THE ALTAMONT SCHOOL

INSIGHTS ON ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

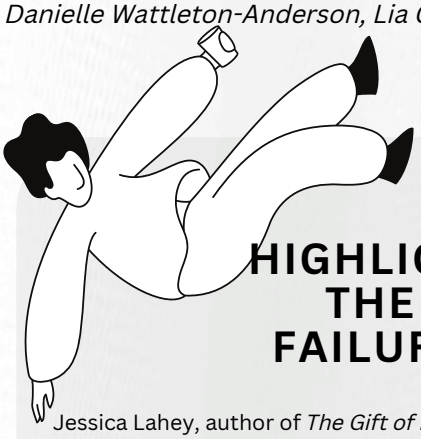
FROM YOUR DIVISION DIRECTORS AND COUNSELORS

HELLO!

Last month's newsletter focused on mental health. This month we would like to take the opportunity highlight how important fostering resilience is to building our children's mental strength and ensuring their overall well-being. Resilience plays a vital role in child development by equipping them to adapt, recover, and maintain strong mental health amidst the inevitable stressors that life can bring. Resilience, grit, perseverance - an individual with these qualities is able to navigate the demands of academics, social pressures, and personal struggles without crumbling. While we naturally want to protect our kids from any harm, we do them no favors in doing so. Resilience is built through struggling, working, and overcoming. In addition to grit, our children build strong self-esteem when they learn to recognize that self-worth is not tied to the absence of failure or the lack of perfection. By nurturing resiliency, supporting developmentally appropriate challenges, and encouraging problem solving, we equip our kids with invaluable tools to navigate the inevitable complexities of life.
This month let's talk about how and why we do this.

Danielle Wattleton-Anderson, Lia Gerety, Lauren Garrett, and Kate Smith

AT A GLANCE



HIGHLIGHTED ARTICLES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FAILURE AND RESILIENCY

Jessica Lahey, author of *The Gift of Failure,* says, "Modern parenting is dictated by fear. Risks seem to lie around every corner.... Maybe tomorrow' continues until it's time for them to leave home, and by then they have learned that we will always be there to save them from themselves. When tomorrow arrives, and the responsibilities, freedoms and risks inherent in adult life arrive with it, overparented children will be less likely to manage all of it successfully." Read more here: **Why We Should Let Our Children Fail**

You may be thinking, "The stakes are too high, there is no space to let my kid fall on their face!". Read more about how to navigate this challenge here: **Why Letting Kids Fail May Be the Ultimate Parenting Win**

A Stanford-led study focuses on the importance of letting kids take the lead: **Why You Should Let Your Kids Take the Lead**

OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENT EDUCATION

Don't miss the chance to participate in our next Parent/Counselor Book Club!

April 2nd @ 6:00 (Teams)

The Screentime Solution: A Judgement-Free Guide to Becoming a Tech-Intentional Family by Emily Cherkin

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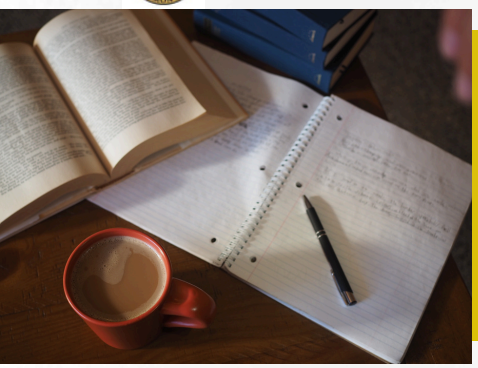

"Together we will cry and face fear and grief. I will want to take away your pain. But instead I will sit with you and teach you how to feel it."
- Brene Brown

In her book *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of The Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*, Julie Lythcott Haims quotes Brown (above) as she discusses the need to "normalize struggle". We must push ourselves to re-image challenges and setbacks that we might otherwise dread our child having to experience as an ability to grow, build knowledge, perspective, and confidence. Feelings come in waves - we experience hardship, we feel a difficult emotion, and we engage in a coping mechanism. That is strong mental health. In order to grow into adults who understand this, our children must be given the opportunity to learn it and develop their own coping mechanisms. That does *not* mean that we do not support our children through the challenge. It means that we sit and listen to them problem solve, instead of problem solving for them.

Normalizing struggle becomes...

1. Your child having the ability to **withstand difficulty** and keep going.
2. Your child **being comfortable with small failures** in order to avoid the big failure (ex: fail a quiz and ask for help so that they succeed on the test).
3. Your child understanding that sometimes **opportunities show up as work** - just because something is a challenge does not mean we should not do it.

Avoidance of struggle becomes.....

1. **Inability to advocate** for themselves in a collegiate or professional setting.
2. **Fear of challenges and failures** that will inevitably happen in life - will a job rejection be the first time they've "failed"? Will they expect you to smooth over a conflict with a college professor? Will they know how to work with a difficult colleague?
3. **Freezing or feeling lost** when a challenge presents itself.

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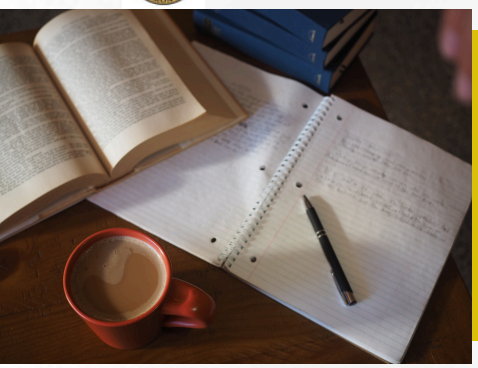


"I was feeling bad, but now, because I talked to my friend/went running/spoke to my professor/got some sleep.....I notice that I feel better, and my parents had nothing to do with it."
-Wendy Mogel, *The Blessing of a B Minus*

Allowing them to learn from struggle looks like...

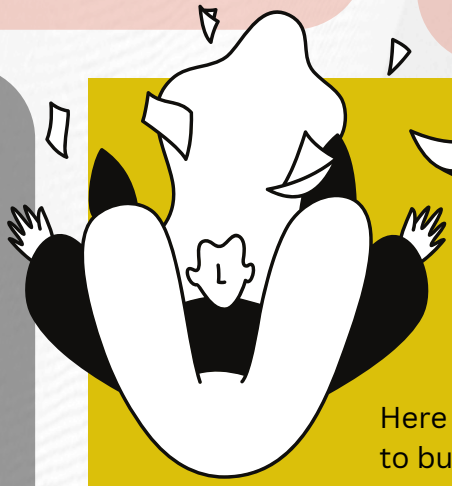
1. Let your child make choices and decide how to approach things.
2. Let them take risks and make mistakes.
3. Engage in dialogues with your child to unpack what they've learned from an experience.
4. Help develop perspective.
5. Give authentic, specific feedback.

Avoiding the struggle looks like...

1. Rescuing your child from discomfort too quickly.
2. Making excuses for your child's mistake or failure.
3. Managing every aspect of a child's life, such as reminding them about every assignment or organizing their schedule.
4. Solving social conflicts for them.
5. Allowing your child to avoid responsibilities or discomfort.

Further Reading

1. *The Blessing of a B Minus,* by Wendy Mogel
2. *How to Raise An Adult: Break Fee of The Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success,* by Julie Lythcott-Haims
3. *Mindset,* by Carol Dweck
4. *8 Setback that Can Make a Child a Success,* by Michelle Icard
5. *Raising Resilient and Compassionate Children,* by Dr. Marion Rose and Lael Stone



Executive Functioning Tips

Executive functioning skills are the skills that we use on a daily basis to make decisions, problem solve, manage our emotions and impulses, and organize our thoughts and tasks. These skills are crucial for success.

Here are some executive functioning skills that are crucial to building resiliency:

- **Cognitive flexibility** - Flexible thinking helps individuals navigate unexpected challenges and adjust to setbacks without becoming stuck in rigid thought patterns. It allows for alternative solutions, re-framing problems in a more positive way, and adapting to new environments or expectations.
- **Emotional regulation** - Regulation skills help in coping with stress, maintaining motivation, and making rational decisions even in emotionally charged situations.
- **Problem-solving -** Strong problem-solving skills better equip us to face difficulties and find constructive ways to overcome them. This prevents feelings of helplessness and fosters confidence in handling adversity.
- **Time management -** This skill reduces stress by preventing last-minute crises and overwhelming workloads. It also fosters a sense of control.