

Debra Gelfand
Children's Foundation

Unraveling Parenting Myths

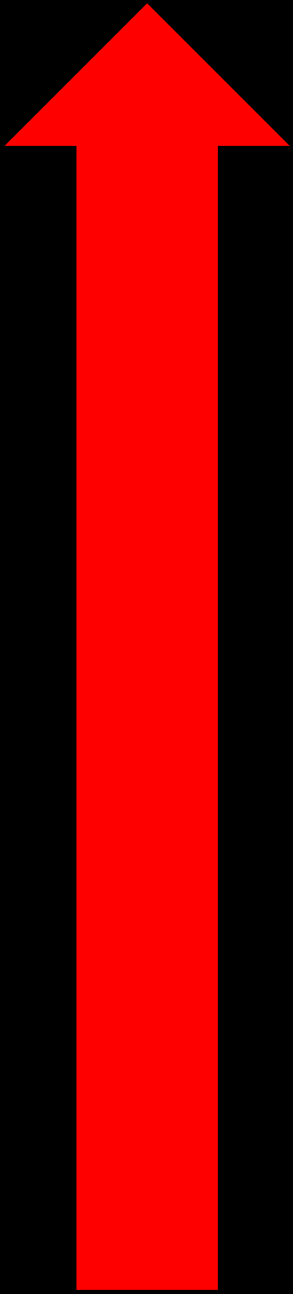
A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and blue jeans, is pushing a stroller on a paved path. A young child with blonde hair, wearing a pink and white striped shirt and light-colored pants, is sitting in the stroller. The background shows a park-like setting with trees and a building in the distance.

PARENTING IS HARD

***AND OUR SOCIETY MAKE'S IT THAT
MUCH HARDER***

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS





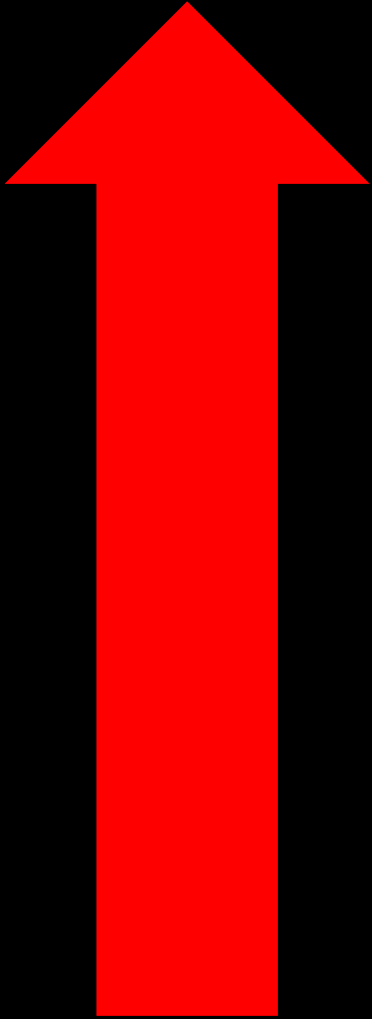
2009-2018

rates of depression rose
more than 60% among
those aged 7-17



2007-2015

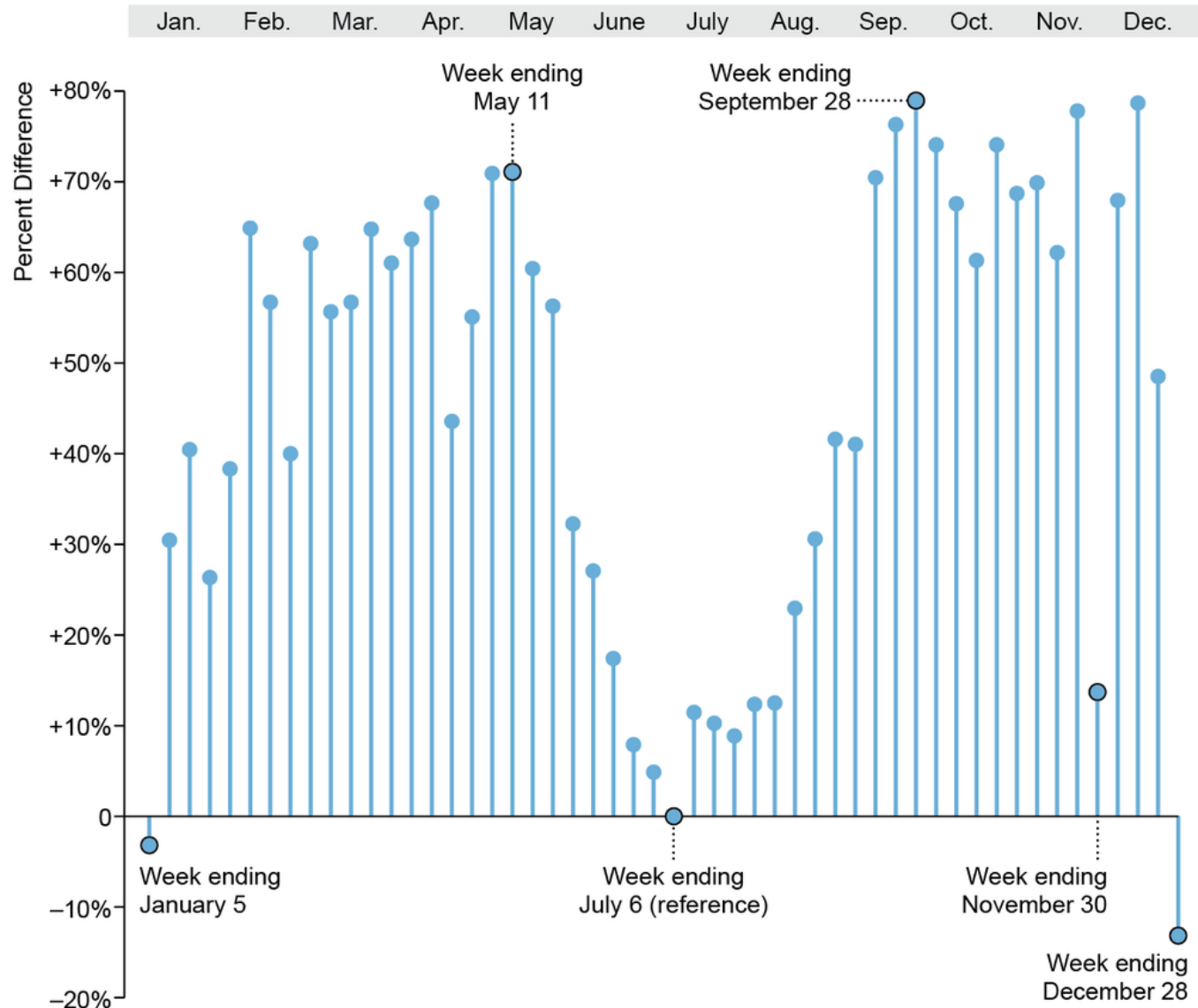
number of children and
teenagers who were
seen in emergency
rooms with suicidal
thoughts or attempts
doubled.



**The suicide rate for children
is **two times higher** when
school is in session.**

Mental Health Emergency Room Visits by Week, Ages 5–17, 2019

The graph shows the relative differences in the numbers of mental health ER visits each week in 2019, compared with the week ending on July 6, 2019, for children ages five to 17. These data represent only the subset of U.S. hospitals that participate in the National Syndromic Surveillance Program.



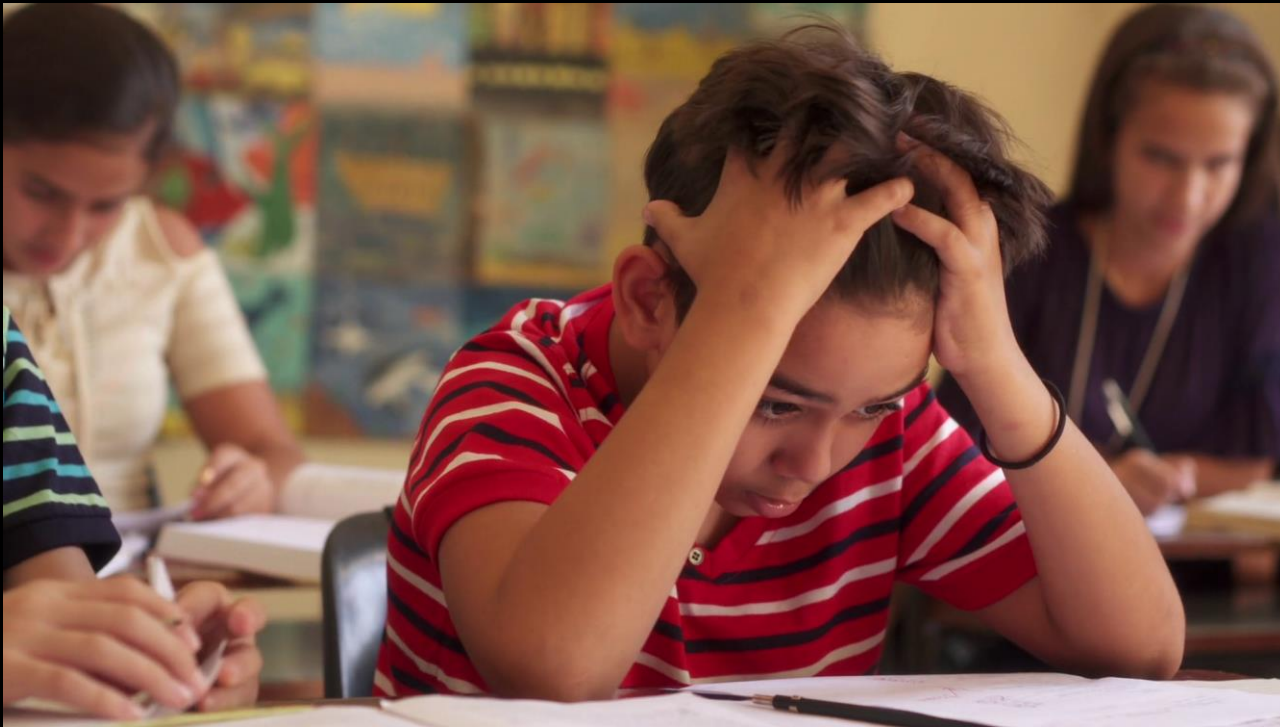
September, 2019

On Parenting • Perspective

Students in high-achieving schools are now named an ‘at-risk’ group, study says



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation named the top environmental conditions harming adolescent wellness — among them were poverty, trauma, discrimination and “excessive pressure to excel.”



Children in high-achieving schools can suffer significantly higher rates of anxiety, depression and substance abuse at least **three to seven times the national average.**





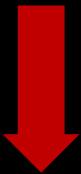
Understanding Children's Anxiety



Autonomic Nervous System



Sympathetic



**Triggers
Stress
Response**

Parasympathetic



**Returns
Us To
Homeostasis**

EITHER/OR





Fear = Real and Immediate Threat





Anxiety



Fear = real and
immediate threat

Anxiety = thoughts
about potential
threats

We Are Time Travelers



And Mind Readers



We are really
bad at both
but ...

Our body
responds as
if these
beliefs are
true.

emotional strain or *tense*

adverse or demanding circumstances

'he's obviously under a lot of stress'

the stresses and strains of family life

Stress

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Anxiety is protective

Anxiety is often wrong

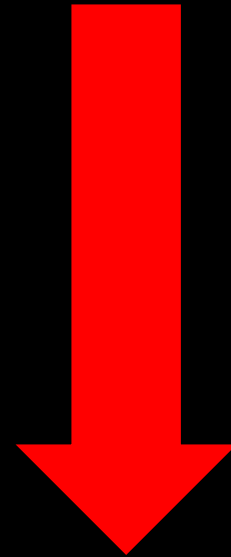


“These thoughts are
not irrational, but they
are not true.”

Dan Harris



STRESS



**T
H
R
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A
T**



Fight



Flight



Freeze

We lose
the tools
we need
the **most**

Listen
Creativity
Flexibility
Empathy
Memory
Language
Inhibition

Why Now?

Public Health Parable



Anxiety is
downstream

A graphic element consisting of a piece of white paper that has been torn along its edges. The word "myths" is printed in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background that is placed over the torn paper. The paper is slightly curled and has a soft shadow beneath it, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

myths

myths

Money makes us happy

***Elite colleges are the
key to success***

***Self-esteem is essential
for wellness***

Kids develop at the same rate

myth #1

**Money Makes Us
Happy**

Road To Happiness and Health



HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

Prestigious Job

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

Prestigious Job

Elite College

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

Prestigious Job

Elite College

AP Classes/Extracurriculars

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

Prestigious Job

Elite College

AP Classes/Extracurriculars

Excel in Lower Grades/Travel Teams

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

Prestigious Job

Elite College

AP Classes/Extracurriculars

Excel in Lower Grades/Travel Teams

Elite Preschool

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

Prestigious Job

Elite College

AP Classes/Extracurriculars

Excel in Lower Grades/Travel Teams

Elite Preschool

Early Enrichment Activities

JESSICA SIMONS

123-456-7890
123 Main Street, City State
myemail@email.com



ABOUT ME

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur
 adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt
 ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad
 minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco
 laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Date of birth: 20/02/2006

Height: 5'2 (158 cm)

Weight: 105lbs (54.5 kg)

Eyes color: Green

Hair color: Blonde

Hair length: Long

EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOL NAME

City, State
2019-2020

HIGH SCHOOL NAME

City, State
2020-2022

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Dialects: British Accent

Language: French (Basic)

Instruments: Piano, Guitar

Dance: Tap, Hip-hop

Sports: Swim, Skate

THEATRE

Play Title	Your Role	Theatre Name / Director Name
Play Title	Your Role	Theatre Name / Director Name
Play Title	Your Role	Theatre Name / Director Name
Play Title	Your Role	Theatre Name / Director Name

FILM & COMMERCIALS

Play Title	Your Role	Production Company Name
Play Title	Your Role	Production Company Name
Play Title	Your Role	Production Company Name
Play Title	Your Role	Production Company Name

TRAINING

MASTERCLASS NAME

University/School Name
(Instructor Name)

MASTERCLASS NAME

University/School Name
(Instructor Name)

MASTERCLASS NAME

University/School Name
(Instructor Name)

MASTERCLASS NAME

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MASTERCLASS NAME

University/School Name
(Instructor Name)



baby
einstein™



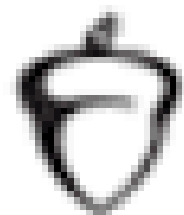


Cherry
Preschool





AP



CollegeBoard

The
Princeton
Review®

KAPLAN

ACT

The College Admissions **SCANDAL** BY THE NUMBERS



Parents paid between
\$15,000 and \$75,000
per ACT or SAT to have someone
take the test for their children



The scandal sparked
conversation about
wealth disparities
in elite universities and
Affirmative Action



50 parents were indicted
in the scandal



Celebrities involved in
the scheme included
actresses Felicity Huffman
and Lori Loughlin



“What do your kids do?”



**“Where is your child
going to college?”**



Happiness **Conspiracy**

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL

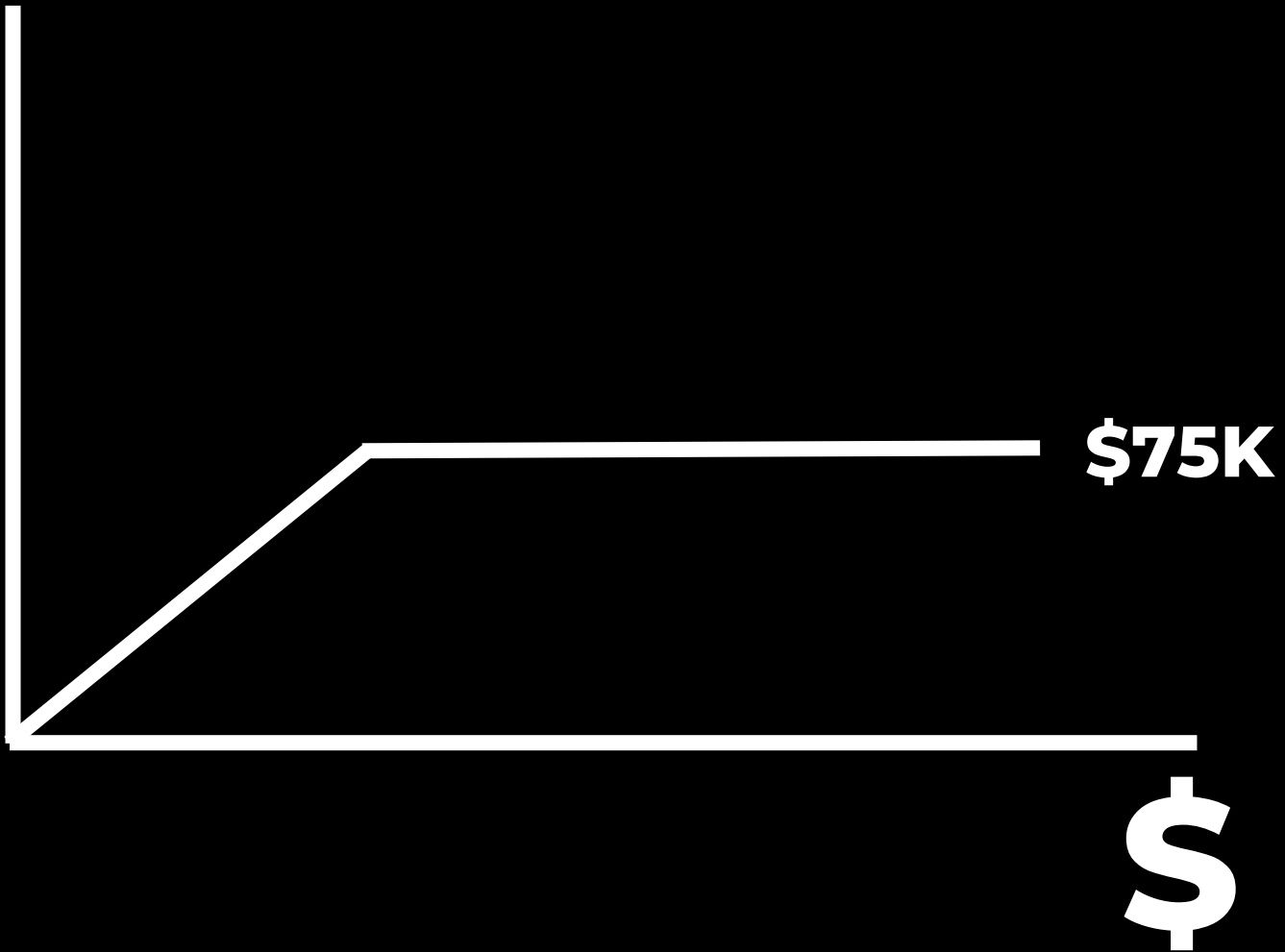


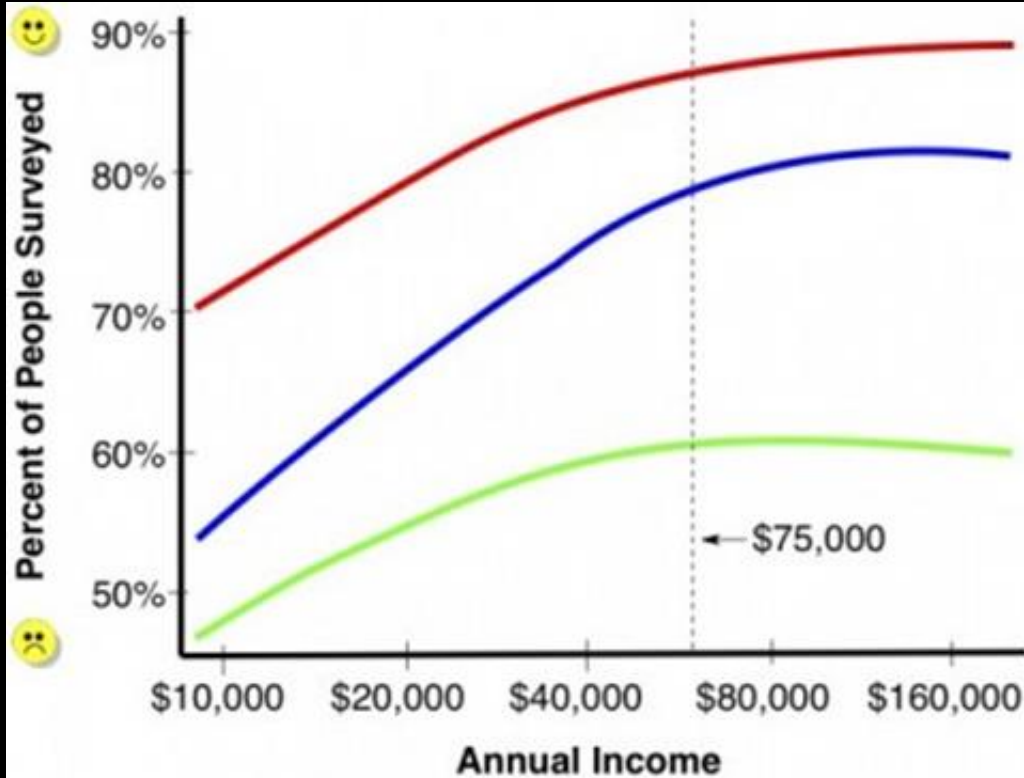
High Income

**Daniel Kahneman and
Angus Deaton (2010)**

\$75,000

The Happiness Chart



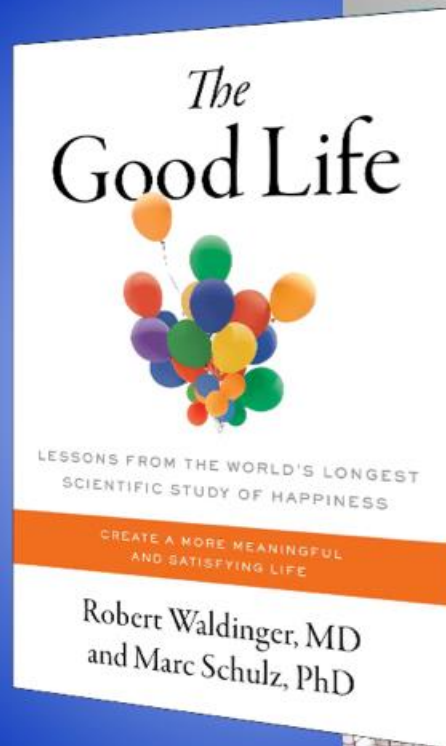


“\$75,000 is a threshold beyond which further increases in income no longer improve individuals’ ability to do what matters most to their emotional well-being, such as **spending time with people they like, avoiding pain and disease, and enjoying leisure.**”

“I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer.”

Jim Carrey





The Grant Study

The strongest predictors for people to maintain their happiness and health throughout the course of their lives was having relationships with satisfying levels of quality and warmth.



The seventy-five years and twenty million dollars expended on the Grant Study points to a straightforward five-word conclusion: Happiness is love. Full stop.

— *George Vaillant* —

AZ QUOTES

reality

**Happiness is about the
wealth of our relationships,
not our money.**

myth #2

**Selective Schools are
Better for our Kids**

HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL



High Income

Prestigious Job

Elite College



★ ★ ★
TICKET
TO SUCCESS
★ ★ ★

56743948

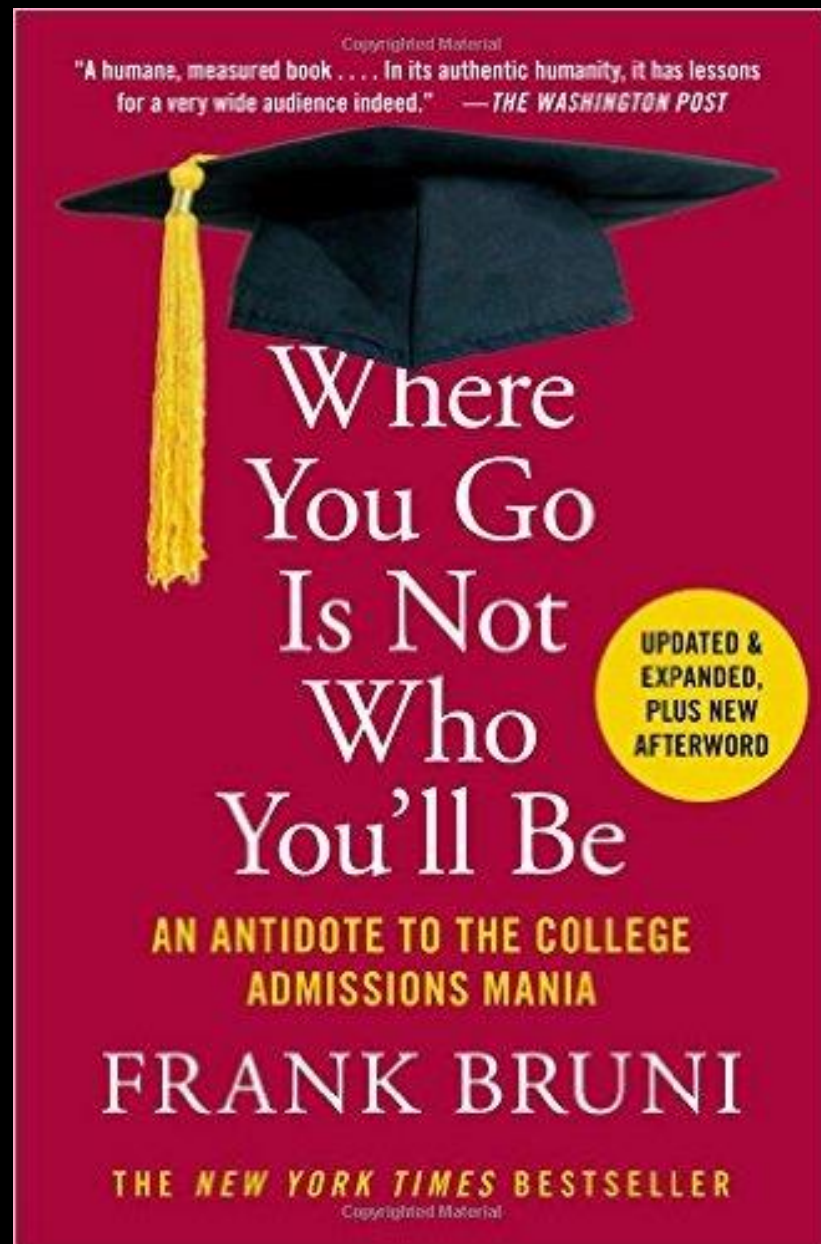
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Attract To Reject

“A yes or no from Amherst or Dartmouth or Duke or Northwestern is seen as the conclusive measure of a young person’s worth, a binding verdict on the life that he or she has led up until that point, an incontestable harbinger of the successes or disappointments to come.”



CEO's of the Top 10 Gross Revenues in 2014

CEO's of the Top 10 Gross Revenues in 2014

University of Arkansas

University of Texas

University of California , Davis

University of Nebraska

Auburn University

Texas A and M

Kettering University

University of Kansas

Dartmouth College

University of Missouri-St. Louis

MacArthur Genius Grants

MacArthur Genius Grants

Western Michigan

Western Illinois

Illinois Wesleyan

Southern Illinois

Platinum Study

550 leaders in business, government,
non-profits, politicians.

Platinum Study

550 leaders in business, government, non-profits, politicians.

2/3 came from “non-elite” institutions

FORTUNE 100 CEOs



Ivy League



No Diploma

FORTUNE 100 CEOs

7%

Ivy League

8%

No Diploma

Be careful what you wish for



**“How does it
feel to be in
the bottom
50%?”**

**Shawn Achor
Harvard Professor**

**But students learn more in
elite colleges,**

Right?

Selective Schools and Quality of Education

Little evidence suggests that selectivity is related to measures of students' self-reported gains in learning, let alone verbal, quantitative, or subject-matter competence measured by standardized tests.

The weight of evidence simply does not support students' or policymakers' beliefs that a selective admissions process enhances student learning.

Mayhew et. al. 2016

**What does impact college
student learning?**

Wait for it ...

Time Spent Studying

(Arum and Roska, 2011)





**This is true regardless of institution and
for all kinds of students.**

**There is no evidence that students'
learning will suffer for attending a less
selective college.**

Gallup/Purdue Study

No statistical differences between public and private universities and elite vs. non-elite schools.

Keys to College Success

1. Taking a course with a professor who makes learning exciting.
2. Work with professors who care about students personally.
3. Finding a mentor who encourages pursue personal goals.
4. Working on a project across several semesters.
5. Participating in an internship that applies classroom learning.
6. Being active in extracurricular activities.

This is where it gets tricky

Only 14% of graduates strongly agreed they were supported by professors who cared, made them excited about learning, and encouraged their dreams.

Only 6% of graduates strongly agreed they had a meaningful internship or job, worked on a long-term project, and were actively involved in extra-curricular activities.

And only 3% experienced all six factors (Gallup Inc., 2014).

**Yeah, but what about jobs
after college?**





The 2014 Gallup-Purdue annual report found no relationship between college selectivity and both workplace engagement and general well-being (Gallup Inc., 2014)

But what about the \$\$\$?

Dale and Krueger found that college selectivity had no effect on long-term earnings. The same students who were admitted into the selective schools but who chose to attend less selective schools did just as well financially later on in life.

Beware What You Hope For

Ten years after graduation, former students of selective colleges report *lower job satisfaction* than students from less selective colleges; students from more selective colleges are more likely to feel underpaid (Liu et al., 2010).

Summary

Job satisfaction, general well-being, learning, and income are all important outcomes of college.

Research shows no relationship between selectivity and learning, job satisfaction, or general well-being.

And more ...

So extreme are admissions standards now that kids who manage to get into elite colleges have, by definition, never experienced anything but success. The prospect of *not* being successful terrifies them, disorients them. The cost of falling short, even temporarily, becomes not merely practical but existential. The result is a violent aversion to risk. You have no margin for error, so you avoid the possibility that you will ever make an error.

William Deresiewicz

reality

**Students who attend
selective colleges do *not*
learn more, make more
money, or have better
careers.**

myth #3

**Self Esteem is
Essential for
Children's Mental
Health**



**BUILD YOUR
SELF-ESTEEM**

Self Esteem Generation



We tried to *hack* self esteem.

We tried to *hack* self esteem.

**By helping our children avoid
*any kind of distress.***

Intensive Parenting

“mothers and fathers overextend their time and money curating their child’s life in hopes of maximizing the child’s future.”



PARENTS
DO NOT LEAVE
YOUR CHILDREN
UNSUPERVISED

Intensive Parenting

“In the past 40 years, American parents—especially those with a college degree—have nearly doubled the amount of time they spend coaching, chauffeuring, tutoring, and otherwise helping their teenage children.”

Playdates



Sports



**Little League
Baseball Has
Changed
Over The Last
40 Years**



**Our Intensive
Parenting
can have
unintended
consequences**



We become more overwhelmed and anxious.



We deprive children of some very important things

The ability to tolerate discomfort

The development of a sense of *personal* competence.

The belief that they can solve their own problems.

These are key to developing
Resilience

Over- Emphasizing Self-esteem

Can make them feel ok when they should be more worried.

Increase their sense of entitlement and reduce their willingness to work hard.

Roy Baumeister, PhD.

The Benefits of *Not* Supervising Your Child

Boredom

Conflict

Mistakes

Bruises

Intensive Parenting Is Often Self-Defeating

“Rafts of research prove that intensive parenting mainly serves to burn out parents while harming children’s competence and mental health. “



But ... we don't read the research.

In a 2018 survey, 75 percent of respondents rated various intensive-parenting scenarios as “very good” or “excellent,” and less than 40 percent said the same about scenarios showing a non-intensive approach.

-

Anxiety is Contagious

“Anxious parents, in seeking to insulate their children from risk and danger, are unintentionally transferring their anxiety to their kids.”



***Perceived* parental criticism and
unreachable standards predicts
child depression.**



**Perfectionists ace school
but don't perform any better
than their colleagues at work.**



Achieving excellence in school often requires mastering old ways of thinking. Building an influential career demands new ways of thinking.





Ben Cichy
@bencichy



Got a 2.4 GPA my first semester in college. Thought maybe I wasn't cut out for engineering. Today I've landed two spacecraft on Mars, and am now designing one for the Moon.

STEM is hard for everyone. Grades ultimately aren't what matter. Curiosity and perseverance matter.

7:11 PM · Feb 19, 2021

Achievement Addiction



The Hedonic Treadmill



The Constant Pursuit of Achievement

The Hedonic Treadmill



It is exhausting

The Hedonic Treadmill

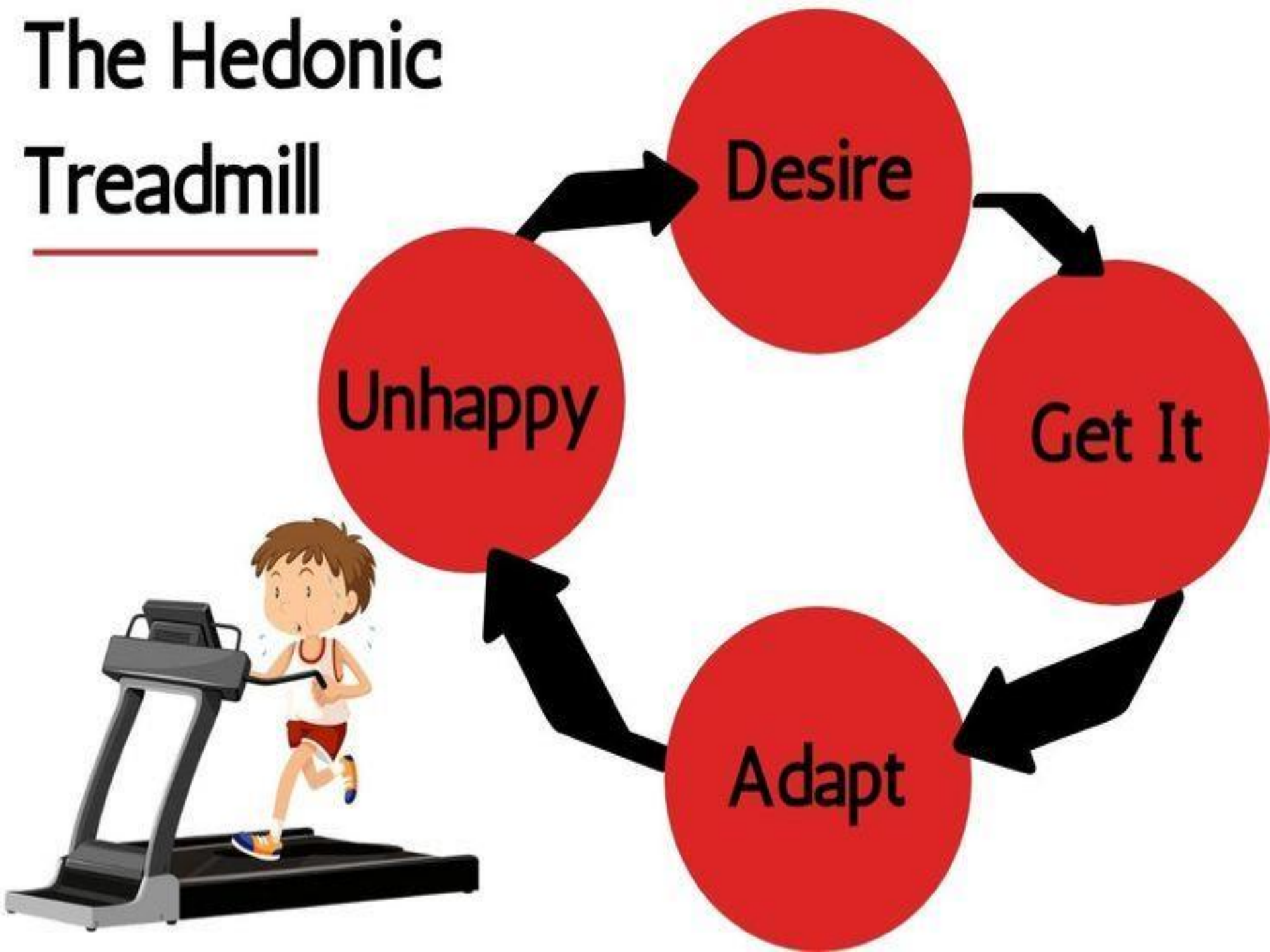


There is no end

The Hedonic Treadmill or Achievement Addiction

“the human tendency to feel a temporary increase in happiness after a positive experience, and then return to the baseline sense of satisfaction afterward.”

The Hedonic Treadmill



Chasing Achievement

but getting no where

because there is always more to
achieve

you continue to achieve
but feel empty and still wanting

“It’s like winning a pie eating contest ...”



“and the prize is more pie.”



**Their success or failure
becomes a reflection on our
competence as parents.**



**By emphasizing
self-esteem**

**We deprive our kids of
their most important
developmental task.**

**Building
Resilience
Instead of
Self-Esteem**

**Resilience
comes from
stress**

Biosphere 2





Jessica Valenti ✓

@JessicaValenti



Whenever I get discouraged and want to quit something, I remember the words of my then 3 year-old after she puked carrots all over the living room floor: "I'm gonna need more carrots."

10:34 AM · 1/18/21 · [Twitter Web App](#)

**They are often unprepared to
separate from us.**



Parents as Gardeners, not Carpenters

Intensive parents are carpenters,
hammering children into a particular shape
one stroke at a time.

Gardening parents pour their labor into
creating preconditions of “love, safety, and
stability” for their kids to grow in
potentially unpredictable ways.

Alison Gopnik

We Need To Model

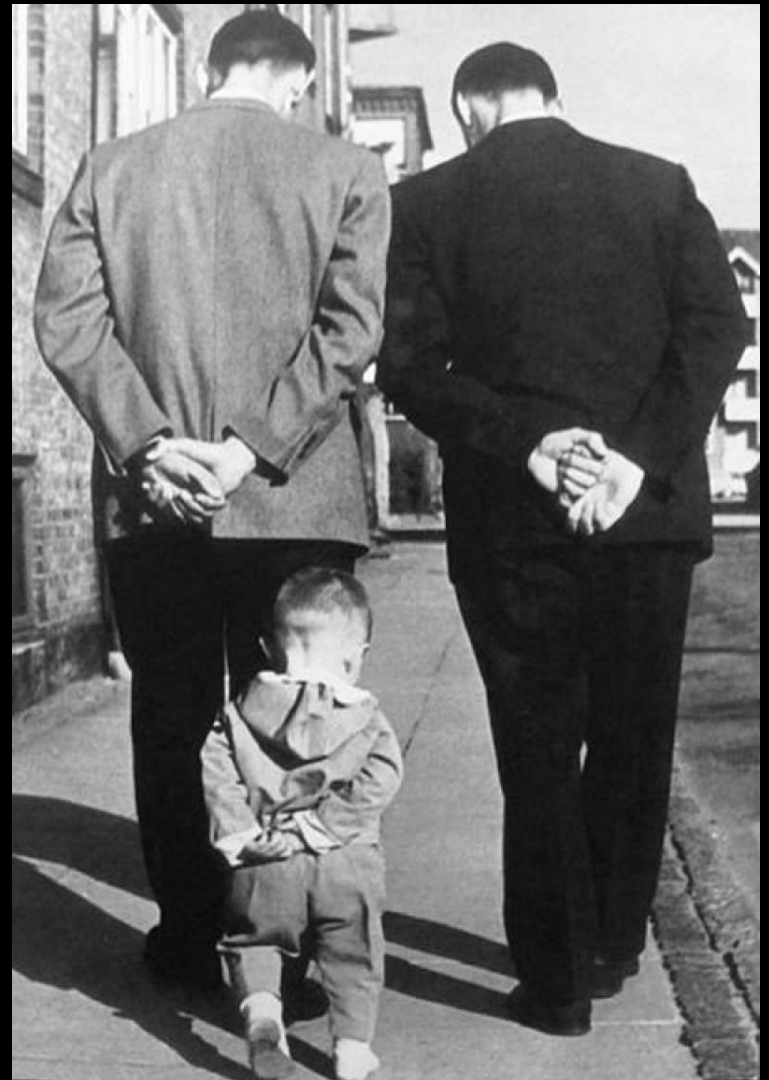


Can we talk about

***our* anxieties
our failures
our struggles
our weaknesses
our insecurities?**

“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”

James Baldwin



What Messages Are We Really Sending?



**90% of parents report
that their top priority
for their child is that:**

they are caring

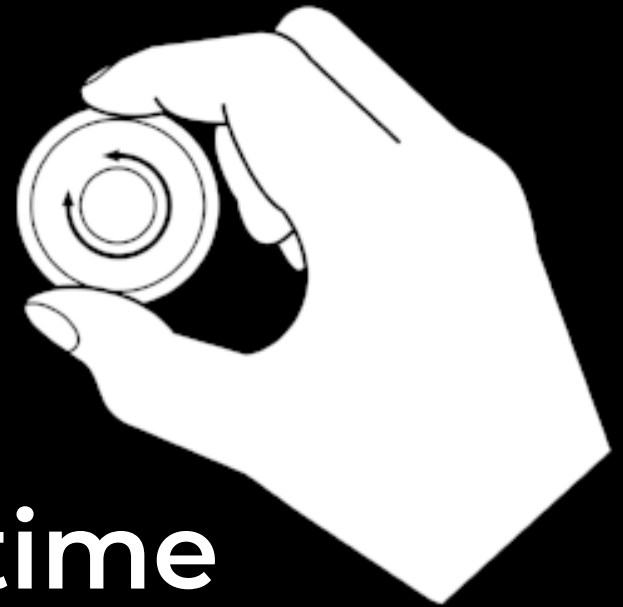
**81% of children report
that their parents value**

**achievement and
happiness over caring**

**ALL OR
NOTHING**

Parenting Involves Moving Several Dials Up

**Display love
Validate feelings
Consistent quality time**



It Also Involves Turning Some Dials Down

Do their homework

Rescue them from their distress

Feel responsible for their boredom

Solving your child's problems for them

Become overinvolved in their social lives



Some dials need constant adjusting.

Enrichment activities

Tutoring programs

Recreational activities

Supporting their hard times



The Problem with Self-Esteem

The biggest problem with self-esteem is that it is contingent on success. We have self esteem when other people think we are attractive and successful. But what happens when we fail? We lose self-esteem. So we are all focused on avoiding failure.

What is the alternative?

Cultivating Self-Compassion

A process of being kind to yourself. It is remembering that failing is a part of the human condition. We are all imperfect.

Can I be warm and supportive to myself
in the midst of my failure?

Self-Compassion

**Can we just be present and avoid the
impulse to fix it for them?**

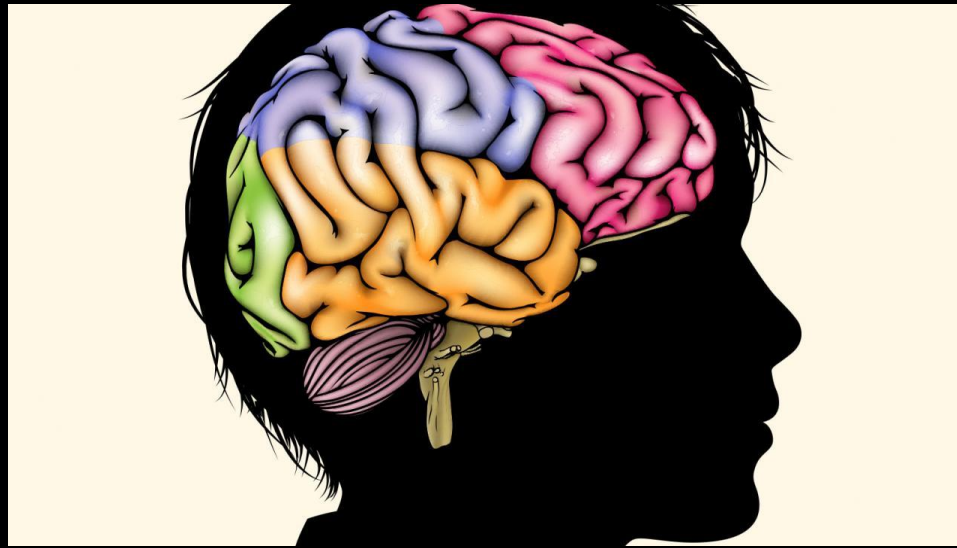


reality

**Children actually benefit
from tolerable stress.**

myth #4

**Our children develop
at the same rate**



Developmental Empathy

Developmental Empathy

David Gleason



DEVELOPMENTAL EMPATHY

Matching the demands we place on
our kids with their brain's
development.



**UNDER
CONSTRUCTION
UNTIL
—25—**

Impulse Control/Inhibition
Emotional Regulation
Initiating Tasks
Persistence
Transitions
Empathy
Attention
Planning





WARNING

Development
has it's own
timeline



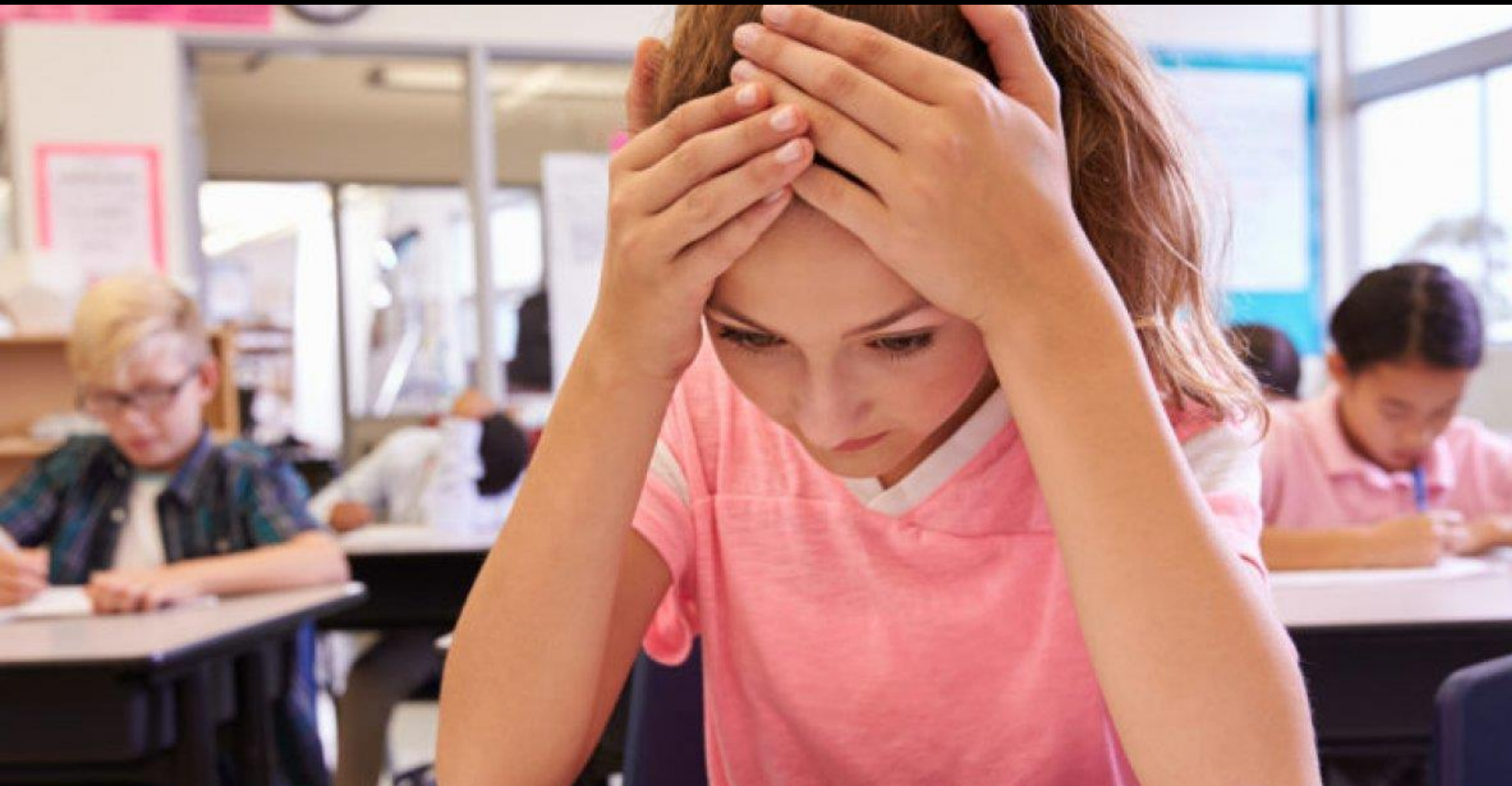


Origin of Stress

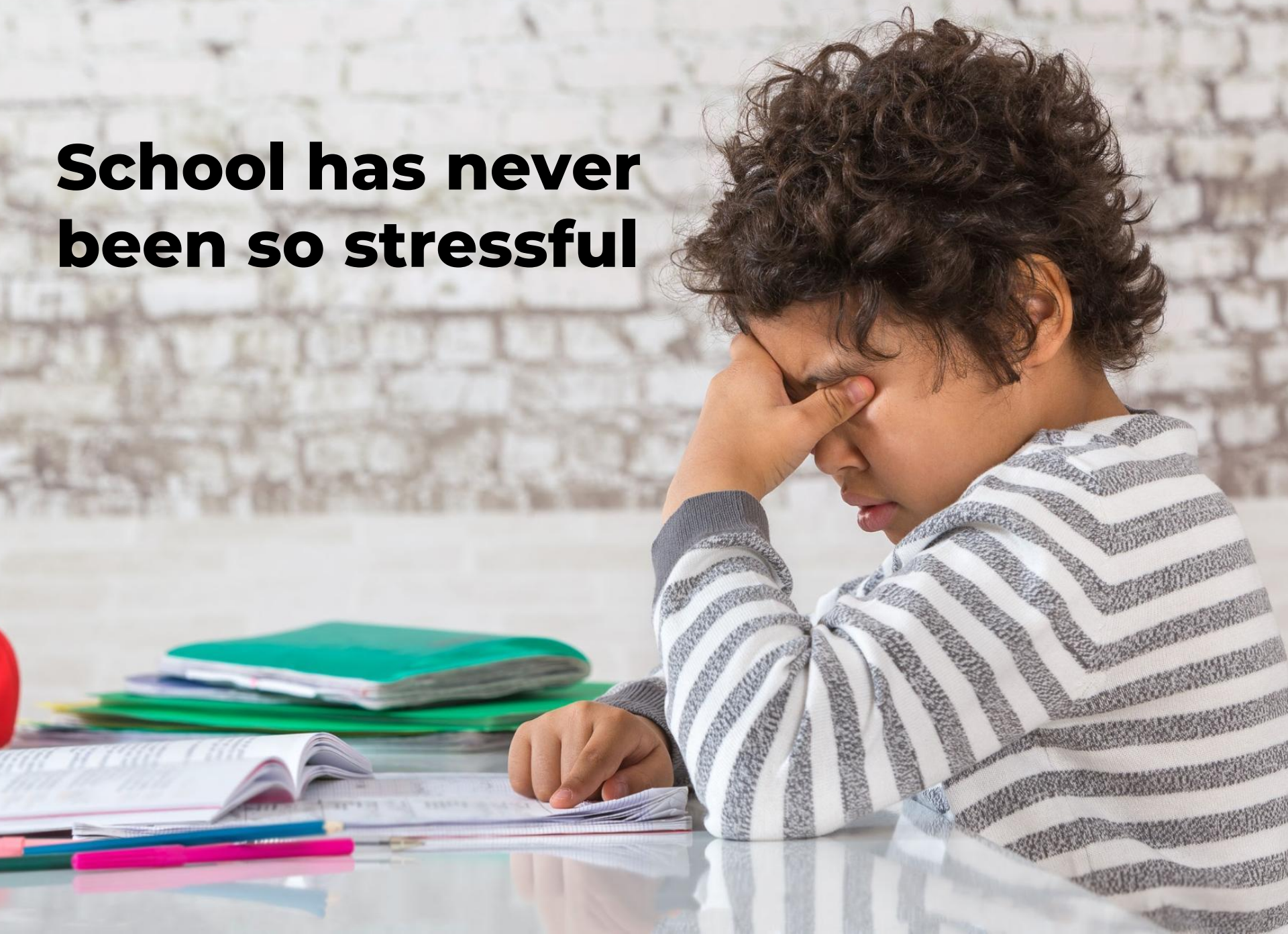


**INCOMPATIBILITY
CAUSES
STRESS**

**School has never
been so demanding**

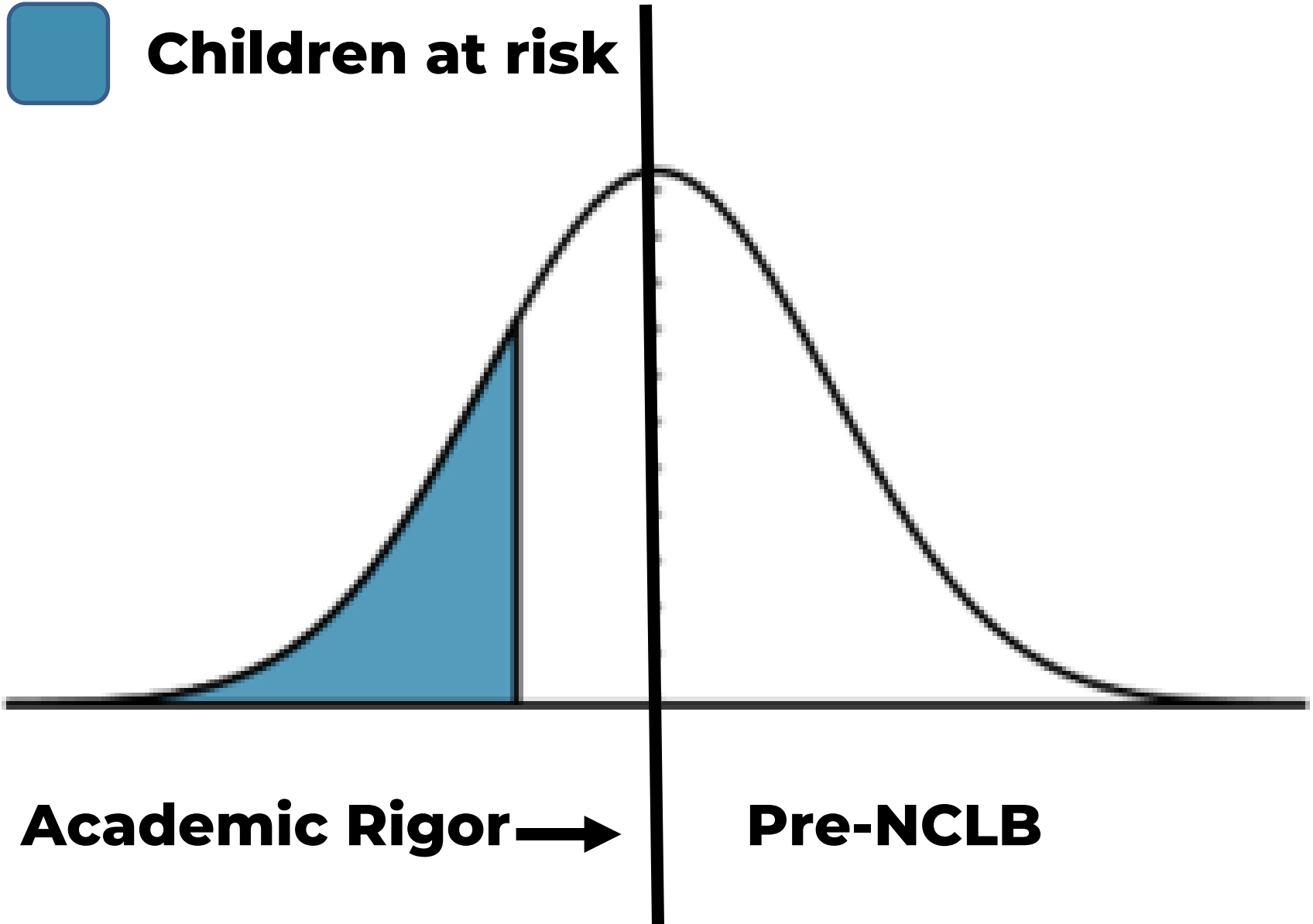


**School has never
been so stressful**





Children at risk

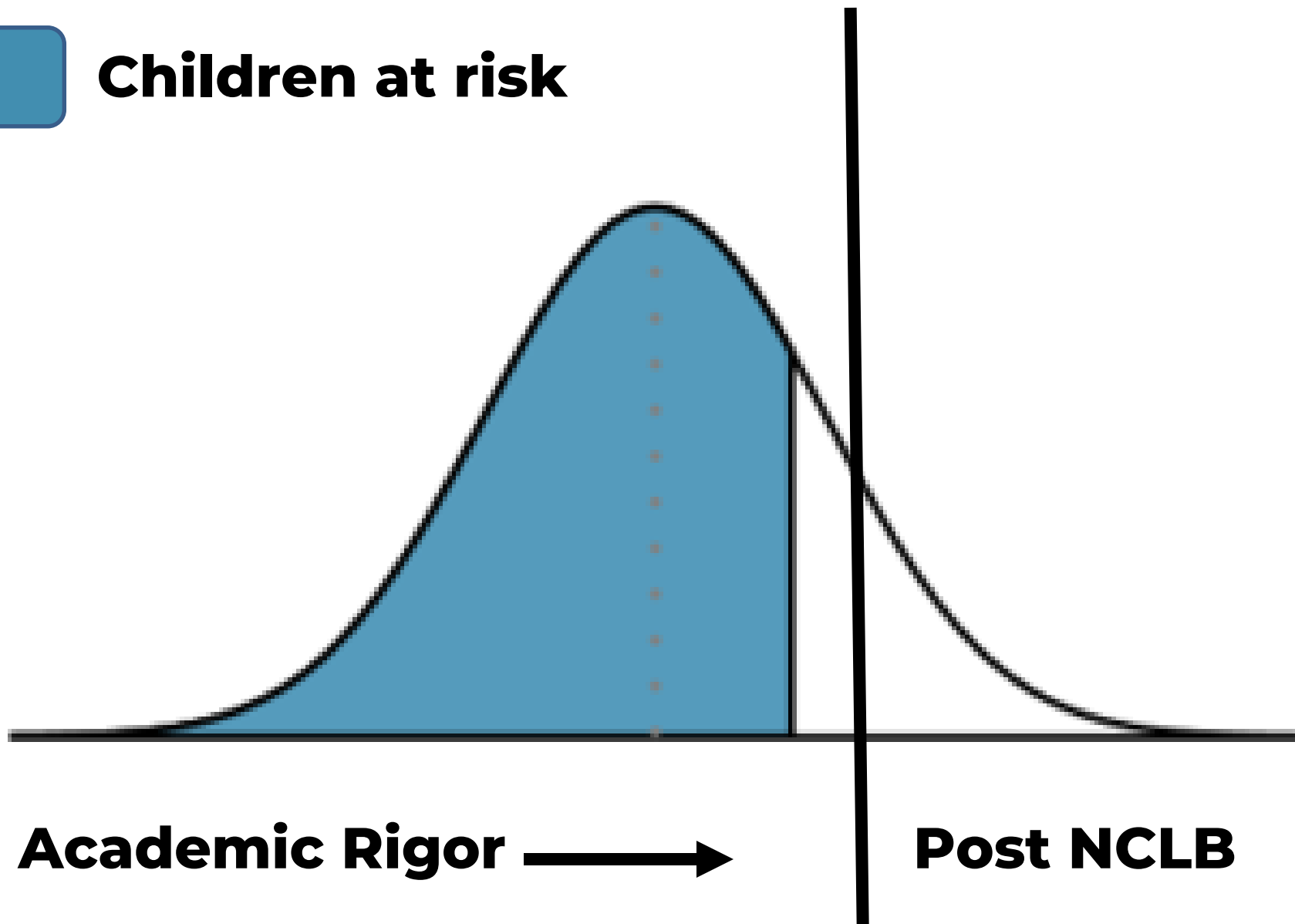


Academic Rigor →

Pre-NCLB



Children at risk

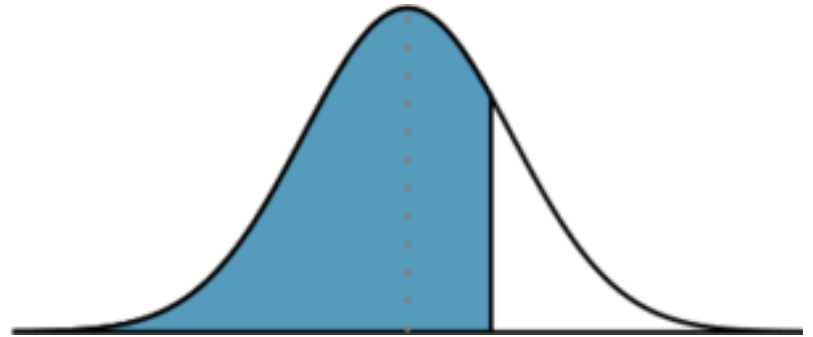


Academic Rigor →

Post NCLB



Children at risk



**Development requires
a lot of failing**





69 times per hour



**And we never call them
clumsy**

**We treat gaps
in development
as behavior
problems**





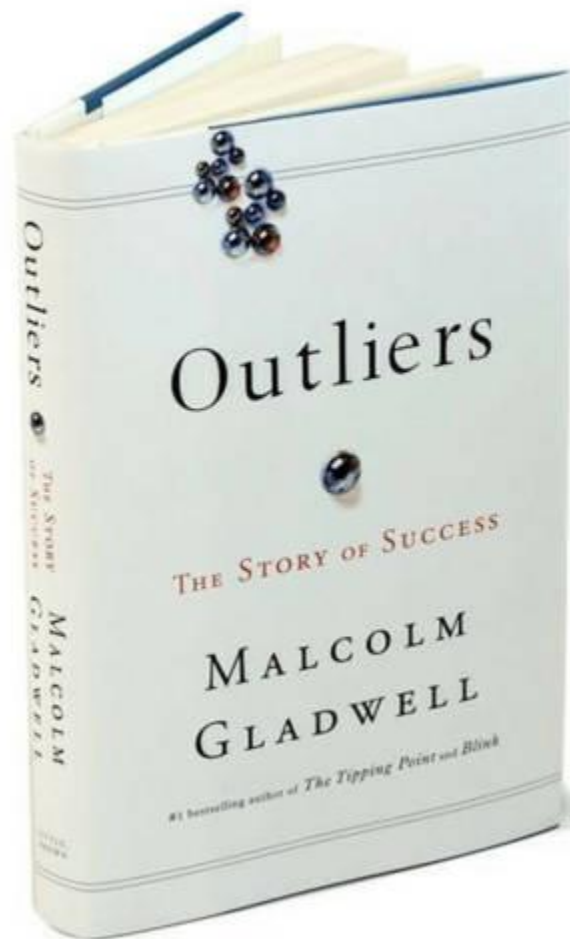
**When older kids fail
we call them ...**

**Lazy
Irresponsible
Manipulative
Immature
Selfish
Defiant**

**When we aren't aware of
development, we can make
terrible decisions:**

We punish and shame.

**Kids already feel shame
about developmental lags.**



40-30-20-10



“Teachers aren't any better than coaches at disentangling ability from maturity. So relatively older kids in elementary and middle school end up getting more encouragement.”

“They tend to get better grades and they're more likely to be chosen for things like gifted and talented programs. Meanwhile, relatively younger kids are more likely to be diagnosed with learning disorders. Or flagged for problem behavior.”

A man with dark, curly hair, wearing a green jacket over a grey shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is holding a white piece of paper with both hands and appears to be speaking or gesturing. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Wharton Business Students Try to Guess Their Privilege

Revisionist History

PUSHKIN

NSA Student Birthdays



North Shore Academy (NSA Bldg)
754 Red Oak, Lane Highland Park, IL

NSA Student Birthdays

Jun-Aug: 38

Sep-Nov: 19



North Shore Academy (NSA Bldg)
754 Red Oak Lane Highland Park, IL

ADHD Diagnoses By Birthdate



**August vs.
September:**

↑34%



**Everyone's developmental
path is unique**



**Help them achieve
their greatest
potential.**

**Starting with where
they are now.**



**Our work is to
prepare them for
their next step.**



**“Development
is always
on our side.”**



~ Karen Gouze, Ph.D.

Physical Maturity Doesn't Equal Emotional Maturity



Intellectual Ability Doesn't Equal Emotional Maturity



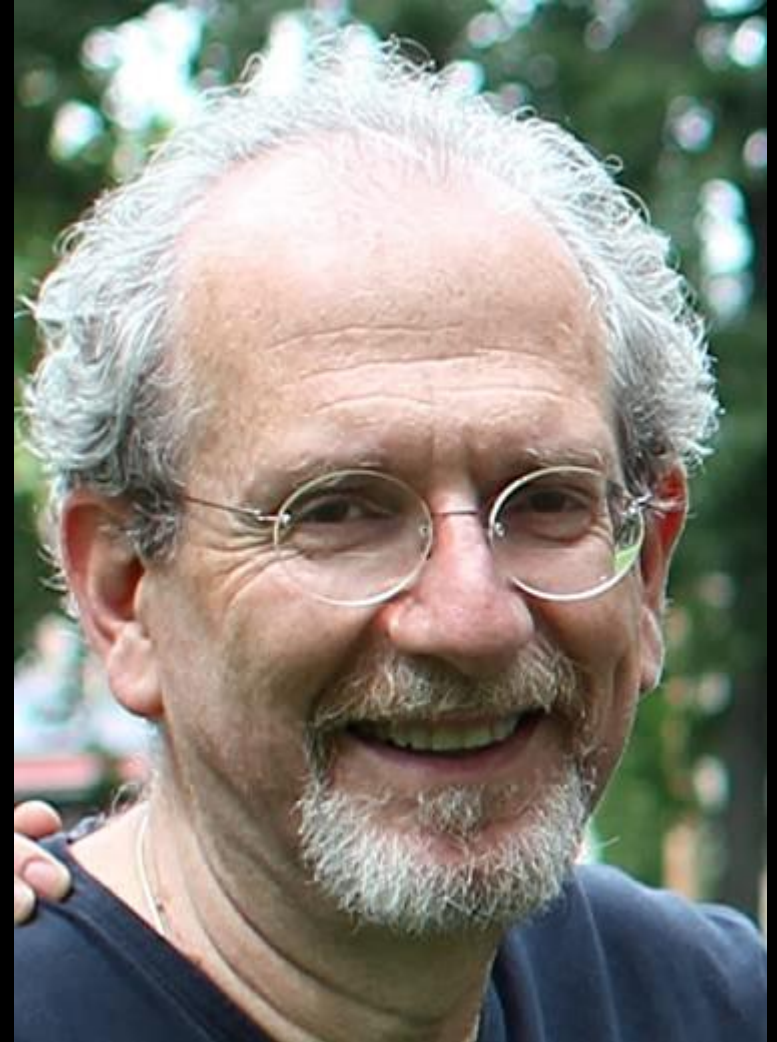
Grade Level Doesn't Equal Emotional Maturity



**Whenever we fight
development
we lose**



**“This will get
easier for
him.”**



~ Bill Levin, Ph.D.



it's hard to
be patient



Our work is like driving a car
at night. You can only see as
far as your headlights, but
you can make the whole trip
that way.

From: E.L. Doctorow



Reality

**Every child's
development has a
unique timeline and
path.**

myths

Money makes us happy

***Elite colleges are the
key to success***

***Self-esteem is essential
for wellness***

Children develop at the same rate

realities

Relationships makes us happy

***Engagement is the
key to success***

***Resilience is essential
for wellness***

Everyone's development is unique

Imagine how Would Things Be Different

If we realized that we didn't have to
build our child's resume?

If we weren't so anxious that they will
not keep up?

What would you do differently?

Something Unexpected Happened In Spring 2020





“The well-being of these students **actually improved. As classes and exams were canceled, grading moved to pass/fail and extracurricular activity ceased, they reported lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression compared with 2019.”**

~ Suniya Luthar

Homework



Sleep





**ADHD
Obesity
Behavior
Academics
Social Skills**

Schedules









YUP, WE BLEW IT.





“But these improvements were short-lived. Beginning in the fall of 2020, as schoolwork ramped back up, the mental health of adolescents returned to pre-pandemic levels or worse.”

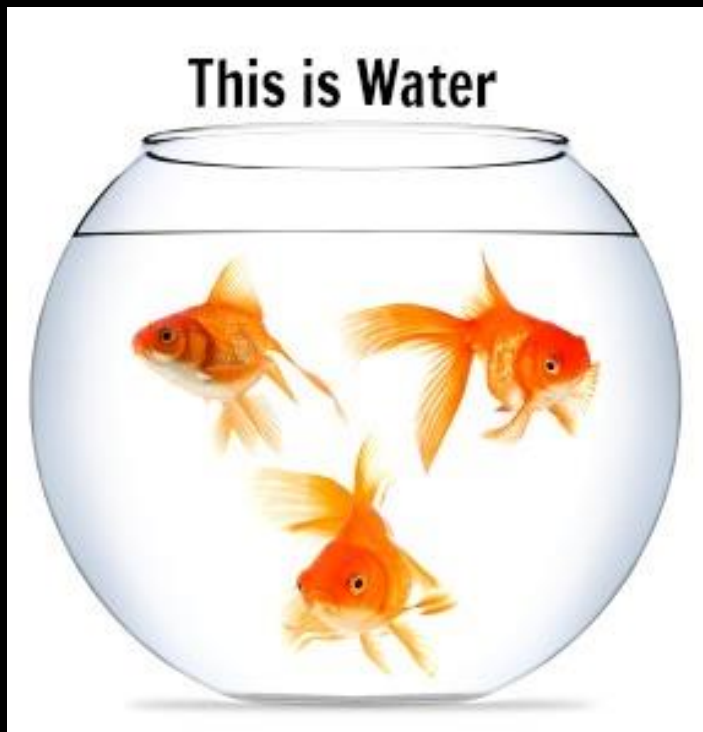
A bright spotlight beam originates from the upper left corner, casting a wide, soft glow across the dark stage floor. The beam is a gradient of white and light blue, creating a circular pool of light in the lower right. The background is a deep, uniform black.

**COVID shined a light
on our children and
our community**

David Foster Wallace

**Kenyon College
2005 Commencement Address**





There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys, how's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, "*What the hell is water?*"

This is Water



“The immediate point of the fish story is that the most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about.”



**Now that we
know
what will we do?**