

Pressured Children and Adolescents: Understanding Their Journey

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I. Introduction: Stories from the Front.

- A. The application of business models, scarcity models and anxiety to the school journey.

II. Could Adults Go Back to School?

- A. Jim Sadler, headmaster of St. Croix Country Day School. "If I have to go to three classes, I dread the day."
- B. Why I had to shadow children.

III. What School is Not!

- A. School is not a race, it is not a competition, and it is not a contest. It is not about prizes at graduation. It is not about a report card. School is not a level playing field.
- B. School is not about preparation for life. Children are living their lives right now.

IV. School is about Three Things: Development, Survival and Fit.

- A. Children are moving on eight tracks at all times.
 - 1) physical development
 - 2) the development of attachment
 - 3) social development
 - 4) cognitive development
 - 5) academic development
 - 6) emotional self-regulation
 - 7) moral and spiritual development
 - 8) identity development
- B. How do kids measure their own development?
 - 1. Connection -- to adults, peers and something they love.
 - 2. Recognition -- succeeding with adults, peers.
 - 3. Sense of power (or mastery).

V. School is a Long-Distance Hike: The Appalachian Mountain Trail.

VI. Three School Journeys:

- A. Success
- B. Manageable
- C. Fury and Despair

VII. The Wisdom of Children.

- A. They are always searching for feelings of success, though not always in school. They are always doing the best they can at every moment.
- B. They come equipped with great “crap detectors.”
- C. They do not lie about the nature of their experiences in school.
- D. They crave meaningful relationships with adults in school.
- E. They want to feel useful.

VIII. The Finest Teachers:

- A. The finest teachers love and trust the age of the children they teach.
- B. Good teachers understand that over the long haul you cannot motivate children effectively through fear.
- C. The wisest teachers understand that there are many sources of knowledge besides schools and books.
- D. The greatest teachers understand that teaching and learning are singular acts of self-exposure on the part of both adults and children.

IX. What Do Parents Need to Remember?

- A. Parenting is not only the hardest thing that any adult will ever do, it is also the scariest. Most of the obstacles to good parenting arise from fears.
- B. Parents have to manage helplessness.
- C. Parents have to manage their own unrealistic dreams.
- D. Parents have to trust in their child’s development.
- E. Parents have to accept Flarsheim’s “H.”
- F. Parents have to develop a philosophy to follow their child’s journey through school.

X. Two Closing Stories

- A. The teacher jogging with 9th grade girls.
- B. Senior boy: “No one knows how much I have loved this school. No one knows how much I have hated this school. No one knows how much this school has meant to me. My journey through school was a mystery to everyone but me.”