



Julie Lythcott-Haims

PUBLIC LECTURE TRANSCRIPT

OCTOBER 1, 2019

KANE HALL 130 | 7:30 P.M. | FREE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION, page 1

Yvette Moy, Director, The Office of Public Lectures

FEATURED SPEAKER, page 2

Julie Lythcott-Haims, *New York Times* best-selling author

Q&A SESSION, page 9

INTRODUCTION

Yvette Moy

Director, The Office of Public Lectures

Good evening, welcome.

For those of you who don't know me, I am Yvette Moy and I am the director of public lectures here at the University of Washington. And our offices are housed in the graduate school. And I want to thank you all for joining us tonight.

We have a couple housekeeping items to go through. The first is if you haven't done so please turn off your cell phone or silence it. We also say that there's no video or audio recording of this evening's lecture, KUOW or NPR affiliate is on-site this evening and will record this lecture and it will be made available through the UW Media Center. And then finally, please refrain from taking photographs while our lecturer is on stage. It's very distracting. Emile Pitre is our authorized photographer tonight, he will take photos for about the first five minutes or so right and meal, and then there'll be no more photographs during the lecture this evening.

We have a few people that we'd like to thank as well. The UW retirees Association volunteers, often for us to help us make these events very successful. And this evening we had Nancy and Peggy at the door. We also had Rita joining us this evening and running front of house. And of course, Emile Pitre, this lovely gentleman who is a UW alum, as well as the founding member of the University of Washington's Black Student Union. He was a chemistry professor, and he closed at his career here as the Associate Vice President for Minority Affairs and he still comes to campus almost every day and a beautiful suit.

We also want to give a shout out to our friends at the Department of Sociology for their support to help us bring some of this year's amazing speakers and they're also going to be the faculty and they're also the faculty representatives for our three faculty folks are coming from social this year as well. We hope to see what those lectures and then we also want to thank the members of the University of Washington Alumni Association book club. Apparently, they chose Julie's book for

their very first book club meetup. We're really glad to have you here tonight.

And then finally, you may have noticed that we had two Villa middle school students sitting in the front, in front of house who were checking you all in. So, let's just say I'm just grateful that everyone's here and I'd like you to put your hands together to show a little bit of appreciation for all these great volunteers. Thank you.

* * * * *

Also, following Julie's talk this evening she will be doing a book signing right here on stage. So, if you haven't bought a book, feel free to do so. University Bookstore will be out in the corridor selling and we'll be happy to see you.

So on to the information about this year series. This year, the graduate school will be celebrating the Graduate Opportunity and Minority Achievement programs 50th anniversary, and what you may not know is that GO-MAP, which it is also called, is one of four graduate support programs in the nation that supports underrepresented minority students. And we were the very first in the nation to do that.

So, we're really proud that they've made it 50 years. And to celebrate their many achievements, we've curated a lineup of speakers who can talk about various aspects of personal success. No longer a cookie cutter definition. As more and more marginalized communities are finding their voices. We look at the idea of success through the lens of parenthood, women's rights, LGBTQ visibility and overcoming the obstacle of shame. It's going to be an amazing year and we hope to see you back again and again and again.

Tonight, speaker Julie Lythcott-Haims is the author of *The New York Times* best-selling book, *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success* and *Real American: a memoir*. She's deeply interested in what prevents people from living meaningful, fulfilling lives and how to raise an adult emerged in Julie's decade at Stanford University's dean of freshmen. There she was known for her fierce advocacy for young adults and her fierce critique of the growing trend of parental involvement in the day to day lives of college students. She received the university's Lloyd Award for creating the atmosphere that defines the undergraduate experience. And toward the end of her ten years as Dean, she began speaking and writing widely on the harm of helicopter parenting. *How to Raise an Adult* has been published in over two dozen countries and gave rise to a TED talk that became

one of the top TED talks of 2016 with over 4 million views and it's still climbing. Julie received her bachelor's degree at Stanford University, her law degree at Harvard and her MFA in writing from the California College of Arts. She lives in Silicon Valley with her partner of 30 years there two teenagers and her mother. And tonight, she joins us here at the University of Washington.

Please join me in welcoming Julie Lythcott-Haims.

FEATURED SPEAKER (5:02)

Julie Lythcott-Haims

NYT best-selling author

Thank you.

It's okay for the people coming in. You don't have to run. Take your time. You're all right. It's all good. It's all good. I'm going to put these down here. Hope my microphone doesn't fall off my non waistband here. Okay, see this is supposed to happen behind the scenes. And I just said that in public. Okay. Hopefully my pants don't fall down as I clip the thing on.

Okay. Hi, everybody. Thank you so much for making me a part of your Tuesday evening. I am so grateful to be here. So grateful for the sunshine and the nice weather today. It was a wonderful welcome for a bay area who is a bit of a weather wimp. So, thanks for holding off the rain for me visiting from Palo Alto event. I want to thank you so much for making me a part of this lecture series. I'm honored to get to be here.

I'm a little nervous about kicking off this year's conversation on success. But I'm excited as well. And I hope that what I have to say over the next hour will turn out to have been worth your while. And presumably you'll tell me if that wasn't the case. I am wondering if Jenny Lusk is here. She's not, okay. This woman was not able to get a ticket to the event. But then on Twitter, the University said, don't worry, there's plenty of room there's, you know, there's walk ups and whatnot. And she said, this made my day, at which point I said, this is making my day,

you know, like, this lady wants to see my talk so badly. We're having this conversation on Twitter.

So, I promised her that if she was here, I was going to give her a shout out from the podium. So, I'm not going to ask every new person who comes like, are you Jenny, are you here? But I just want you to know that I'm thinking about Jenny and I'm rooting for Jenny to have made it through the traffic into the right auditorium and into this talk, she was so excited to hear about.

Okay, so I just want to be clear that the University of Washington didn't invite me, the author of *How to Raise an Adult* and anti-helicopter parenting manifesto, didn't invite me to be here in its community and the broader Seattle community because they fear that any parents at UW are helicopter parents. No, no, no. Tonight, we're going to talk about what other people are doing wrong. So that you can go out into the community tomorrow and in the days to come help other parents be better parents. Okay, so let me just get a read actually, because I wasn't sure at all who was going to actually be in the room. It's great to be back in a university setting. I have not worked on a college campus since 2012. So, I'm really enjoying the gravitas of the university environment. But I had no idea who would actually show up for a lecture by me at a place like this. So, raise your hand if you are on staff here. Yay. Okay. Raise your hand if you're a faculty member here. Yay. Okay. Raise your hand if you are a student. Here, awesome. graduate student, undergraduate student. No undergraduates. Like we do not need to hear that lady. We're going to be on Snapchat instead. Okay. Are any of you alumni of this magnificent place? Right? Fabulous. What about community members? You're not in any other category. You're here. Excellent. Okay, so why'd any parents have you dubbed Oh, wow, okay. Okay. So, forget what I just said. Because it turns out that you are the reason that I'm here with this, but okay. It is hard to figure out where to pitch a talk to everyone. Because you do range an age, I'm guessing from like 22 to 82. So, and some of you are children, you're all children of someone. Some of you have children. Some of you have raised your children. Some of your hoping your children are raised but are not quite. Right. Some of you are teaching those children and wishing they were right. So, I'm going to try to just land my thoughts here in a way that Works some of the time for all of you. Okay? So, I stand before you with a set of accomplishments that event read from my bio. But I think more important than knowing where I went to school where I worked is for you to know that I have been lost, and lonely and alone, and sad and frightened and terrified, and self-loathing and empty and unsure and insecure and arrogant, and mean, and scared and ashamed.

And now you're thinking, I thought this was a sum a lecture on success. And this lady doesn't seem to quite have it together. But for real, and I'd wager that in claiming those truths about myself, I'm no different than most people in this room. This is a part of our nature as humans, to be so afraid that we shrink or act with anger or arrogance. To be so needy, we just hide, just hoping to be noticed and seen. Or we act with judgment toward others or disdain to be so worried about pleasing others that we cannot be ourselves to make a misstep, we think is so unforgivable, that it causes us great shame. I am on a journey, out of fear toward love. We all are, if you're willing to admit it, when we can truly love ourselves, that's when we can love others. And when we can love ourselves and love others, then I believe everything good is possible. And that's success, not just at an individual level, but at the level of community, society, even the planet. Welcome to the talk on how to save the planet by becoming a healthier, happier, more whole you.

* * * * *

I know all of this because I've had some tough experiences over the course of my life. So far—I'm 51—experiences that have taught me this stuff the hard way, you might say, although failure and disappointment and setbacks are what lead to growth and learning and success, so maybe I learned all of this the necessary way, the right way, by actually experiencing it. Once I know you a little bit better, I'm actually going to open up and tell you some really personal stories about my own journey. But let's save that for another 20 minutes or so. I was in higher education for 14 years, after a short career in corporate law. So corporate lawyer turned University administrator and Dean turned writer. The last ten of my 14 years at Stanford were as the Dean of Freshmen. I had 1700 of them every year, 17,000 over ten, and I worked at your Pac 12 rival down the road. Which I noticed is playing a game against y'all this Saturday. And all I can say, number 15 in the nation, please go easy on us. This is proving to be a tough year for the Stanford Cardinal. So, my job as Dean of Freshman was to care about my freshman, was to give a damn about them. Undergraduates are, I like to say, unfurling. They are becoming, they are unfolding into their adult selves, which is a process that can be a little ugly before it's beautiful. Remember, remember back for some of you, the journey back to the self at 18 is a longer journey than it is for others in the room. But we've all crossed that threshold as far as I can tell. Right? Remember yourself, doing that stuff of becoming your adult self. Not all of it is Instagram worthy. When I say my job was to care about them, I mean them, not their parents not whom their parents wanted them to become, not what their entire

extended family expected, not what their whole ethnic community said was the right pursuit in life. My job was to care about them. The young human in front of me in my office, in a small group having a conversation. They'd come to me for advice. I had office hours every Friday afternoon. And they'd ask me questions like, should I major in econ or public policy? Should I do this research project or this overseas opportunity this summer? And I thought, who am I to tell another human being what to do with their life? I wouldn't give them answers. I literally did not know the answer. But I'd asked them or tried to ask them good questions to open them up a little bit further to their own self. So, I would say thanks for Back to them like, well, I don't know, who are you kid? What do you know to be true about yourself? so far? What are you good at? What do you love? What do you think you might want to make of this one precious life? And some of you might know, I'm quoting the late poet Mary Oliver with that term. What do you want to do with your one wild and precious life? I'd ask undergraduates these questions every chance I got; you know why? Because I learned over the years that young people will tell you the answers to these questions, if you dare to ask. And if you demonstrate that you're really listening without judgment, by the way, young people, undergraduates 18 to 22 are no different than everybody else in this regard. They we all of us want to be asked those kinds of questions, not these kinds of questions. Where are you applying to college? How many AP Are you taking? Are you taking the SAT or the ACT? Will you then apply early? Are you going to wait for regular? What are you going to major in? Why are you majoring in that? Are you going to go to grad school? Which grad school you're going to go to? What are you going to study there? Why are you going to study that? How'd you do? What are you going to do with your life? Why are you doing that?

They want to be asked, as we all do, what's good in your life? What's lighting you up? What's making you happy these days? What makes you scream? Because you just can't stand it. What are you afraid of? What does your life look like? In your dreams?

* * * * *

It's that inner voice in each of us, the one that speaks for our soul that aches to be heard. Again, Young people no different than all of us in this regard. For the faculty in the room, imagine an office hour setting where someone's come to see you. And instead of them saying, Is this on the test? Is this going to be on the test? Instead, they sit down and they just put their hand on their chin and they gaze at you and say, Tell me your story

about when you knew this thing that you're teaching us was going to be your life's work, helped me understand how a human bravely decides This is who I am. This is what I want, and I'm going to do it. So, over the years as dean of freshmen, having these kinds of conversations, I became increasingly concerned. My students could say what they had achieved, but not whether it really mattered to them. I mean, they could say what they've done but they couldn't say why they had done it, except of course to get into college. And apparently it had worked. They had found their passion. You know, by January 1 of their senior year of high school, or November 1, if they applied early. they'd found their passion but had they really because you know, passion shows. I'm not against passion. I think passion, purpose path in life is important. It's the rudder beneath us. So, when the wind blows, we go in the right direction. If we're old enough, we've come to a point we've made the right decisions. we've recovered from bad decisions; we may have found our passion and we're doing work and pursuing hobbies and relationships accordingly. I'm not anti-passion. I'm anti passion as utilitarian thing all high school students must find to impress a college admission Dean, and I saw the evidence of when passion had been manufactured, instead of authentically found because passion shows in the eyes. So, in my one on one conversations with students My office hours just catching them on the pathways and hallways of life at Stanford. And we'd have these conversations. Passion shows in the eyes and a lack of passion is also revealed by the eyes. You know, when someone is passionate about something, their eyes dance, you know, do you know what I'm talking about? Right? And even if you don't get the thing, it's a Nano robotic technology. And you're like, the right. I don't get that. Yeah, I'm a baby boomer, or right and right, but the they're excited about it. You can't help but kind of be a little bouncy and excited too. Because being next to a human who's really passionate about something, it becomes this infectious thing and the most wonderful sense of the word. So, passion is evident. And it's not on a resume. It's sort of energy in the body that just shines out through the eyes. You can't deny it, and you can't make it up if it's not there. So, I wanted everything my students did to matter. To them, or at least for them to know why they were doing something. And the right answer to the question, why are you doing this? Why have you chosen that is never or rarely because I'm supposed to, or because it's the right track. There is no supposed to. There is no right track. There is no preordained path to success. The path is made by each of us by walking it ourselves. And here I'm quoting the Spanish poet, Anthony. Antonio sorry, Antonio Machado. Is any of this stuff really your passion? I found myself thinking, as I

talked with my students, and more and more and more and more over the years, more and more encounters made me ask this question and then I find I found myself working That for too many of my students. It wasn't that this stuff was their passion. They were simply incredibly good at doing as they were told. As an aside, I want to speak directly to the adults in the room who may have children, teens, young adults in their life. Young adults, by the way, we now define as being up to 30. Which is great, because my next book, a sequel to this one is called How to be an adult and it's for 18 to 30-year old's. Okay, so if you're raising somebody in this demographic, with all due respect, and I say this as a mom, I've got a 20-year-old son and an 18-year-old daughter. A young person's trajectory is not about you. us it's not about us as parents. Yes. We love them so fiercely, it hurts. I know. I know. No, but our kids are not our pet or our project. They are not the proof of our worth. They are not even ours in a possessive sense the poet rights, they come through you, but they are not of you. They are not ours. This life they lead is their own wild and precious life. as they grow up and become increasingly in charge of themselves, they feel the stirrings, the rumblings, the yearnings, the ache, the hunger to be independent, accountable, unbridled, wild and free. And it is our job to step aside. Get back in our lane and let them go and be them.

* * * * *

So on my campus, I would tell the parents of my undergraduates every fall, every September at orientation, six days of orientation No bigger schools, you roll them in over the summer, usually right weekends over the summer and our campus with only 6000 1600 undergrads, we brought them all in at once. Excuse me, and my speech to the parents on moving day, boiled down to three points. Trust your kid, they have what it takes to thrive here. They've earned this number to trust us. We're not trying to get away with doing as little as possible here at Stanford. Trust your kid, trust us. And my third message was now Please leave. And I didn't actually wag my finger at parents, but inside I was thinking Come on, folks. It isn't Middle School go away. And I'd say to my students in the ensuing year, get to know that inner voice that's trying so hard to speak up for your soul. Figure out what why you're here? What matters to you? And when you get better at answering those questions, kid, you get better at making the right choices for yourself. Making one's own decisions and choices. Figuring out one zone on one's own how to solve a problem means you have agency, which is really a sense of your own existence. It means you are becoming you. And when you don't have agency that contributes to higher rates of anxiety and depression.

When things are handled for you. You can create a learned helplessness not really seeing that your own actions have outcomes. Do I really exist? This state contributes to higher rates of anxiety and depression research shows. It sounds straightforward that you would be in charge of yourself and make your own decision. That sounds easy, but it won't be for kids. Maybe children of people, nobody here but people near here. have kids who grew up with what I call the checklist of childhood, which is a childhood that's all about the right school. K through 12, maybe pre-K through 12. And not just the right school but make sure they're in the right track lane type of classes at that school, not just that, make sure they're getting the right grades in the right classes at the right school, make sure we parents are doing all we can to ensure those right grades are gotten. So, the tutoring and the coaching to get the right grades up. Tutoring isn't for C's, D's and F's anymore. It's for B minus b minuses A B pluses and minuses, depending on who you are. And its parents sitting there night after night, making sure the homework gets done. We're doing the math, we've got a mid-term tomorrow, you know, how could you give us a B? We worked so hard on that.

* * * * *

I see some of you know what I'm talking about. You know, others who fall into this category is not just the grades and the checklist of childhood. No, that's just the start. just the basics. There's the standardized test scores that have to be perfected, and the hours that go into prepping for those tests if we can afford it, for to send them off to someone else to get them tutored on the tests, retake the test, and so on grades and scores, and all the accolades, we hope they'll get and all the awards and all the sports they have to do and all the activities and all the leadership we want them to do, right to impress the college admissions deans. So, a kid comes home after the first week of high school and says, Hey, parent, I think I want to join this club and the parent says, oh, kid, do you want to just join a club or could just start a club from scratch? You know, because that shows leadership and colleges want to see that. And then the final thing in the checklist of childhood community service, check the box kid, show them you care about others, preferably very far away from here. And all of this to please the college admissions Dean's is supposed to be done so flawlessly, so perfectly. That of course. We have to over parent in order to get our kids to this outcome. The thing is through a path laid for you, for a student, a child by a well-meaning adult trying to impress other well-meaning adults can leave a kid feeling like a dog on a leash, a puppet on a string, a robot, perfectly executing somebody else's instructions. a racehorse who will

win the race and where the roses around its neck. But who is everybody really applauding? The owner, the trainer. None of them is walking their own path. None of them. The puppet, the dog, the horse, the robot...none has agency. My work is to care about humans unfolding becoming having agency walking their own path. My work is an invitation to grow deeper, and invitation to experience more than conventional definitions of success, my work is an invitation to experience freedom. What stands and will continue to stand in our way as long as we let it is the noise in our heads of other people's expectations and beliefs about us. Their needs for us based upon their fears and insecurities and unrequited dreams, based upon the limitations they would place on us because they can't stand who we are. It's a cacophony, this noise in our heads about what other people want need expect demand. Our task, your task is to start to listen for your voice to discern what it is saying. The better you get it, hearing it, honoring The more you will recognize it when it tries to get your attention, the louder than it becomes the more than you are able to do what you are uniquely here to do.

* * * * *

So now that I know you a little bit better, I am going to turn to some of my personal story is to give you a glimpse of how I learned the things that I'm trying to share with you this evening. So, when I was an undergraduate back in the mid 1980s, back at Stanford, I became an American Studies major. This was American history, political science and literature. And I was learning through my Amstrad major that law was a tool to help people and I was pretty sure I wanted to help people. And I knew I had a big mouth and sort of, you know, using words and rhetoric to help people felt like the right match for my skills and my values. I had a poster of Thurgood Marshall on the wall of Michael college dorm room. You know, my roommates and dorm mates had pinups of entertainers and sports figures. I had a Supreme Court justice on my wall, our first black Supreme Court Justice who litigated brown versus board, right, the case that said separate but equal is inherently unequal and that a kid like me, ought to be able to attend a better public school. I wanted to be like Thurgood Marshall, I wanted to go to law school and be one of the millions who had tried to place our tiny feet in his immense footsteps. So off I went to law school. I went planning to help people I went with the intent of getting that law degree to come out and help humans who are underserved, unseen to be an advocate for those who needed help getting their needs met. But what I now know to be true at 51 what I know to be true at 51 what I know at 51 to be to have been true when I was 25, is what I'm trying to say is that though

I went to law school to help humans, I was so insecure when I was there, that I felt I just had to go get a corporate law job in order to impress them. All the people I felt were judging me. I needed a corporate law job and the job offer the salary that came with it, to prove I was worthy. As a young woman of color. I was by that point in my life trying to perform in a way that would ensure that I was not met with the scorn, contempt, disregard of white society. I had already had somebody write the N word on my locker at my all white High School on my 17th birthday, when I was student body president. And I'd never told a soul because I was so ashamed that it had happened to me. And I could tell you now with all the wisdom and benefit of age that I basically spent the next 25 years after that encounter, just tried never to be called the N word again. So going corporate instead of into a public interest law job, you know, helping the underserved the marginalized people who might look like me, became a way out became a way to demonstrate Oh, no, you know, I'm black, but I have a corporate law job so you can value me. If you're sensing that there's some self-loathing embedded in that I'm going to get to that in a second story. So here I was a corporate lawyer in Silicon Valley, Palo Alto, California, it's now 1994. The internet is being born the commercialized internet. I mean, Netscape was going public. It was a very sexy time for patents, trademarks and copyrights, which was my chosen specialty. I was an IP litigator and making the world safe for things like bum bum bum bum. Anyone, Intel Inside, right, I know I'm in Microsoft town.

* * * * *

So, I'm a trademark lawyer making the world safe for trademarks instead of a public interest lawyer making life a little better for a better woman or a child in foster care system or a child in the juvenile detention system. My heart was always with corporate I mean, criminal defendants. And I'm well paid. I've got the briefcase leather coach. I've got the suit from Talbots. Everybody's applauding me, my family, my husband's family, my friends. Look, Julie. She's at a big firm, woo hoo. And I was miserable. And not knocking corporate law. I'm just saying. It was clear to me early on that this is not why I'm on the planet. They didn't know how to get out. And more than that, I didn't know why I was so miserable, because I thought I had done everything right. It made all the right choices. I thought, you know, how did I end up here, I'm highly educated. My parents love me. You know, I've been given every opportunity. So, there it wasn't my well-paid misery, feeling really pissed off at myself because I thought, Julie, you're not suffering. This is not suffering girl like there are people

suffering, you were going to go help them you chose this instead don't call this suffering, figure it out, figure out how you can find professional work that feels more aligned with your values with why you're here. So, because this was by now 1995 you couldn't get Google How do I get a better life? You know, it was a Saturday night, the bookstores were closed. The libraries were closed, right? I had no resources other than what I had in me and on my bookshelf and I took out a piece of paper and a pen or a pencil and I wrote down on this piece of paper What am I good at the column heading the big line down the middle? And what do I love on the other side? My hunch my uninformed hunch was if I could figure out what I was good at, and what I love, and then find an intersection of the lists, that that intersection might lead to more rewarding work. So, I sat down with this rudimentary exercise, and began to brainstorm Well, what am I good at? And I thought, I don't know. I mean, I know what they say I'm good at I'm so good at doing what's expected of me. I know what people want me to do. Right? But what am I actually good at? And I gave myself for the first time in my life that night, and I must have been if it was 95 if I was about to be 28. So let's say I'm 27 years old, and for the first time in my life, I give myself permission to say I'm good at working with people, helping people helping people solve their problems, facilitating human interaction, I wrote I think until that point, I had thought that helping people was like, or being a people person with like a trait I might embody because I'm a woman, you know, sort of like a girl thing, like, you're good with people. I think I thought it was part of my personality or my gender. Like I'm five-foot four African American woman who's a people person. I didn't know that that was going to be relevant to my job. But because I was so desperately unhappy, and I mentioned I was good at the IP litigation. I was being given opportunities. I was being mentored. I got to make a case in front of a federal district court judge as a second-year associate at my law firm. I mean, it was great for what it was, okay, well paid good at it mentored being shown more and more opportunity. Right. But I just couldn't stand what I was doing and how I felt had a knot in my stomach every Sunday at two, knowing I had to go back in there. Monday, assuming I wasn't there on the Sunday. All right. So, what am I good at? That was hard. But I came up with that list really validating what we nowadays call soft skills or EQ. Right? We didn't quite have that language then it's just people person. I wrote that down. The other side of the list was easier. What do I love simple cheeseburgers? Red wine. I just had one tonight. Red wine, good fiction, Stanford. And I was like, okay, so I got to find the intersection. I can work with people and cheeseburgers.

* * * * *

Going to flip burgers, right? I'm pretty sure. That was not what I was supposed to be doing. work with people at Stanford became the obvious thing because I was working in Palo Alto, and I would see the university's big tower is I went to work and left work and went home and I just kept being sort of taunted and beckoned by these buildings on this place where I had done some growth. When up and I felt a real heartfelt connection. So, I set out to get a job working with people at Stanford, I decided I want to work in admissions, or I want to work in student affairs. And I tried to get a job and read a great cover letter because I was good at writing cover letters. And I would get the interview, and I would do well in the interview, and I'd make it to the next round and so on. And then they would say to me, Julie, sorry, we can't give you this job. And I'd be like, why not? You know, you do it. I didn't want to say like, I'm so desperately unhappy, right? That's not the greatest thing to say. But I was like, please tell me how I could please you more, right. And I didn't realize how many miserable corporate lawyers were in every search pool. Basically saying like, Oh, I have no training or background in this, but I can come up to speed really quickly. Particularly we litigators, US litigators, right, like constantly coming up to speed on someone else's business and acting like we understood something about it. So, I tried once to get a job at Stanford and failed. I tried a second time to get a job. failed. I tried a third time to get a job and failed. Finally, I caught a lucky break somebody they didn't they were like you're a lawyer. You've not gone to school to study working with students. I said, I've been a student Isn't that enough? Like no. So, finally Stanford Law School has someone going on maternity leave, the Dean of Students there was going on leave. She was a former lawyer at the rival firm of mine. She said, Julie, I'm going on leave. I've convinced them to hire someone to replace me. So just farm my job out to everybody else. And I think you should interview. I said I think I should, too, because I've been listening to Sally Kim. She's now a district magistrate judge in San Francisco. She, you know, I knew she loved this work of working with law students. So, I went to my job I'm now in house it until and I said you know, and I am not sure I want to do this work much longer and I have a chance to test drive test drive a new career Institute. affairs that's at Stanford Law School. It's just for 12 weeks. Because I'm covering someone's maternity leave, would you hold my job? She says, you know, for your sake, I hope you love it. For my sake, I hope you don't, because you're one of my top people. So, I'll hold your job. I would have quit had she not held my job off. I went within a day and a half of working with law students.

I loved it. It was so great. I was getting paid to what care I was getting paid to care about these humans. Some of them were very uptight, you know, but I knew the past they were on. I had been on that path myself. I knew what awaited them. And my job was to help remove obstacles from their path and more importantly, to look into their eyes and just demonstrate I see you. I care about you. My concern is helping you on your way. After a day and a half. I knew I loved it. What was I going to do when she came back? After a week, we lost a student to suicide. And it was the most devastating. Obviously, situation our community could encounter. And I saw how this magnificent institution responded to the emergency to the tragedy unfolding, to working with students to working with the family. I knew that if this is the worst of it, I would rather be nowhere else than with these people helping these others who are suffering. So, I loved the work and I was being paid a whole lot less. I take a pay cut of at least 25% to do this work. So, when my friend Sally called up the dean and said, you know what, I'm not coming back from maternity leave. I've decided I want to stay home with my two kids. The Dean called me said I'm not doing a national search. You've been in this job for 12 weeks. We really love you; I want to hire you. I said, I want to work for you, but you have to pay me a lot more money. You know, when you have that leverage, that's the only time you have that leverage is when they want you, right? So, I negotiated a higher salary for me and everyone else at my level. I mean, it just lifted all boats and I stayed in that work for two years and had a wonderful time. But my heart was not at Stanford Law School, though I was a lawyer. My heart was in the undergraduate experience, which is where I had gone to college myself. So, I set out to leave law school, I went to work for the university president for a couple of years. Brand new president in 2000 stayed with him till 2002. And from that vantage point, I pitched the idea that Stanford would be a better place if we had a small office dedicated to making sure our newest undergraduates were making their way into the institution would know that someone gave a darn about them to help them thrive. So, I pitched the idea that we needed a dean of freshmen and they let me give it a try. And that the role I held for 10 years and that's the role that led me to want to write a book on the harm of overparenting. About five years into that work, I got to tell you, I thought I was I had made it right. I was not miserable. This list of what am I good at? What do I love? I didn't need that anymore. I was working with people. I was helping people solve their problems. I was getting paid to care about my fellow humans. I was loving it; the money was fine. I had learned that all the money does not make up for misery. If you hate your job, and they just keep paying you

more. It doesn't make the job any better. Just make your vacations better. You know, but if you intrinsically love the work, the work itself becomes part of your compensation. They need to pay you. Yes, but they were paying me plenty for the work that I was doing. The joy that I got was just immeasurable. So, I thought I was doing magnificently. I was getting great feedback and a lot of corners. But a coach was brought in to work with me and my colleagues and The Vice Provost whom we reported so we reported to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. He was a white male with a PhD in engineering. His direct reports were all women, all white women, except me all had PhDs except me. And even though my law degree my JD is from a fancy brand name, place on the East Coast that begins with H, you know, a JD is not as every faculty member in the room knows, right a TD is not a PhD and I rather like you know, not have a PhD. So, I've got the wrong degree. I'm of color and I'm the youngest on this team. So, when the coach is brought in, her name is Mary Ellen. I really feel like I'm just rocking it. So, I kind of want to just tell Mary Ellen, what's wrong with everyone else? You know, so she can help them kind of get their act together and then our team can really, you know, be a well-oiled machine. I'm not kidding. And I'm going to turn to my other book real American where the story is better told than I can do it off the cuff. So, after about nine months of working with the vice provost and his direct reports, Mary Ellen has conducted a 360 review of each of us. And she's ready to tell me how I'm regarded by my colleagues. And by now I trust her enough to be able to listen to the feedback to emotional, too aggressive. might as well give me a list of stereotypes of black women and tell me not to do any of those things. I tell her, she lets me continue. Yes, I have a tendency to blurt things out when I get really moved by something or frustrated, but my emotion is warranted. Is it getting you what you want? She asks me. And so, I have to admit to her that when I practice law, my passion and anger could be channeled for useful argument. But in academia, it just seems to push people away and then I'm the one that has to apologize. I want to know why I'm this way. I plead to Mary Ellen. That could take 20 years of therapy Mary Ellen says chuckling. How about We focus on when you're this way. So, you can start to this to notice the emotion coming, and then decide what if anything you want to do about it? What if anything I want to do about it. I realized that Mary Ellen isn't siding with the stereotype. She's telling me that my power lies and being able to be in charge of my voice. with Mary Ellen's help I begin focusing on my behavior. When I feel a strong emotion coming instead of acting on it. I try to pay attention to what I'm feeling and where I feel it in my body, and what

triggered the feeling and I write it all down. When these feelings arise in meetings with my colleagues, I have a little code for how to respond, which stands for don't dwell Excel. For weeks my meeting notes are littered with this tiny notation. over a few months of this close attention to self of mindfulness, I begin to be able to sense the emotion coming I can then pause ask myself what is going on what just happened? reassure myself you're okay. You're okay. Okay, while the conversation around me keeps going, I begin to see that the trigger is a feeling of being overlooked, doubted or dismissed, I begin to see that my fear that I will be judged as not good enough. Because I'm black makes me desperate to prove constantly that they are wrong. I begin to see that I can't control anyone else's opinion or behavior. That the only person I can be in control of, if I work hard at it, is myself. With Mary Ellen's guidance I begin to see that I can love and accept myself regardless of what others may or may not be thinking of me. I can choose whether to speak or not whether to be silent or not whether to go off on someone or not. Rather than let those impulses simply happen to me like reflex. As her coaching begins to impact me, I feel renewed with the help of a white Buddhist Alito master Mary Ellen, I begin to emerge into a healthy black self. With their help, I came to realize that growing up black and biracial mostly white spaces. I experienced a whole lot of micro aggressions, and some blunt force racism that made me basically feel worthless. A day comes when I summon the guts to tell Mary Ellen my most shameful secret: that as a child, I had hated being black and was afraid of black people and just wanted to be what white people valued. This gut spilling fear sharing, loosened up the knots of shame in my psyche, loosened up the muscles not just in my mind, but in my soul. Speaking this awful truth out loud through tears needed the pain out of me. The relief felt astonishingly good. I wake up the next day no longer feeling the vice grip of racism that had asked me to prove I was good enough, despite being black. I look in the mirror and allow myself to see not what whites might see or what they might want to see or what They might want not to see, not conforming to what they admire, to see my actual self. I drive to work that day having shed the loading of my black self and by extension of all black people from my eyes, which had prevented me from really seeing other black folk. I'm on my campus, a campus I've now worked on and been a student on for many, many years, or everybody's familiar. And I look into the eyes of one and another, and another and another black person, students, faculty, staff, and I feel my heart swell with feelings like compassion, admiration, love, even desire. It was as if I was discovering their existence, their magnificence for the first time. It might as well have been the first time it was as

if all the black people on the Stanford campus had gotten the memo that morning saying would you smile at Julie today? But of course, they hadn't gotten any memo. I could finally see myself. And so, I could see them, like climbing out of a deep depression. I hadn't known I was this afflicted, until I wasn't round about age 40, I began to be free to just be me, regardless of what anyone thinks of me, for those of us who are seen as less than by others, because of our race, ethnicity, ancestry skin color, because we're too poor, because we're members of the wrong religion because of our sexual orientation or gender presentation, our politics, when people are cruel to us, on the basis of these things of anything, it hurts. It's not supposed to hurt sticks and stones may break your bones. But words can never hurt you. That's not true. It can hurt so much that it becomes part of the noise in our heads becomes even more than that. A clamp our own hearts.

So if this is you, if this is impeding you from succeeding in the ways you want, I urge you to dare to tell it to your own consciousness, to sum it up from deepest memory, to tell yourself that it happened and how it feels. saying the truth of it to yourself will begin to set you free. I promise. It happened to me. We each of us is on a journey. Time is short. Life is now. Learn to think and do for yourself and be excited about being accountable for your own behavior. When you do what you're good at and what you love, that's when work really sings. If you're good at it, but you don't love it...like Oh, you're good at math. You should go into math, but you don't love it? You'll feel like a drone in your own life. If you love it, but you're not any good at it, well, you're not going to make a living. That's why the intersection is so key.

And third, locate a self, you can love, regardless of what others think. And then choose to play it yourself and communities, neighborhoods and workplaces where you can be with those who will love and accept you, as you are. Anyone who can't accept your personal or professional choices outside of your being an axe murder, of course, right? Anyone who can't accept your choices, that's their problem to work out. Anyone who needs you to be or do a certain thing to make them proud. That's their insecurity. When you are in charge of yourself, just go be you. That's my definition of success. And I'm rooting for all of you. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

Q&A SESSION (52:10)

Alright, so now I'm going to take questions. There are microphones down here at the base of the steps. Please make your way. Yeah, let's get some lights up so I can see. This, by the way, is how to stay in touch with me. This is all my social and my website, you can take a screenshot. If you just take your phone out and screenshot it, then you can know how to stay in touch with me if you'd like to go forward.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Okay, you're my first question. And I'd love to know your name. Okay, we've got to turn that mic on. All right. Okay.

(53:05) Participant 1: Yeah, I'm Sheridan. I'm a grad student here.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Sharon? Sheridan.

Participant 1: Yeah. I'm, I'm kind of going back to your parenting talk. You know, so I guess you mostly focused on the parents and the students. When you think about kind of helicoptering and how to raise a good adult...but the university kind of sets the rules of engagement, right. And, you know, especially at a place like Stanford, you know, the incentives right, are strongly structured. I mean, the reason that you see so one reason you see so many helicoptered kids is that helicoptering kids helps you get into Stanford, and going to Stanford is highly desirable. And I think, you know, we can argue about whether it's a guarantee of a good life, but short on hurt usually. So yeah, I guess, what do you have to say about the university's role on this thing?

Julie Lythcott-Haims: You know, this is usually the first or second question asked...often not quite so politely. Often, it's like, "aren't you University people to blame?"

Participant 1: I didn't mean to be polite, sorry.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: [laughter] When I worked in a university, I couldn't see it. It's weird. I was so wrapped up in the rhetoric of itself, I couldn't see it. I was like, "those crazy parents, what are they doing? Why won't they stop?" And I wasn't in admissions you know, I worked with them once admitted, but really only once stepping away from university was I able to see the role

that these colleges and universities are playing and fomenting the college admissions arms race. And, in incentivizing parents to do their kids homework to get them into the, quote-unquote, right school. You know, there's nobody at the university that wants to have students there who haven't done their own homework. Or to have students there whose parents have dragged them down that path that the student may not even necessarily want to be on themselves.

So, the trick is, you know, how do we how do we have an admissions process that actually allows a young person to authentically represent who they are? Here's where standardized testing is a huge piece of the problem. One's SAT score correlates with one zip code; one's ability to afford to prep for it and prep again and take it and retake it, and so on, is a function of wealth. And, your test score goes up the more you can do all of those things, and everybody knows that. So, it's really a test of it's a showing of well worth more than aptitude by a long shot. And so, I'm part of the group that says, you know, let's reduce the reliance on standardized scores. I really applaud the universities and colleges that say we're, we're test optional. I applaud the universities and colleges that say we're not going to participate in US News, because frankly, it is the most irrelevant set of statistics about whether an undergraduate education is worthwhile. [clapping]

Yeah, absolutely. So, I'm very proud to say my son, my elder, is a undergraduate at Reed in Portland, this tiny little small liberal arts college that refuses to participate in US News because they know it's BS. US News will ding you if you if a university or college doesn't participate...they will assume your standardized test scores are 200 points below your peers. So, they punish you for not participating. Deliberately, you know, putting you much lower in the rankings than you would otherwise deserve to be. They have us in a stranglehold. And so, I'm here to say, we need to get rid of US News, and if college—if the big boys and college admission would get together and say we're not submitting our US News data, all of them are afraid to be first. You know, we all know who needs to be first. And if those schools are coming to mind right now would do it, it would read norm everything. We could return childhood to children, instead of having childhood be this checklist about getting into a college that is increasingly impossible to get into. So, there's a lot of change that could come...

Here's another one: the College Board, which runs the SAT and AP test, has research that shows that the maximum number of AP tests you need to take to demonstrate you're going to be capable of thriving in college is five. Now, that's a lot for some

people, but there are plenty of communities in the United States where kids are taking eight, ten. Okay, five is the maximum predictors six tests are no greater predictor of your success in college than five. Eleven tests? No greater prediction than five. So, there's a movement afoot to cap the number of AP a high school kid can take to five, right? Imagine: one in the sophomore year if or two or three in the junior year, leaving two for the senior year. I just was in a community and outside Chicago, Illinois, where they have a freshman AP class called AP Human Geography. And I just tell them like, how many college and university faculty want high school freshmen to be taking college classes. I think it's BS. It's crazy, right? It's an insult, I think, to the whole enterprise of college to think that, routinely, 14-year olds and 15-year olds are taking college level classes in their high school. So, the system is broken. And I'm part of the effort to try to fix it. And in the meantime, I happen to believe—and know based on research—that a successful happy, meaningful life is not a function of having gone to a big brand name college, okay? Successful happy people didn't go to college, went to community college, went to some college nobody's ever heard of, went to a big state school went to a small liberal arts college, or went to a big elite place. Okay, all of those things are possible. It is not the elite school that confers a life of advantage on somebody. The research is...there's a beautiful Gallup poll that shows people who self-report as thriving across five dimensions of measuring thriving from finances to happiness and everything in between. Didn't it all correlate with whether they went to a top school? Quote unquote, and I'm using the rankings just for top school or bottom school? What mattered was “were they mentored at their school?” Did they go to a college or university where they had one mentor who gave a damn about them? Right? One caring adult.

One mentor is what matters. A faculty member who takes an interest in you, right? With whom you have these deep question these conversations about who are you what matters to you, right? Having a mentor in college turns out to be what determines whether you self-report as thriving decades later. And great mentors are to be found everywhere. Right? And often not necessarily at the biggest brand name places if the faculty are so busy with their research and scholarship that they can't make time for undergraduates. So, my advice to anybody advising an undergraduate-to-be is: go to a place where the faculty will make time for you and seek those opportunities out. Small seminars, research opportunities, living in residence with faculty members. That's what makes...that's the sweet spot of an undergraduate education:

faculty attention. And there are plenty of places where that happens routinely.

I'm not sure if I answered your questions, Sheridan. The universities are definitely in part to blame. I think also though, as parents, we have to know, when you're dragging your kid down a path, when you're doing their homework for them, you are undermining their agency, and that harms them at the level of mental health. You do not want them to be admitted to XYZ school so badly that you're willing to compromise their mental health. That is my sense of what should be normal and what is *way* abnormal in our culture these days. I know plenty of parents would say, I'd rather have my kid depressed at Princeton than happy at Arizona State...and any parent who actually believes that, you need therapy, because we should not be in the business of harming our children in order to assuage our own egos.

Alright.

Not a single other question?

Yes, go ahead. If you say it, I'll shout it out. Trying to tell them what to do. Yeah. Music. Yeah.

Participant 2 (1:01:11): [very faint] What's that fine line between encouraging your child to have experience versus trying to tell them what to do? My child, he's in jazz band, he's in marching band... it take time, it takes dedication. No one's expecting him to be Chair One or whatever, but just doing it... what is your read on that?

Julie Lythcott-Haims (1:01:50): So, the question is, where's the line between encouraging them to experience something and telling them what to do? I'm not here to tell you what you should value in your family life with your children, right? You get to have your opinions and needs and wants, and all of that. I'm trying to tell you that nowadays in our society, too many of us are treating our children like little dogs on a leash. So, it's really not about where they want to go—like, we're the dominant one we're tugging that leash and the direction we needed to go. So, when it when are you tugging versus just sort of in a healthy way helping your child meander down the path of life? Here's an example. Andre Agassi versus Jeremy Lin. Andre Agassi was number one in men's tennis for some time. He wrote a memoir talking about how he resents how his father forced him down that path, even though he was great at it. You know, he did that because his dad made him. And he was miserable, though a champion. Jeremy Lin came out of Palo Alto, California, the improbably tall child of Taiwanese

immigrants, is a basketball player and goes off to Harvard and is on the basketball team and ends up being drafted very low, you know, very near the end of the draft for the NBA, and he's in a couple teams. Clearly, I'm not a huge NBA fan, I don't know all the stats. And, he gets to the Knicks. At some point he's traded again to the Knicks. It's like, oh, we got Jeremy Lin. And he turns it on and he's on fire! And he's whatever position he's in. He's like doing whatever...he's shooting or you know, like, I don't know where he is on the court...but he's great at it! So much so that fans come to Knicks games with these signs and say what? Lin-sanity! Okay, with Lin-sanity there are fans with placards. Lin-sanity! It's on the TV. Right? He had this amazing moment with the Knicks. He was great. He helped the Knicks do great things. I have no idea how great they were that season, but it was fun for Knicks fans. And, you want your kid to be more of a Jeremy Lin than an Andre Agassi because Jeremy Lin's mental health was not compromised. Okay, he was good at basketball, his parents let him play. They're like, as long as you keep going to church (that was their value) we'll drive you to this basketball stuff you seem to need to do on weekends. Okay. Okay, he drove it. He, he had the impetus. He was intrinsically motivated, and they supported that. Okay. That's one example to keep in mind: a Jeremy Lin, not an Andre Agassi. Okay.

Bill Durham, at Stanford, is a professor who has really sort of developed the field of adolescence. I think I'm getting his name wrong? Damon! Bill Damon! Sorry, Bill. I'm so sorry. They're recording this and now it's gonna be on the radio and they're gonna be like, she got his name wrong. Bill Damon. So, he's this education professor and he knows a lot about adolescence. And he says, a parent can't give a kid a passion any more than they can give a kid a personality. Okay, or like, you can't change your kid's passion. You can't change your personality. But you can look for a spark in your kid. The spark comes from them. The parent fanned the flames. Okay? How do you fan the flames of your kids' interest? Whatever you can afford to do, you fan the flames. Okay, maybe you can afford to buy him a book on the subject—that fans of flames. Or send them to a summer camp on the subject—that fans the flames. Maybe you are able to introduce them to someone who knows a thing or two about the subject—you fan the flames and whatever way you can. That means give them more exposure to the thing, help them develop more deeply in the thing. Okay, that's another way to think about where the line is.

Here's a final way you might tap into “what is my kid actually interested in?” Raise your hand if you know the concept of *flow* pioneered by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, an Eastern European thinker. Okay. It's the equivalent for all of us of musicians being

in the groove, athletes being in the zone...flow is the same thing for all of us. It's a state you're in when the challenge presented is slightly more than the skill set you have. So, you're engaged and you're talented, you're challenged. You're not frightened. It's not such a steep learning curve, that you're just terrified. You know, you're engaged, and it pulls you in and you lose track of time, and you lose track of hunger and thirst. You're so in it, you get lost in something. You look up like, Whoa, look how much time is gone. You know, by definition, you can't notice flow when you're in it because to notice it takes you out of it. Okay, so you can look back and say, boy, I was in flow today or last weekend or what have you.

Okay, notice when your kid is in flow. What are they doing when they're just so enjoying it? It could be looking at bugs in the garden. It could be knitting; it could be playing with a dollhouse; it could be Legos; it could be anything. Okay, that's a clue as to spark of interest that you might want to fan the flames! Now you're gonna be like, all he does is play video games, right? [laughter] Understand some kids will be video game designers, some kids are making lots of money as you know like, eSports people. Right? But not everybody...so they should that shouldn't be the only thing...we have to try to fan some other flames.

Okay, so whether it's in your house—you said music right?—some of us need our kids to play the violin, some of us need our kids to play the piano. I made my kids take Spanish. Why? Because I'm not fluent in Spanish and, as a woman of color in California, I'm embarrassed I can't speak Spanish. So, my kids are going to fix that for me by, you know. Yeah, right, maybe that's not the choice you're gonna make, right? You're like no, it's going to be the violin because you know I don't play violin...so my kids going to. But don't become Amy Chua! I think *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* describes abuse, and I am here to say that out loud. So, you do not turn your child into the person you wish they would be. Every single human wants to be loved and seen and accepted for who we are, and children who are trying to be made into some other version of themselves to please a parent are miserable. Do not let that happen to your child in your home. Yes.

Participant 3 (1:08:13): [very faint] I just wanted to add, in regards to flow... [rest of comment is unintelligible]

A. Julie Lythcott-Haims: And your name? Myla. Excellent point. Our kids are so over-scheduled and childhoods these days, there's no time for flow. There's no time for a break. There's not much time to dream, and they're not getting enough sleep.

This checklist of childhood that I've described is so stacked with activities and homework designed to please a college admission Dean, that they don't sleep enough. And any pediatrician in the community will say like, this is getting to be really problematic. And we parents act as if, oh, they can get enough sleep once they have the degree from the right University, you know? No, actually, you know, a lack of sleep is an impairment. It is a cognitive impairment. And so we have to care about all of these things as much or more than we care about the bumper sticker on the back of our car, which impresses all the drivers behind us, with where, you know, our kids going to college, right? Impresses the drivers about us, we hope, right? Because what this boils down to when we're driving our kid down a path we need them to follow is our needy ego, needs to be sated and soothed. Like, I feel better about myself when I can tell you where my son or daughter is going to college. Okay, and if that is you, if you like, "uh huh, yeah, I knew that. No, no, they can go anywhere, but they really have to go here, right? Oh, honey, we don't care where you go to school," except every mug in the kitchen bears the name of one particular college... You know, the only sweatshirt dad ever wears says that, you know, you're not really you know, honestly conveying to your kid that they can go anywhere. So, this is what therapy is for. When we, I like to say get a life, get a life and your kid can get one too, you know? Yes.

Okay, one other thing! There's a great organization in Palo Alto called Challenge Success, which is born of the research of Denise Pope at Stanford University's School of Education. And they work with school districts around K through 12. Around offering rigor and wellness, maintaining wellness, while you have rigor and they have this great concept called PDF: playtime, downtime, and family time, as the protective factors that support the child even in an environment that is intense high stakes and so on. So, you got to make room for playtime. You got to make room for downtime. And family time is that sort of family dinner we know we're supposed to have. Yes.

Participant 4 (1:11:02): [Question not available]

Julie Lythcott-Haims (1:11:31): Exactly. And your name was? Marta. Marta is saying look, isn't there something in between helicoptering and doing nothing? Yes. And I'm not advocating doing nothing. Okay, so I'm not saying like, do this and watch your child drown. Like, I'm not saying that. I'm saying exactly what Marta says.

We're supposed to be teaching our kids skills. Our job as parents is to put ourselves out of a job. Okay, that's how we

biologically got here. Right, our forefathers and mothers, they raised the next generation had the skills to raise the next generation. Okay, we're supposed to be imbuing more and more skills in them so that they can be independent one day and maybe even look after us one day in our old age and raise their own kids, okay? So, it is essential that we not foster a dependency on us, but rather take a keen interest in them developing skills. So, there's this amazing four step method for teaching any kid any skill. First, you do it for them, then you do it with them, then you watch them do it, and then they can do it completely independently.

Picture teaching a child to cross the street for should do it for them. They're in your arms. They're adorable. They're being held. You make all the decisions. Step two: you do it with them. You're going to say, "Hey, buddy, we're going to practice crossing the street today. It's going to take a long time for us to learn this for you to learn this, but we're going to start today." You pick an intersection that feels right for the age your child is in your neighborhood. Okay, don't do it when you're busy because your instinct will be to scoop them up and just go across the street, but unless you intend to be carrying your 10-year-old across the street at some point you have to teach your kid. Okay? So, step two is you're narrating, holding their hand. Okay, buddy. We're going to stand here. We're going to stand with our toes right here, just next to the curb. And we're going to look left and right and left to see if there any cars...and only one we've looked three times and there's no cars, it's safe to cross. Okay? And you narrate that in your slow teaching voice. And yes, it's slow and you could go faster, right, but you're teaching. Step two is all about teaching and when you practice step two enough times you can finally move to step three, where you're going to let go of buddy's hand. Now he's past the stage where he runs into traffic. Don't let go of his hand until he's past that stage! Okay, like, "now you're old enough where you're going to do the thinking out loud and I'm going to be here just in case." And your little ones' like "okay, Daddy, I stand right here," and his little toes are over the edge. You're like "pull it back, buddy. You're too close. Got to have some distance from the curb," still teaching. And your little one goes "okay, I look left no cars, no cars. No cars. Do it." "Hold on, buddy, you got to slow down." Make them slow down, right? It's excruciating, right? You're teaching it's fine. And finally, he says, "okay, I've checked. It's safe. Let's go." And you're there with your strong protective hand to say, "hold up, kiddo. Look over there. There's a garbage truck. And sometimes there's a car hiding behind a garbage truck teaching... sure enough, there's a car. Got to do it again." Right, and your kid does it

again. And finally, you do step three enough times, you can get to step four, which is: you're not there. You could be listening to a speaker on a Tuesday night and your kid's crossing the street somewhere. Okay, this applies to cross the street, tie your shoes, Velcro your shoes. Make your own food. It applies to...fill out your own forms! Like, the simplest form about a summer opportunity in the sixth grade becomes an application for a part time job, becomes a college application, becomes some of the more complicated bureaucratic forms of adulthood! We're not letting them practice the easy stuff, develop the skills. So of course they're incapable when they're 20. They can't do a thing because we've done it all for them. So, we're supposed to be teaching them, is the point. We are supposed to be in the sweet spot of parenting called authoritative, okay?

There's this Cartesian chart of parenting types. Okay, picture the Cartesian chart, demanding to not demanding / responsive to not responsive, okay? The parent who is really demanding and not responsive to the needs is the authoritarian parent. Okay, my way or the highway, right? Just do as I say, okay, that's not very fun. That's like Andre Agassi's dad, we presume, and *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. Okay. Alright. I'm not responsive to their needs and not demanding is the neglectful parent, the absentee parent who's neglectful or abusive. They're just not parenting at all. Okay, over here, which is not demanding but highly responsive, is the indulgent or permissive parent who wants to be the best friend, or the concierge...everything's great, making your childhood easier. No rules and expectations, just it's all good...whatever you need. Up here is where we're supposed to be: highly demanding and highly responsive. The authoritative parent has the authority from authoritarian, highly demanding, and that is from permissive intelligent, highly responsive, we have expectations and rules and we expect them to follow them and we're very responsive to their needs, their wishes and so on. We're supposed to hit that sweet spot that's in that quadrant. And if that wasn't the craziest thing you ever saw them, then I don't know what was. Not bad for an American Studies Major!

And finally I'll say this, kids are supposed to be intrinsically. This is all my book by the way. I've got a book for sale. The chart is actually drawn in the book. Yeah, okay. Okay. There's intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is the carrot dangling in front of a person, or the stick that we prod them with. Those things—according to research by Dan Pink and others—extrinsic motivation does not work for very long. Okay? Intrinsic motivation is what we're all supposed to have ultimately, to live our lives and take care of ourselves and do

work. And intrinsic motivation is developed when you have autonomy and connection. According to Jessica Leahy, who wrote *The Gift of Failure*, a middle school teacher and mom who says middle school will teach kids beautiful lessons if we parents will just let it. Okay, so they need autonomy, meaning that we can't hover over them all the time. "Have you done homework, when you can do your homework? Why haven't you started your homework? Have you done your homework?" every five minutes like...that's not autonomy, that's nagging and it's annoying. It teaches a kid, "my parent thinks I don't care about my own life, and she has to worry about it more than I do," which really harms them mentally. Alright? So, they need autonomy, a little space from us. But connection is they need connected relationships with adults who care about them. How's your day going? What lights you up? Not what happened on the science test? Have you studied right? We have these academic transactional conversations with our kids, which make them feel that they only matter to us around their academic accomplishments instead of mattering because they exist. So, we're looking to build intrinsic motivation. We're looking to parent in this authoritative way, and to teach these life skills, all of the basic life skills they need to know. Let me tell you my a-ha moment came when my son, who's 20, was ten. I had been giving that talk at Stanford for seven years: *Trust your kid, Trust us, Now please leave*. Remember that talk? And I came home for dinner the next night—Sawyer was ten—and I leaned over his plate. We were having chicken and I began cutting his food, trying his meat. Some of you are going so? And some of you are like, texting your 11-year-old, "you're gonna cut your own meat tomorrow night, buddy." That's when I knew I was part of the problem I was writing about, okay?

If your kid is ten and you're cutting their meat, they can't be independent at 18. There's so many skills a human has to learn between cutting your meat and go to UW, or the Marines, or wherever they're going to go after they leave home. Okay, so I realized I was complicit in the problem. Okay, so if you're ready, because we're going to close soon, I think, let me tell you this: if anything that I've said resonates and you want to make a change in your own house, there are three things you can stop doing tomorrow (or Monday if that's safer for you). Stop saying "we" when you mean your kid, okay? "We're" on the soccer team! No, you are not. Just try running up and down the field a few times. You'll know who's on the soccer team and who's not.

Okay, "we" have a midterm tomorrow. No, you don't have a midterm. "We" can't do that super fun activity with the other grown-ups because we have a midterm. No, you don't. You

don't, they do. Right on. Okay, stop saying we—it's a little linguistic tick that is going to signal to you like, oh my gosh, I'm trying to live my kid's life for them. Okay. Say my child, my son, my daughter. Okay, not we. Again, get a life your kid can get one too.

All right, number two: stop arguing with all the adults in their lives. Teachers, principals, heads of school guidance counselors, umpires, referees, coaches...are tired of being constantly questioned. By you—not you, but people near you. Okay? Right? I'm not saying kowtow to authority. I'm saying teach your kid to advocate for themselves with respect to authority figures. You can implement this in kindergarten. I know schools that do. It is the child who will speak with the teacher about XYZ. Obviously, sometimes there are things that need to be escalated, but we act as if everything has to be escalated because we're so worried about their future. Right? They have to can't get zero today because they might not get into the right college in 18 years, okay. Or 12 years or five years, right? We worry about that. So, we do all this rescuing and we do all this arguing...stop saying we and stop arguing with all the adults and teach your kid how to talk to authority.

And number three: stop doing their homework. Teaching them the math is great, cleaning up the math so they get the right grade is not great. It's cheating. The teacher doesn't know what the kids know, and the kid worst of all feels like, "my parent doesn't think I'm capable so they have to do my homework for me." And that's sort of how we got to the college admissions scandal, with parents bribing and cheating and just manufacturing grades and scores for their kids. So those are the three things you could stop doing. And if you're the sort of person—I'll tell you what matters most when it comes to raising our kids, the two things that matter most—all of these things are on my website by the way. These are the four skills, the three things to stop doing, the two things that matter most. And then this one-week cleanse I'm going to tell you about.

The two things that matter most are chores and love. The longest longitudinal study of humans ever conducted, the Harvard Grant Study, threw off thousands of findings, one of which was that professional success in life came from doing chores as a child or having held a part time job in high school. Some of you are grinning and applauding and some of you are going like, Oh, your chores. I like to say "It's not Kumon, it's the vacuum." It's... chores teach a work ethic that teaches your kid to roll up their sleeves, pitch in, and be useful. Contribute your sweat your effort to the betterment of the whole. It really helps build that mindset that's going to make them indispensable in a

workplace increasingly populated by young adults waiting to be told what to do, and waiting to be applauded at every turn, because that's what their childhood taught them. Okay, chores! And there's a list starting at age two in this book, which will just blow your mind if your kids aren't doing any choice would be stunned at what a two and three-year-old is supposed to be able to do. And then love, unconditional love. Happiness in life equals love. Turns out and, you know, you got to love yourself to be able to love others and kids have to be loved unconditionally at home not conditionally as a function of the tests they just took. So, when they get home from work, from school, you know, don't just say what happened on the science test because you've checked out online the school's online portal, so you know their grades before they do right? You know, you don't just say have you done your homework when you can do your homework? When are we going to do your homework, you got to do your homework, you just pause, like let them get a snack and a beverage and put their backpack down. And then you look them in the eye and say, "Hey, kid, how's your day? What's lighting you up today? Tell me something good about today." They want to be seen, right? That's what I said in my talk, right? They want to be valued for who they are. And they that will help them feel loved unconditionally. So, chores and love are the two things that matter most. And then the one-week cleanses, if you're the person who has to know what happened on the science test, what happened on the math test, when are you going to study, etc. Say to your kid, "Hey, kid, I know I'm always on you about your academics. And I know that can make you feel that I don't think you care about them, so I have to ride you. But I know you do care. So, for one week, I'm not going to ask I'm going to button my lip and just not ask about school."

Now don't you dare pick a week that's like fall break, spring break. You got to pick a real week. And parents tell me there's more laughter their homes when they try this experiment, and it's not because little Junior is flunking out. It's because you've made room for conversations in the house that are not just these academic transactional things that make a kid feel like they're worth more if they're getting the grades and scores you want and worth less, worthless if they're not. So that's the one-week cleanse.

So, all of that is on my website, julielythcotthaims.com. Please check it out. You've been an amazing audience. I'm here to sign books if you brought them or want to buy them. Thank you so much.