

# Jamie Lee Curtis Parents, put down your cellphones. Your kids are watching.

The solution to kids' obsessions with their phones starts with a look in the mirror.

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Jamie Lee Curtis on Sept. 4, 2018 on the "Today" show.

Nathan Congleton / TODAY

## Jamie Lee Curtis

Jamie Lee Curtis is an award-winning actress and the author of 12 best-selling children's books, including ["Me, Myselfie & I"](#) (September 2018).

How many times have you sat with somebody and they're looking at their phone? It's so rude, but that's what's happening to a generation of children with their parents.

Our mothers were, for most of us, our first teachers: We learned everything from them, and we patterned ourselves after them. But now we see moms with their babies, and they're on their phones. So much about parenting a baby is looking them in the eyes, though, and phones get in the way of that.

If our children spend their time looking at us looking our phones — at ourselves on our phones, for that matter — scrolling constantly all day, it's telling them that they should do it, too. But the problem is bigger than that: I'm mortified by what I see on a daily basis on people's social media profiles. There's an obsession with other people's personal lives, and people are obsessed with themselves, which children can't help but pick up on.

It's a runaway train and nobody's talking about it.

As a sober woman of 20 years, one thing I tell parents is that, if the first thing you do when you're celebrating something is to go have a bottle of champagne, or if you have a terrible day at work and go home to your family and say, "Oh my God, it was a terrible day at work, I need a drink," don't be surprised if your young person gets drunk at a party. Don't be surprised because they've seen you do it; how you use your phone, and how often you use your phone, is no different.

You really have to put your phone down, because what's bad for you is bad for your kids. We see so many young people who are dysmorphic, who look in the mirror and are not satisfied with what they see.

It begins with compare and despair: Think about how it feels when you, as an adult, compare your life to those you see in your Instagram feed. It feels like you're not having fun like they are, you're not eating food the way they all are, you don't look the way they all do. Apps have given us this idea that we can alter ourselves— that you alone are not enough, that your being needs to be altered with a bunny face or a chipmunk, with a new voice, with a face that has no blemishes.

If you turn off the phone, at least then you will not have these images constantly served to you that make you feel like you are not enough. Self-acceptance is the key to being a grounded human being: This is me, this is my body, this is the body that God gave me. The whole goal of a self development is to actually be in your feet, to be where your feet are, to be in your body. Then, you need self knowledge, and the acceptance of who you are, what you're capable of doing and what you're not capable of doing.

Your phone addiction is something you can change. Insist on unplugging, and include your spouse, if you have one. Commit to walking in your house with your family and turning off your phone. Can you do it? Because if you can't do it, your kids can't do it. And you can't demonstrate that behavior, then don't be surprised when you're sitting at dinner and your kid's looking down at their phone. The phone isn't going to teach them to put it down; you have to.

I do believe the solution to kids' obsessions with their phones starts with a look in the mirror. The problem is you and your addiction to your phone; it's not your kid. Your kid is simply doing what he or she has seen you do.

This is why I wrote my latest book, ["Me, Myselfie & I"](#): I posted a photograph of myself on Instagram around Christmas with a caption that said, "Mommy got a selfie stick," and a friend of mine said, "Is that a new children's book?" Within a few hours, it was, because it's something I'd been thinking about for a long time.

I wrote it as a children's book, and made it the parent who becomes obsessed with themselves, because, if this was an 8-year-old kid on their phone and the parents were the ones trying to shut it down, it would become a power struggle. But by putting the phone in the parent's hand, in a medium designed to be read by children or to children by a parent or a loved one or an adult, you show through the eyes of a child that all children want is a connection with their parent.

Kids already know when their parents aren't paying attention, and I think that kids, when they read the book, will then be the ones to say, "Mom, put your phone away." It's a cautionary tale — a funny, silly one that highlights the exaggerated parts of this phenomenon of self obsession, but it's the beginning of a conversation that needs to be had.