

How to Raise an Adult Julie Lythcott-Haims

Helpful one-liners:

If we want our kids to turn out differently, we have to raise them differently.

How do we teach them to do it on their own?

Parenting is the 'long letting go'.

Think of your kid learning to walk- trying new things, being allowed to fail, picking themselves up, trying again. Model that.

How do we shift responsibility for learning to the students?

Why is childhood itself not enough of a preparation?

There are two things children should get from their parents: roots and wings- Goethe

We've robbed our kids of the chance to construct and know their own *selves*.

Lurking beneath the problem is the student's inability to differentiate the self from others.

I am interested in young people becoming self-actualized, in making decisions for themselves, and living with the consequences.

We need to restore childhood.

Let children 'unfold, rather than be 'molded'

It is time to give up on perfectionism. Perfectionism is wrapped up in self-loathing.

Stop thinking of our kids as bonsai trees to prune, but as wildflowers that reveal their beauty to us.

It's not about you- it's about your kid

Stop communicating 'only the best will do'

Intro:

- **The systemic problem of overparenting is rooted in our worries about the world & about how our children will be successful in it without us.**
- "There is love and fear behind our involvement."
- "We define success too narrowly".
- History- Boomers parents were emotionally distant; Boomers were emotionally present in their kids lives. They tried to control, ensure outcomes, become strong advocates all the way through adulthood. Boomers egos became interlaced with the accomplishments of their children.
- Parenting changed from preparing *for* life to protecting *from* life.

Part 1-Our fear, our limited definitions of success are limiting our children.

- We perceive that our nation is a more dangerous place, yet the data shows otherwise.
- The stress response we live in constantly is converted to anxiety, neurosis, paranoia.
- While bullying is a problem that needs a response, we overuse the bully label for a 'normal passage through child development and socialization. Instead we should help develop resilience.
- We often criminalize the behavior of other children
- We oversee playgrounds too much
- We have created a 'checklisted childhood'.

- Many of us want our kids to specialize in a sport at an early age. This yields more injuries, typically only seen in professional athletes, in childhood.
- We question coaches, umpires, referees. There is a lack of trust in authority figures.
- The big prize is admission to a highly selective college. For many parents, college 'fit' is irrelevant- there is a clear stratification of elite universities.
- Kids don't work (part time jobs) anymore.
- We fear they simply won't be as successful without our involvement.
- Parents have a lack of trust in the basic systems and authority figures.
- Parents can provide helpful support, but need to know where to draw the line.
- Kids are spending, in a recent study, 3.1 hours of homework each night.
- Parents make kids projects.
- Parents want to keep a good thing secret so as to secure a competitive advantage.
- Parents feel like the stakes are so high.
- School didn't used to be the 'only thing'
- Play, sports, school "all contributed to the cognitive, psychological, and social development, and most of it happened out of the earshot of adults."
- "There is a side of contemporary American culture- fearful, litigious, controlling-that we do not brag about but that we reveal in our child rearing and that runs contrary to our self-image as an open, optimistic nation"

Part 2- **Overparenting is bad for their health, their skills, their career, and our health as parents.**

- Over the past 40 years, fewer adults have the skills of adulthood.
- They need life skills. Coping skills. Be able to handle things when they go wrong.
- Cell phones don't cause overparenting.
- Would you rather your kid be depressed at Yale or happy at University of Arizona? Private school heads suspect parents would choose depressed at Yale.
- # Kids in college with 'severe' or 'significant' psychological problems is on rise. 57% college kids feel lonely, 51.3% feel 'overwhelming anxiety'.
- Parents can interact positively with their kids- when it is 'age appropriate', surrounded by dialogue, and the student is empowered to act.
- Students of helicopter parents are more likely to be medicated for anxiety/depression.
- A highly structured childhood is associated with less executive function capabilities.
- In any group of people only 1-10 percent of adults have taken the 'straight' trajectory'. The much more common route is circuitous. One of the biggest secrets we keep from our kids are the times we struggled and failed.
- Many parents are ashamed because their kids is successful, but not *perfect*.
- We should consider a town's suicide rate a better measure of success than SAT scores.
- Many parents feel they are putting their kid at a disadvantage by not getting adderall prescriptions (adhd med).
- 1 in 4 teens think adderall can be used as a study aid.
- Students with helicopter parents are more likely to be dependent, have poor coping strategies and lack soft skills.
- American parents are depressed at 2x rate of the population; this affects our kids.
- The French prioritize the cultivation of their children's autonomy, which enables parents to maintain their own sense of self and sanity.
- We strive for an unattainable, inauthentic shell of a human. A culture of 'fabulousness'

- Parents too often see selves as custodians of child's self esteem and happiness.

The College admission process is broken

- There is no one 'best' restaurant in NYC. The same is true for colleges.
- US News rankings skew our perception
- We want our kids to win- win admission to a top ranked college; to stockpile power
- We are flooded with the 'narcissism of small difference', where minor differences in gpa, and 'other meaningless distinctions that people make to feel superior to those who are exactly like them.'
- There is pressure to achieve perfection in every homework, test, etc.
- ***SAT doesn't measure aptitude, but one's ability to study for the test. SAT scores correlate more highly with socioeconomic status than they do cognitive abilities. Colleges know this – and find parents capable of paying the bills.***
- Most of us have no idea how to judge a college's suitability for our kids
- College isn't a game to be won, but a match to be made
- There are nearly 2800 colleges. 12 schools have admission rates of under 10%. 100 schools have rates below 33%. The rest have an average of 63.9%.
- Let's remember that if they meet the thresholds, they'll get into **a** college, they might not get into a **specific** college.
- It is probably better for you to get to a school where you are in the top 5-10%, not surviving at the bottom.
- Consider other options to search:
 - Have them use Strong Interest Inventory
 - Big Future, by the college board
 - Colleges that Change Lives
 - Alumni Factor- 225 top schools as rated by their alumni
 - LinkedIn University Rankings shows people who are employed in their field

The Case for another way:

Pay attention to your parenting- be less permissive, less authoritarian, and more Authoritative

We need to let go of the illusory sense that we can control or manipulate everything in our children's lives.

- Give them unstructured time. Let them play. Model play for them.
- Teach life skills. Have them do chores.
 - First, do it for them. Then do it with them. Then watch them do it. Then let them do it independently
- Teach them how to think. Too many schools focus on rote memorization, hand holding. Kids figure out how to 'do school' but not to learn.
- Parents should focus on what they are learning, not on grades
- Develop growth mindset
- Teach them to think about, and work for, more than themselves.
- Prepare them for hard work
- Help them discover and develop their interests and talents. Have them find a sense of purpose- essential for achieving happiness and satisfaction in life. Have them listen to their own intuition, their inner voice. Find Mentors
- Don't expect them to be perfect at everything
- Normalize struggle- adversity is part of it. Let them fail.
- Model the way you want them to live
- Listen to them
- Let your child emerge, don't manufacture them

Advice for you

- Reclaim your self. 95% of your life should be spent on the five things that matter most to you- in order to live a happy life.
- Build a community of like-minded adults.
- Connect with thought leaders