# Ashley Walters rethinks parenting after Netflix’s Adolescence highlights social media’s risks



Ashley Walters has opened up about the profound impact of his role in Netflix's critically acclaimed series *Adolescence*, revealing that it has led him to reassess his parenting style. The drama, which premiered in March, revolves around a 13-year-old boy accused of murdering a schoolgirl. Through the lens of this harrowing narrative, the series explores the influence of social media on teenagers, particularly how online content can distort young minds.

In a candid discussion on Fearne Cotton's *Happy Place* podcast, Walters reflected on his experience portraying the character of Jamie Miller, who becomes radicalised by the misogynistic and toxic content he consumes online. He admitted that his perspective on raising his eight children has shifted dramatically, stating that he realised he might have been "too liberal" in his parenting approach. Walters acknowledged that his leniency regarding screen time and device usage stemmed from a desire not to alienate his children from their peers, but the series has prompted him to rethink this stance. “I don’t think I understood how dangerous those things can be sometimes,” he said, noting the necessity for more stringent discussions around online safety within his family.

The narrative of *Adolescence* reflects a broader conversation about the consequences of unchecked social media access among youth. Recent studies suggest that teenagers spend an alarmingly high number of hours—nearly five daily—on social platforms, often exposing themselves to harmful influences and distorted realities. This alarming trend has catalysed calls for better parental guidance in managing children's digital interactions. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, in commentary on the series, emphasised the need to postpone smartphone access until high school, arguing that early exposure exacerbates mental health challenges among young people.

Walters' reflections on parenting also resonate with the current anxieties of many parents navigating the digital landscape. With the series gaining significant traction, discussions have emerged among experts advocating for practical strategies in addressing the specific challenges posed by social media. Parenting consultant Tanith Carey has suggested that fostering open dialogue with children about their online activities can pave the way for healthier relationships with technology. Moreover, the idea of supervised device use has gained traction, positioning it as a potential middle ground for parents who wish to balance granting autonomy with ensuring safety.

The concerns surrounding social media have not gone unnoticed by the UK government. Following the series' success, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced plans to offer *Adolescence* for free in schools, believing it could serve as a crucial educational tool to address the pervasive issues of online radicalisation and youth violence. Such endorsement indicates a growing recognition of the show's relevance in contemporary discussions about digital behaviour among teenagers. Starmer himself shared that watching the Netflix series with his children was enlightening, stating, "This violence carried out by young men, influenced by what they see online, is a real problem."

The series has sparked a diverse dialogue not only about the responsibilities of parents but also about societal structures that fail to adequately support young individuals. Co-writer Jack Thorne and fellow creatives aimed for *Adolescence* to "cause discussion and make change," a vision that has evidently resonated with audiences and critics alike. The eight-episode arc highlights the complexities of adolescent life in an age dominated by digital interaction, offering an unflinching look at the pervasive risks associated with online engagement.

Truthfully, as *Adolescence* shines a spotlight on these pressing issues, it serves as a call to action for parents and society at large to reevaluate the ways they engage with and educate young people about the challenges and dangers that accompany the digital world.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14754767/Ashley-Walters-liberal-parent-role-Netflix-Adolescence.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14754767/Ashley-Walters-liberal-parent-role-Netflix-Adolescence.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2025/04/adolescence-jonathan-haidt-phones/682459/?utm_source=apple_news)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/33b72293c431496e57c2ca16417a379d), [[4]](https://theweek.com/culture-life/tv-radio/adolescence-and-the-toxic-online-world-whats-the-solution)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.womanandhome.com/life/news-entertainment/adolescence-tween-smartphones/), [[6]](https://www.womanandhome.com/life/news-entertainment/adolescence-toxic-masculinity/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/adolescence-hits-home-hard-says-british-pm-drama-be-aired-schools-2025-03-31/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14754767/Ashley-Walters-liberal-parent-role-Netflix-Adolescence.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2025/04/adolescence-jonathan-haidt-phones/682459/?utm_source=apple_news> - In this article, Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist, reflects on the Netflix miniseries 'Adolescence,' which delves into the detrimental effects of social media and smartphone use on teenagers. The series portrays a 13-year-old boy, Jamie, who, after being bullied online, commits a tragic act. Haidt, author of 'The Anxious Generation,' advocates for delaying smartphone access until high school and social media use until age 16, emphasizing that unrestricted access can exacerbate mental health issues and harmful behaviors among adolescents. He views the show as a catalyst for societal change, encouraging parents to recognize the pervasive digital immersion affecting youth today.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/33b72293c431496e57c2ca16417a379d> - This article discusses the UK government's initiative to stream the Netflix series 'Adolescence' for free in secondary schools to spark conversations about the harmful effects of social media on children. The series, which revolves around a 13-year-old boy accused of fatally stabbing a girl, highlights the negative impacts of online content. Supported by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, the initiative aims to help students better understand issues like misogyny, online radicalization, and healthy relationships. The move comes amid rising concerns about the influence of smartphones and exposure to harmful content among children, emphasizing the collective responsibility to address these issues.
4. <https://theweek.com/culture-life/tv-radio/adolescence-and-the-toxic-online-world-whats-the-solution> - This article examines the challenges parents face as teenagers spend nearly five hours a day on social media, leading to concerns about the toxic online environment their children navigate. The Netflix drama 'Adolescence' exemplifies these fears, depicting how a well-raised 13-year-old boy, Jamie, commits murder due to influence from the online 'manosphere,' an anti-feminist subculture. The piece discusses the impact of failing male teenagers, who, facing social isolation and skewed body image expectations, turn to toxic online figures for validation. Proposed solutions include better male role models, more youth clubs, and potentially banning smartphones for children, though these efforts are acknowledged as challenging against the powerful draw of social media and online validation.
5. <https://www.womanandhome.com/life/news-entertainment/adolescence-tween-smartphones/> - This article explores the concerns sparked by the Netflix series 'Adolescence,' which delves into the dark storyline involving a 13-year-old boy accused of murder. The piece highlights the high prevalence of smartphone ownership among children and the rising parental anxiety about exposing their kids to potential dangers associated with smartphones. Parenting expert Tanith Carey offers practical advice on addressing tween's requests for phones, emphasizing listening to their reasoning, explaining the maturity required for such devices, and considering supervised tablet use as a middle-ground approach. The article aims to help parents navigate the dilemma of granting smartphone access while ensuring their children's safety.
6. <https://www.womanandhome.com/life/news-entertainment/adolescence-toxic-masculinity/> - This article explores the concerns sparked by the Netflix series 'Adolescence,' which delves into toxic masculinity and online influence on teenage boys following a violent incident involving young teens. Writer Jack Thorne expresses his fears about raising a son in a digital age filled with harmful content and influencers. The piece offers practical advice for parents addressing toxic masculinity, encouraging open dialogue, promoting respectful relationships, monitoring online activity, and reinforcing emotional intelligence in sons. Experts suggest alternatives to lectures, the importance of positive reinforcement, and discuss how inflammatory language can alienate rather than educate. Three mothers share personal experiences dealing with the impact of toxic content, like Andrew Tate's messages and unrealistic beauty standards, on their sons. Each highlights the importance of conversation, understanding developmental challenges, and building trust. The article concludes with recommendations for professional help, emphasizing that early intervention and informed parenting can help mitigate harm and guide boys towards healthy masculinity.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/adolescence-hits-home-hard-says-british-pm-drama-be-aired-schools-2025-03-31/> - This article reports on British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's praise for Netflix's decision to make the drama 'Adolescence' freely available for schools. The show addresses the profound influence of social media and online influencers on teenagers, notably highlighting the toxic effects of figures like Andrew Tate and the rise of incel culture. Starmer, who watched the show with his teenage children, emphasized the importance of discussing these pervasive online influences. The drama, co-written by Jack Thorne, achieved historical viewership on British television with nearly 6.5 million views for its first episode. Thorne expressed hopes that the series would spark meaningful discussions among teachers and students.