



SAFE COMMUNITY COALITION

Working Together for Our Youth Since 1995

In April 2022, the Safe Community Coalition and The Potomac School co-hosted a presentation by Julie Lythcott-Haims entitled “**Throw Out the Checklisted Childhood: Tips and Strategies for Raising Successful Kids.**” Former Stanford dean and New York Times bestselling author of *How to Raise an Adult*, Julie Lythcott-Haims explains why our culture of over-parenting is hurting our children and making them ill-equipped for adulthood. Relevant to parents of toddlers as well as twentysomethings, *How to Raise an Adult* is a rallying cry for those who wish to ensure that the next generation can take charge of their own lives with competence and confidence.

In her presentation to parents, Julie illustrated the myriad of ways that overparenting is damaging our kids, our relationships and our communities. She pointed out that our kids are anxious, depressed, self-harming, starving themselves and attempting (sometimes completing) at killing themselves. Julie discussed the research on overparenting and how it contributes to an increase in depression and anxiety with a decrease in executive functioning skills. Julie noted that overparenting takes on three forms: overprotection, fierce direction and excessive hand holding. According to a study by Terri Lemoyne and Tom Buchanan, Julie shared in her *How to Raise an Adult* book, students with parents who “hover” or “helicopter” are more likely to be medicated for anxiety and/or depression. Julie pointed out that our children need to go through trial and error—and yes, fail—in order to develop agency (“I can”) and resilience (“I can cope”).

During her two visits Julie has gained a strong understanding of the challenges and concerns of the McLean community, and she was inspired to create for McLean a list of recommendations for parents to follow to prevent the harms of overparenting. She termed this list a 12 Step Parent Pledge which she urged the parents in attendance to adopt and to encourage their peers to heed as well.

Julie's Parent Pledge



1. I will communicate overtly and often to my child that I love them for who they are, not what they accomplish and that I am not stressed about the college process.
2. I will inform my child that I am there to support them—it is their life, not mine. I will accept that it's not about me, it's about my kid. I will set aside my definition of a successful career, what I'd be proud to be able to say to others about my kid, or what I'd always assumed or hoped my child would be or do.
3. I will stop focusing on homework, scores, grades, etc. and focus on what my child is passionate about. I will check my ego, check my pronouns (we are not applying to college), and bite my tongue.
4. I will not check ParentVUE/Schoology or other student grade portals. I will not open emails that update me about my child's homework, grades, etc.
5. I will not share private information about my child with others, including but not limited to their grades, scores, college applications/acceptances, etc.
6. I will not ask other parents about their child's grades, scores, college choices, etc.
7. I will stop checking my child's homework, assignments, projects, etc.
8. I will stop arguing with authority figures in my child's life. If they have a conflict with a teacher, coach or friend, I will encourage my child to work that out directly with that person and not intervene in that process.
9. I will let my child have their feelings. I will sit with them through their uncomfortable emotions and not try to make them feel better or take their hurt away. Julie noted that, according to Harriet Rossetto who runs a rehab facility in L.A., "one of the best predictors of success is a sense of resiliency, grit, capacity to fail and get up." If I'm preventing my child from feeling discomfort and/or failure, they will have no sense of how to handle those things when they inevitably occur in their future.
10. I will let my child solve their own problems.
11. I will encourage my child to be kind, work hard, do chores and show up for dinner.
12. If any of the items on this list spark a strong reaction from me (I am strongly against committing to an item), I will seek support/therapy for myself as this is my life and my child deserves to have a life independent from me.