



Madeline Levine, Ph.D.

Shifting the Focus

Parenting for Authentic Success

Very rarely does the Common Ground Speaker Series bring a speaker more than once. On our eighth year ago with her first book, *The Price of Privilege*, Madeline Levine recounted how she had seen firsthand the effects a fast-paced, high-pressure world can have on children. This time, with her new book, *Teach Your Children Well*, she challenged the community to examine hopes for our children and to re-imagine success.

Dr. Madeline Levine is a lecturer, author and psychologist with over 30 years experience working with children and adolescents. She acknowledges the temptation to hyper-parent and offers concrete examples of parenting styles that protect children while encouraging both academic success and emotional well-being.

On Success

Levine proclaimed that we have a much bigger job than figuring out how our children will perform well in school or even excel financially—we should hope for them to know and appreciate themselves. Success should be redefined; our core values and parenting choices should strive to develop a deep belief in our children that they have something meaningful to contribute to the world.

The provocative reality, according to Levine, is that most of our children are quite average. Adults have kept a secret from their children—in life, you only have to be good at a few things. Knowing who you are can take the pressure off. Parents need carve out time and ways to support children's interests and strengths, rather to compensate or work on their deficits.

On Parent Anxiety

Many of us have a map for our children. They will attend this middle school, that high school, and then there's Ivy League. Levine stresses that it's okay to have hopes for our kids, but that we need to know the difference between our kids and ourselves (and our aspirations). The pressures at school and with friends are enough to worry about, Levine cautions, without our kids worrying about pleasing their parents so much!

Levine sympathized with parents though; she "gets" why parents worry. The world is flat and competition is global. Our kids do need enough monetary success to support themselves.

On Resilience

Levine addressed that young American workers are strong in content and skills, but weak in other areas. American kids need to be told what to do, have a sense of entitlement, and are not collaborative.

Most importantly, Levine coached; we need to raise more resilient kids if they are to compete globally. We must allow them to fail. They need to care for themselves and to take their places as members of the family community and help out.

So if we are to teach our children well, Levine summarized, we have to listen long enough and pay attention to authentically know the child in front of us. In periods of stress, we should help them find areas of confidence. Allow children the space to construct a sense of themselves...and for parents too!

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Madeline Levine
www.madelinelevine.com