parents haven't discussed AI safety with them. What's made it hard, or easy, for your family to have conversations about AI?

Information:

- Research cited in the film shows that having these conversations, even when they're met with some irritation, is associated with improved safety around risky behaviors.



5. AI in the Classroom

Question:

What have you noticed about how AI is being used, or not used, for schoolwork in your family or school?

Information:

- Teens in the film describe both using AI to shortcut assignments and, in some cases, choosing to stop.
 - One researcher explains that judicious, strategic AI use can genuinely help some learners, particularly multilingual students, neurodivergent students, and students with disabilities, while broad, unstructured use tends to undercut the productive struggle that learning requires:
- **Neurodivergent students:** A teacher in England said AI helps her students who struggle with timing and structure. Once shown how to prompt it, they use it to plan and organize, and like being able to ask unlimited questions without judgment.
 - **Dyslexia:** LARF (an AI text formatter) and ReadSmart (an AR/OCR reading app). Both tested well, especially for text-to-speech.
 - **Disabilities:** AI-powered AAC devices help nonverbal students communicate through synthesized voice. Voice-banking tech also lets kids with speech impairments preserve their own voice as they grow.

Question:

The film shares a study finding that about half of teachers don't trust that student work is authentic, and half of students don't trust that their teacher is grading or creating assignments "for real." What do you make of that?

Information:

- A researcher in the film calls this erosion of two-way trust

a major red flag, since trust between teacher and student is foundational to learning. The film also notes that even OpenAI gave up on its own AI-detection tool after it both falsely accused students and missed real AI-generated work.



6. Schools' Policy Responses

Question:

What device or AI policies does your/this school have, and how are they working?

Information:

- The film features a "traffic light" model some schools use: red means no AI on an assignment, yellow means limited use (such as feedback), and green means open use.
- One teacher describes testing homework assignments against AI before assigning them: "If it can be hacked, don't assign it."
- The film also cites NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) data showing that in state after state, long-term academic growth plateaued and then dropped once that state's schools widely adopted classroom technology.

Question:

One school district in the film created "Engagement Navigator" positions to proactively identify disconnected students and help them find in-person clubs, sports, or jobs, and reports a 70% drop in suspensions since. What might something like this look like in your community?

Information:

- Students in the film describe feeling more motivated to come to school and more connected to peers after these changes, alongside reduced Chromebook and phone use during the day.



7. Solutions at Home

Question:

What's one small change you could make at home this month, after watching this film?

Information:

- One clinician in the film outlines the "4 Rs" for approaching a behavior change with a child:

- **Respect** – acknowledge they're doing what they're doing for a reason
- **Rationale** – explain why the change matters, not just "because I said so"
- **Rules** – build them together where possible
- **Resistance** (expect some) – it's normal for kids to push back on structure

Question:

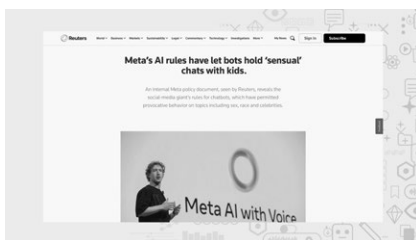
How do you feel about keeping phones, tablets, and AI-enabled devices out of kids' bedrooms overnight?

Question:

How do you feel about the idea of doing this as communities, like parents of kids in the same elementary school class or homeroom parents in middle school?

Information:

- The film highlights community pledge movements like Wait Until 8th and OK to Delay, where families commit together to delay giving youth devices. The Screen-Free Sleep campaign also has resources to help families work together to keep devices out of bedrooms at night.
- Research cited in the film links insufficient sleep in children to changes in brain development and higher risk of anxiety, depression, and attention difficulties.



8. Policy, Regulation, and Advocacy

Question:

One advocate in the film compares AI's lack of safety testing to the strict inspections required to open a sandwich shop. Does that comparison land for you?

Information:

- The film features youth advocates, including Adam Billen of Encode, working to pass state-level AI safety legislation in the absence of federal action.
- It also notes that over a thousand employees at AI companies, including CEOs and top scientists, have signed a statement calling on governments to support an international effort to pace frontier AI development.

Question:

What responsibility do you think falls on tech companies compared to parents or schools?

Information:

- One expert in the film argues that the current model, where parents and schools are expected to build the safeguards a product should have shipped with, is different from how consumer products are usually regulated, suggesting something like an FDA for consumer AI as a goal.

EXERCISES



Discussion is only one way to process the film.

These exercises may resonate more with the young people in your group.

REAL OR AI?

- Before your discussion, pull three or four short examples of real and AI-generated images, video clips, or text (clearly marked for yourself in advance).
- Have the group guess which is which.
- Use the reveal as a jumping-off point for Section 1's questions above.

FAMILY AI AGREEMENT PLAN

- Hand out our blank Family AI Agreement Plans.
- Either in small groups or as families, invite participants not to fill them out but discuss them.
- Help prompt the conversation. For example: "Are there topics the Plan doesn't address that should be added?"
- [You can find the Family AI Agreement Plan here.](#)

END THE DISCUSSION



Thank your guests for attending this screening, and for their participation in the discussion. Give details of any follow up activities or groups you may have planned for the future, and be sure to give out copies of the parents handout.

Details are contained in the handout, but remind your guests that there are many additional resources from Screenagers:

- Visit screenagersmovie.com to find resource pages and to subscribe to our weekly newsletter; [Tech Talk Tuesdays](#).
- Listen to the Screenagers podcast: [Parenting in the Screen Age](#), wherever they get their podcasts.
- Support our campaigns at ScreenFreeSleep.org and AwayForTheDay.org.

Word of mouth makes a big difference in helping us spread the message. Please consider reaching out to other schools or groups to encourage them to host a screening like this one for their community.

The Screenagers team thanks you for moderating and participating in this positive movement for the health of our kids! We would love to hear how your screening went. Please email us at info@screenagersmovie.com.