

Episode 194: How to be (& raise) an adult with Julie Lythcott-Haims

[00:00:00] **Julie Lythcott-Haims:** fundamentally I am rooting. For every single human to chart their path forward, listening to the messages that come from that inner voice that tells us I'm good at this. I love this. And if you ask any of us, what would you do if it was just up to you? Most of us have an answer to that.

And if we're not able to be that person it's because society or parents or peers have told us, that's not legitimate

That was Julie Lythcott-Haims on psychologist off the clock.

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Debbie Sorensen: I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen practicing in mile high Denver, Colorado, and coauthor of ACT Daily Journal

Diana Hill: I'm Dr. Diana [00:01:00] Hill coauthor with Debbie on ACT Daily Journal, and practicing in seaside Santa Barbara, California.

Yael Schonbrun: From coast to coast, I'm Dr Yael Schonbrun a Boston- based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

Jill Stoddard: And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of Be Mighty and The Big Book of ACT Metaphors.

Debbie Sorensen: We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

Diana Hill: Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off the Clock!

We're so happy to be partnered with Praxis, continuing education here at psychologists off the clock, they offer continuing education for promoting lasting change with evidence-based training.

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Debbie Sorensen: yes, and we have big news. We Diana and Debbie here are offering a Praxis training. It's a two hour [00:02:00] workshop on Wednesday, April 28th. And you can sign up best of all, it's free and anyone can join. It's not limited to therapists. And what we're going to do is talk about some of the concepts from our book that we have coming out in may and offer you some practices that you can use from acceptance and commitment therapy to thrive in your own life.

So we're really excited to be offering that. You should check it out and we hope you can join us.

Diana Hill: So go to our website off the clock. psych.com to get a promotion code on live events through practice.

We've had a number of guests on the show that we've been inspired by, and that are offering you our listeners discounts on their programs. If you go to our website offtheclockpsych.com, you'll be able to find coupon codes for the programs of Dr. Judson Brewer, Dr. Rick Hanson and Jen Lumenlun. So go check it out at, offtheclockpsych.com and start learning today.

Jill Stoddard: Hey everybody. It's Jill here. And I'm here with Diana to introduce an episode with the author. Julie Lythcott-Haimes, and we talk a lot in [00:03:00] this episode today about the concept of adulting and, , Diana shared with me after listening to this, that she had so many thoughts, , especially as it related to her current practice.

So Diana I'm curious, I've been dying to hear what these thoughts are.

Diana Hill: Well, this episode was so fantastic. I love how you talk about your own personal experience with parenting. And Julie just has such a, a rich perspective on how to support generation Z and millennials in becoming adults. And the thing that. Has really stood out for me recently because I work a lot with 20 year olds is that.

The research on generation Z and these 20 year olds, is that not only are they being impacted more by the pandemic than other generations, but their stress and anxiety was already on the rise. And I see that in my practice right now, it's sort of this timely moment where people are getting they're graduating, they're getting ready to move on to getting a job or college applications are starting to come [00:04:00] in.

And what. Is interesting as to see the stress and anxiety that they're experiencing. But I actually think that parenting has changed at least for the, for some of the clients that I'm working with, where the stress isn't coming from, their parents, it's coming from some other places. And this unique time where social media is both their social support as well as the thing that makes them feel bad about themselves.

And I can't imagine. Like having my college acceptance and rejection being, you know, blasted to a thousand people or seeing a thousand people accepted the school , that I was striving to get to. So I think it's this unique time for this generation and how to support them as Julie lays out so well, navigating the challenging times.

Yeah.

Jill Stoddard: I mean, it's a really interesting point. And I think you're right. I think what we've seen over the decades is the ways in which Parenthood tends to swing like a pendulum and the changes are always coming from the best intention. Like what we learned

from the last generation [00:05:00] of parents we're going to do differently, but oops, the pendulum swung a little too far in the opposite direction and that has its own.

Kinds of issues, but I agree with you. I think there's this other whole set of issues where, , for example, I did a talk at a prestigious private school that I just assumed was a really high pressure environment in terms of the types of pressure the parents might be putting on the kids. And in fact, all the parents who attend at the top were.

Begging me to teach them how to teach their kids to take the pressure off themselves. , so it is this really interesting, , I think added layer of what's going on, , with kids right now, it's like this pressure that they're putting on themselves. And I think you're right, that social media plays a big role in that it's that social comparison and having to measure up, not just to my parents' expectations.

Which is more how it was in the past, but all of these tens of thousands of people out in the

Diana Hill: I think another part of it is that [00:06:00] the parents have evolved and maybe their perspective on parenting you know we've all gotten more educated right That's part of being a parent Now there's like a parenting course that we're all taking Right But the parents are still doing that level of Striving for themselves for perfection So maybe it's being modeled in the parents The high achievement is being modeled in the parents or the self-criticism and that even though they're not actively doing it towards their kids maybe they're doing it towards themselves And I think that that's part of what Julie also talks about is how our children teach us so much about things we need to change in ourselves to be better parents There there's so many lessons in that and I mean even just the whole I'll mention homeschooling Cause it's my favorite bingo card. But even just homeschooling my kids this year, I notice how. How much I can get caught in like rushing through an assignment to get to the end point, rather than letting them be curious and staying in the process, the, you know, sort of the [00:07:00] act psychological flexibility process of, , being curious.

I want to get to the end, or I want to get to the finish line, or I will, you know, kind of point out mistakes as opposed to seeing the mistakes or just the process of learning. And I think that that's why this podcast is so helpful for me because. I'm not an expert in parenting. That's yeah. Ellis job. But, but I'm learning through interviews like this, like, okay.

This all kind of maps on that. When I work on my own relationship with some of these places where I get stuck, it helps with my kids.

Jill Stoddard: Yeah. And I think that's such a great point about modeling because, you know, even think back way back when too, when we were kids, you know, how did we learn? We didn't learn because our parents wagged their fingers in our faces and told us what to do and how to do it. We learned by trial and error and by modeling, by observing what they do, social learning.

Right. So, I mean, I think that's a, that's a really interesting hypothesis of how much, if this, like, striving and achieving in kids is coming from them, watching what we're [00:08:00] doing, even if we're trying to do a better job of the parenting stuff. Yeah.

Diana Hill: I loved how Julie talked about struggle. And both of you talked about the sort of struggle. And I, one of the things that I think about with, with my kids is this difference between struggle and suffering, that, that it's okay for kids to have a little, like a little bit of struggle and the, you know, the sort of helicopter model that she talks about with like the, the parent that, you know, pops in every moment to rescue them.

But really as parents, I'm kind of interested in more of this, like, I guess an accordion model where. When allow them to struggle a little bit, give them a little bit of space, move the accordion out so that they can be in a little bit of struggle, but then move in then when they're suffering and that we sort of stay connected the whole time as we move out and we move in and it's not just this trajectory of I'm really close with our kids.

And then I launched them into independent adults, but. Sometimes we even need to step in [00:09:00] when they're adults and they're suffering. I mean, I know I need my mom. Sometimes I need her to step in. I just need her to step in and in a different way. And it's actually, you know, being able to be attuned to our kids' needs in a, less avoiding discomfort way as you talk about and more about allowing them to struggle,

Jill Stoddard: parenting without over-parenting. Um, well, and I'll end on this. It was after this interview that I realized I was totally guilty of the twisting off the juice cap thing. And interestingly, I would let my son struggle through it a little bit more than my daughter. And I realized what I was doing after Julia and I had this interview.

And so from that point forward, and, and my daughter was more quick to give up. As some of the literature says happens more often with girls, right? , and so now she'd be like, I can't do it. It's hurting. My finger is, and I'm like, come on. I believe in you. You can do it. And she gets it off eventually every time.

So hopefully [00:10:00] she's building up those muscles in our arms that Julie says in the episode are atrophying because parents opened their kids juice bottles, and we have solved that problem after this interview. So I think you'll learn a lot listening to this one and enjoy this episode with Julie Lythcott-Haimes.

I am thrilled today to have Julie Lythcott-Haimes with me. For any of you who attended our wise minds summit, you were able to hear me interview Julie at that time. And today we're going to talk about her new book. Your turn. Julie is the New York times bestselling author of the anti helicopter parenting manifesto.

How to raise an adult. Her Ted talk on the subject was one of the top talks of 2016. And in 2020, she became a regular contributor with CBS this morning on parenting. Her second book is the critically acclaimed and award-winning prose poetry memoir, real American, which illustrates her experience as a black and biracial person in white [00:11:00] spaces.

. Her third book, your turn, how to be an adult came out in April of this year. Julie lives in the San Francisco Bay area with her partner, Dan of over 30 years, their young adult children and her mom. Julie. Welcome. Thank you so much for being here.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Jill, thanks for having me back. And I'm delighted to be here.

Jill Stoddard: Great. So I have to tell you, I absolutely love this book. And you talk about so much. I mean, you pack so much into this book, everything from people pleasing to networking, to finances, to coping with grief. I mean, there's so much in here for emerging adults. , we would need many hours of an interview to even scratch the surface.

So hopefully people will buy the books so they can get all the juicy stuff. But I thought to start, we should define what the book is about, which is how to be an adult, right. Or the term that we often hear is adulting. So can you start by defining what you mean by adulting?

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Happily [00:12:00] and yes, it is a long book and that's cause you can't T-L-D-R adulting. It is a massive topic. Adulting is the stage of life between childhood and death. It is a set of decades. We hope that our healthy, where we make our way out into the world, figure ourselves out, figure out what we want to do for work.

Figure out who we want to be in community with who we want to be in relationship with. And we'd go and do and be those things. That is my definition of adulting. And this book is in response to the many, many, many members of the millennial generation for whom I have great compassion because I was afraid I was a college Dean working with that generation.

, and also for older gen Zs, who may feel this way too, for those millennials who said, you know what, I can't adult, I don't want to adult, I'm afraid to adult. I don't know how to adult. This is my way of saying. I get it. Yep. They're all kinds of valid reasons why you might be feeling stuck [00:13:00] and you gotta, so I'm here with this very compassionate, but also Frank and times blunt and at times funny and at times vulnerable book.

Showing you how it's done. And there was no one way it's done. The point is there, it's your path for you to carve? And I share my own stories and those have close to three dozen other humans from so many different walks of life to make the point, there are innumerable ways to do this. It's all about what you figure out to be true about yourself.

, there's some technical things you gotta master. Yeah. But, but it's really. Fundamentally about wanting to, about wanting to adult, when you want to, you will do the work to learn the skills and to figure your way forward. And it's that wanting to piece that I think has been lacking, , and creating a lot of fear in, , young adults.

Jill Stoddard: All those things. And one of the things I really liked that you pointed out, [00:14:00] you know, when you're saying adulting is a really big topic is, you know, you specifically say it can't be boiled down to 10 tips or even a thousand. Tips. And we sort of live in this, like there's been this like blog effication of our lives and all the blogs are 10 tips for how to be an adult.

And you know, and you really can't, it's, it's complicated and complex and challenging. And, , you know, one way I had never thought about this is you actually talk about being an adult as being a state of mind and that the state of mind is what ignites the doing. That ends up forging your adult self.

And so you talk about as part wanting to, like you just said, part having to, and part learning how, and I think that's, you know, that is exactly what this book does. , you talk about almost like breaking the old rules of what adulthood at one time meant. So, you know, finish school, get a job, leave home, get married, have kids.

, but that it's really about. Behaving responsibly, , [00:15:00] accountably independently, all of which includes supporting oneself and making life choices. And I want to, I want to quote you here because I have a specific question. So I'm going to quote you to you from your book. You say, quote, a successful life is not about getting into a certain school or having a certain job or career, or about how much money you have.

It's not about perfection, making a singular noteworthy achievement, or having the most followers. People will hold these things out as the finish line for you to cross, but forget that there is no finish line. Your work will feel most fulfilling. If you've spent some time figuring out your unique interests and talents, and you'd go out there and get better and better at doing that stuff.

So I love that. First of all, it's beautiful. , and I couldn't agree more, but here's my question.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Okay. All right. Yes.

Jill Stoddard: How do we encourage older teens or young adults? You know, people in that age group, you mentioned to really follow this [00:16:00] prescription. Cause in some ways you're saying, follow your heart. You're saying be independent, financially independent, but you know, follow your heart.

If their parents aren't on the same page, like if they have different goals for themselves than what their parents think they should have.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: So here is where book one, how to raise an adult on the harm of helicopter parenting, which encroaches upon a kid's agency undermines their resilience. And often doesn't result in a kid having good character. This is how that book slams into this book, , in this book. In no uncertain terms. I talk about it's time to go off leash.

If your parents are holding a leash, if your parents are judging your identity, it's time to listen to what you know, to be true about yourself instead of what your family seems to expect. If your parents have certain expectations about job and career, , it's time to dislodge yourself from that. And I get to a point in the middle of the book.

I say, I think in the get unstuck chapter, chapter six out of 13, , it's called, , get out of neutral, the tragedy of unused [00:17:00] potions. I say your parents opinions, perspectives, expectations needs may be what's keeping you stuck. And we're at the midway point of this book. And the hinge of this book is to be an adult, is to venture forward.

Even if your parents disagree with the path you're taking. Now, if you're going to go be an ax murderer or a drug addict, yes. Parents, please try to stop your young adult from doing that. But if they're choosing a career that you don't understand, or you don't think is valuable, or you don't think is lucrative too bad, so sad, it's not your life.

Stop. Okay. This book is advocating for young people to say, you know what? I know I've had this stirring in my heart that I'm a theater person, or I know I love working with kids and they want me to be a professor, but I'd rather be a third grade teacher. There is no parent who has the right to tell that child.

You can't do that. I mean, fundamentally I am rooting. [00:18:00] For every single human to chart their path forward, listening to the messages that come from that inner voice that tells us I'm good at this. I love this. And if you ask any of us, what would you do if it was just up to you? Most of us have an answer to that.

And if we're not able to be that person it's because society or parents or peers have told us, that's not legitimate. Okay. And yes, finances are a reality, but you know what, when we're doing work, we love, we can accept a smaller salary because the work is filling us in ways that no amount of money can.

And I addressed that in the book, like, yeah, you do need to be able to support yourself, but that doesn't mean you have to go work on wall street or be a corporate lawyer, unless you love that. Awesome. If you do, but if you're just doing that for the money and you're miserable, that's not success. I don't care how proud your family or peers seem to be.

You're miserable and well-paid get out.

[00:19:00] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, your parents. Aren't the ones who have to get up and take the subway to wall street and do the job eight hours a day or more every day for decades on end.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Well, let's, let's put a pin in. There is an important caveat because for kids who are the children of immigrants, who've struggled really hard and sacrificed a lot, maybe to get to this country for kids who grew up poor or working class, where it's been, you will get an education and you will better yourself and maybe help the rest of us.

I totally get that. I have tons of stories in this book about people who are pulling themselves, , up to, , a place of greater ease and comfort financially based in comparison to, , how their parents grew up. And so I'm not trying to be flip. I'm not trying to say your parents. Opinions are invalid. I'm saying the adult discerns, okay.

This is what my parents want. Let me figure out how much of that I'm going to adhere to an address. And yet I have the imperative to lead my life. The way I know is right for me, because that is ultimately how I'm going to be the most successful. Be able to contribute [00:20:00] to my community. Be of use as a happy.

Cooperative kind person to my family. So it's, it's complex, but it's, it's about telling that young adult, Hey, you're in the driver's seat. You're not in the passenger seat anymore. You're not a dog on the end of someone else's leash and keeping those metaphors in mind, I think as a way to say, all right.

Yeah. Other people's opinions are valid and you can talk with them and get their advice and guidance, but ultimately you're in charge.

Jill Stoddard: It makes me think, is that what you're saying too, is make a conscious deliberate choice. That's based on your values. Don't just react on autopilot. Based on what other people are telling you to do. And so if you're making a conscious deliberate choice based on your own values, that might also include your, , immigrant background, cultural background, parents values, but you're being thoughtful and making a decision.

Are these my values too? And if they are that I'm going to weigh that. [00:21:00] But if it's really discrepant from what matters to me, that I might choose to take a different path.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: That's exactly right. And I will underscore that. I think it is the marker of adulthood. When you can say, you know what, I know this is what I want to try next. And my family doesn't get it or doesn't like it, but you know what? I'm going to do it anyway. I mean, I, I put in the book, I had a college friend.

Who was from a wealthy family and her wealthy grandmother disowned her financially, literally, and truly disowned her, my friend, because my friend chose to attend a college that was not in the Ivy league and that's just not acceptable to grandma. And my friend said basically too bad, so sad. It's my life.

She, she sensed. I will forever not be leading my life. If my family's opinions of what I do end up being the dominant voice I listened to.

Jill Stoddard: Wow. Well, this has actually led my husband and I to have a conversation. Our kids are almost [00:22:00] seven and almost nine. And, , you know, I said to him, how are we going to handle it? If our kid says I don't want to go to college and I want to be a painter, , you know, some, something like that, what, how are we going to handle this?

, you know, I was telling him a little bit about the things I was reading in the book and. What we came to, the agreement we came to is our kids can do whatever they want. If they want to be a painter, be a painter. The only rule we're going to have is you have to be able to support yourself. You're not going to live in our house and have us paying all of your bills while you paint.

You're going to have to support yourself. And as long as, so I think what ends up happening, like for me, I'm a writer, but I don't support myself as a writer. So I have another job. And I also write, and I have found a way to do both of those things so that I can be financially independent.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: So your response and your husband's response is beautiful. And your seven year, almost seven year old, almost nine year old are fortunate that you are their parents. And if we could just have parents hear this and [00:23:00] ingest it and make it part of their own narrative and their own families, wow. We could return a lot of healthfulness to childhood.

Right. Um, and. Yeah, because the point is exactly that, first of all, it's their life. It is their choice. You have your life, you've chosen to have children. You are raising them, nurturing them, loving them, providing a roof and food and all of this. And there will come a point called adulthood. When a child is expected to be able to make their own way, barring

significant disabilities, they ought to be able to stand on their own two feet, so to speak, pay their bills.

Okay. Once that's happening, great, whatever they do again, not being a drug dealer, but like every other way, any legal way. Fantastic. It's their life. And that kid who wants to be a painter will be forever a hollow shell of themselves. If they are instead doing some other work that somebody else decided was more valuable.

But in their heart, that heart still knows. [00:24:00] I'm meant to be a painter. I want to paint. And I, you know, I've got close to three dozen stories of other people in this book illustrating these various points. I think at least three of them, Jill are artists. The chapter two opens with somebody who's working real hard to get her break in Hollywood and, you know, went to college.

I think I had a graduate degree was working as a nanny and a yoga teacher, yoga teacher, and that still wasn't enough to pay the bills in LA public assistance for a while. Auditioning, auditioning, auditioning. That person is now the star of a show on freeform. And she's in the book because how that actor became somebody who worked it and worked and worked and can now support herself.

I want that story in here. I have a dancer in New York who had \$50,000 in student loan debt. And paid that off on a dancer salary, living in one of the most expensive cities in the world. And because she was like, I am a dancer and I'm going to dance and I'm going to figure this out. And she [00:25:00] cut corners in terms of food.

Like she, she was frugal, very frugal. She became a financial planner on the side. She got so good at it. She does earn money from dancing. She is an artist full-time, but she's got this side hustle, which is the financial planning to help other people. So that's an example of how artists make it work. I've got a theater director who lives in Auburn, Alabama.

Who's, you know, dealing with bringing, you know, making that work work for him. And his now wife. Um, so it is possible. It is plausible. It is feasible. It does require sacrifices, but that artist who is identifying I'm an artist, and yes, I do this other thing, a nine to five in order to pay my bills, but I don't let, I don't choose a job.

That's going to encroach upon my evenings and my weekends. Right. It's not going to inhabit my mental and emotional space. I'm just going to do this job, get my paycheck so that I can be an artist. Right. If my art doesn't pay my bills. [00:26:00] That's a very legitimate path that many, many artists, as you've just indicated, you're a writer, right.

You're writing and you're doing other stuff to pay the bills. So these are legitimate choices and nobody has the right to tell another human. That's not a legitimate pursuit.

Jill Stoddard: Figure this out by doing it right. By having challenging experiences by failing. I mean, which also is a way that this book is, is linked to the first book. Although, you know, what I see a lot in my practice are, , older teens or more young adults, kids who are maybe

20, 20, one, 22, who have had helicopter parents and now are really struggling to do these things independently.

, I'm thinking of an example where I had a client who desperately wanted to be independent.

And her mom actually got her into therapy for anxiety. , and theoretically also wanted her to be independent, but when my client would change things up. So for example, she would want to cook [00:27:00] for herself without being micromanaged by her mom. But her mom would that get angry and storm off and give her the silent treatment.

So there were like these real costs, , too. Making some of these changes to essentially going against what the parent was wanting a purse. So I think, you know how difficult this is, can't be under emphasized, but at the end of the day, what's the alternative. I mean, what a terrible life to be 25 and need your mom to be cooking with and for you, I mean, you just, you gotta do it right.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: you would do the silent treatment. When you do choose to try to exert your independence. And as you know, I read about this in the book, Ben and chapter six get out of neutral is an example of a 30 year old who is still living under his parents' roof. He has two graduate degrees. He has a condo that his parents won't let him live in because they want the rent money.

, they opened his mail. They ask him where he's going. They [00:28:00] want to know his mother will call and yell at him. If he's not home by dark. He's 30. His mother probably has some kind of underlying mental health condition. , he is struggling with the fact that every time he tries to leave, she ices him out.

She does exactly what your client's mother does. She acts offended. , she acts hurt and she ignores him. And that's painful for him and any psychologist listening. And as you well know, would say like the cost of Ben of moving out feels like it's greater than the cost of staying because he's staying in enduring during this, because.

You know, she's made good on her threats. He does not want to be completely ignored. And so I have his story in here in the get out of neutral chapter, which is about the things that hold you back because he's not, not yet a fully fledged independent I'm on my own. I'm out of under my parents. I'm out front of my parents' thumb adult, but he's trying, and he's working on it.

And the beautiful thing that's [00:29:00] aside sort of a dividend of this. Interview process. He met with my research assistant. We got the first interview, maybe three years ago, two years ago when I called him back to get an update, as the book was getting finalized, he said, well, I've lost 143 pounds since our first call.

And he said in talking to my amazing research assistant Lee, he said, I think. Talking to Lee talking through what I was doing in further furtherance, some of my own independence, like having my own checking account that they don't look at and have access to make me realize

the small steps I have been able to take and see the benefit of those and made me think, well, what else can I do?

And we didn't even know his weight was a concern for him in the first call. And so when he showed up on the second call was like, I've lost a hundred foot. We were like, Whoa, if that isn't a sign, not to, I'm not trying to be waiting list or, or fat shaming at all. He said, I lost this weight. That was important to me.

He had apparently been quite heavy and the. He was dislodging [00:30:00] some agency that was lurking within himself. And he located and said, you know what, even though she cooks, I'm going to be in charge of what I eat in this house. And I'm going to be in charge once I've feel comfortable getting out there and walking the streets of my suburb, where my parents live and I live, you know, he, you could just see this person emerging into the space of, I.

I'm in charge of some aspects of my life. I will decide what goes in my mouth, even though my mother wants to constantly feed. I'm just going to say, you know what? No. And boy has he really kind of staked some boundaries and maybe they're not anywhere near as big as someone else's might be or any, but we're as large as, as he would want those boundaries to be, but they are there and they're growing and I am rooting for this person.

Jill Stoddard: That's amazing. And that's so important. I mean, small things matter if we think about, you know, this is adulting as a learning process and if you've never done it, you know, if I've never ridden a bike, I'm not going to go get on two [00:31:00] wheels and take off and, you know, do the tour de France. Right. There's going to be a lot of stuff.

Steps training wheels and falling down and, you know, a lot yeah. Steps before I get to the point of being able to ride that bike. And I could read lots of blogs about 10 tips for adulting, and that's not going to do it either. Right. So I think, you know, that's, that's so important that. That most things that we ultimately master over time, it takes practice.

It takes time and it takes multiple baby steps. Nobody does it all in one fell swoop. And for Ben, he had a much higher mountain to climb.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: I say two things. One is, um, there is a four step method for teaching any kid, any skill, which I articulate in the first book, how to raise an adult, which I want your listeners to hear about. And you can. Find this written on my website. So you can follow up if that's of interest, because it really is fundamental bedrock essential.

But I want to say first that, um, there are [00:32:00] self-help lists in this book. It is, you know, even though adulting can't be boiled down to them, I wouldn't write a book that was only a list of things. I know that some people really learn from lists. Some people want lists. And so these chapters are. Almost every single one of them has a handy list, which is meant to kind of pull out some of the things you're hearing in the storytelling that I do.

I do stories from my own life. I've got these other people that I've interviewed at the end of every chapter. Um, stories are the way humans feel connected, less alone, more supported,

a hopeful optimist, all these things. So stories are in there to help every reader feel, Hey, wait a minute. Okay, I get this.

I can relate to this. And then the tips are in there, right? Because people, some people want tips and that's, and that's valid, but to the forced. So to the tips, to the practical, from the other book, the 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 only then can they do it [00:33:00] independently. And too often, if we're over in parenting, we're stuck in steps one and two, we're doing it for our kid or with them, meaning they're there, but we're doing all the work like we're crossing the street. With them. And for them, we're looking both ways instead of teaching them how to look both ways, how to develop that instinct that it's safe to cross step three is you're still there, but you're watching them do it.

You're there for the just-in-case. They're going to set the house on fire as they cook that grilled cheese sandwich moment, or just in case they're going to step in front of a truck. They did not see coming. Okay. You're still there, but only not macro managing do not micromanage. That's what helicopter parenting is.

It's a constant micromanagement. You're there to do step three enough times until you and they are confident. They have arrived at step four, which is they can do it without your having to be there at all. Every single skill of life is something a child has to learn over the course of childhood and get to [00:34:00] step four on.

Well, we over help. We're just depriving them. And then we shouldn't be surprised at all that they're bewildered scared, uncertain about how to make their way forward. We have done much and basically taught them you can't. So I'll do it for you.

Debbie Sorensen: We are so excited that act daily journal by Diana Hill and Debbie Sorensen is coming out on may. First. It's available to pre-order now at barnesandnoble.com or you can link to it through drdianahill.com or through our podcast webpage.

Jill Stoddard: That's so great. And that goes for whether your kid is four or whether your kid is 40. If you're still micromanaging and.

we think we're helping, but really if we're over helping for too long, that's about us and our anxiety and our discomfort. If I'm not letting my nine-year-old cross the street by herself, that's because I'm scared.

Not because it's actually unsafe or she can't do it. So I think for [00:35:00] parents to really recognize the function of these behaviors for themselves, you know, we need to learn how to open up and make space for some of that discomfort. And that's actually helping our kids so that they can be independent. Yeah.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Put that on repeat and just make it like you sell. So everyone hears it in. And let me say. Look, I'm not a psychologist. I'm a former lawyer and a former college Dean, and now I'm an author and writer and speaker. Um, so I can't say it with the authority,

with which you just said it, but I am constantly saying it anyway because I have observed it and I've read about it and it's entirely true.

Of course, we're trying to just help and be useful. , but , it is ultimately our own fears that are getting in the way and are. Prohibiting us from allowing our children to have the normal, healthy childhood experiences that will teach them skills and teach them resilience and ultimately make them stronger and, and [00:36:00] really well prepared to get out there.

And let me just say whatever authority I purport to be by having pen three books. I am also a parent who has over parented my kids and I was railing against over parenting. On my campus and telling parents kindly but firmly telling parents to back off. And then one day I came home to my own family. My kids were eight and 10.

We were having dinner. I sat down next to my ten-year-old leaned over his plate and began cutting his chicken. And that that's when I got a Jill, I was like, Oh my gosh. Oh, Whoa. It was like, Dickinson ghost of Christmas future was visiting me. She's telling me, I wish your listeners could see you laughing at me, which is perfect because that's the point like I'm trying to, it is a funny story and I want every parent listening to know, like I get it.

I've done it. I'm still doing

Jill Stoddard: we all do it.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: right. But I have seen, as you trace that ten-year-old four to 21. I have seen the ways I've laid down patterns [00:37:00] that over help, that sort of signal that maybe he's fragile or can't handle things. So I'm taking care of it. I didn't intend that, but in unpacking the behaviors through some therapy, we're realizing, Oh my gosh, look what we've done.

Okay. I realized that you cannot let go of an 18 year old who goes off to college, the workplace or the military. If you've been cutting the meat of a ten-year-old because there are so many skills that kid must learn beyond, use a knife and fork safely in order to jettison them out into the world. So. I learned then that it isn't that these parents are just starting to over parent, their 18 year old.

They've been doing it since the child learned to walk and they've been over-protective around edges and surfaces and they've not let them, you know, learn to use knives and forks or use the stove. And they've never had to tie their own shoes or unscrew a juice drink. Many teenagers don't have the muscles or the manual dexterity to.

Crack that plastic top on a juice [00:38:00] drink. That's a wonderful visual metaphor of over-parenting. We've always done it for them. This helpful offering. Let me do that. No hand your kid to bottle and have them struggle. How do you think they're ever going to get it? You know, so we've won that. And it would not try to harm them, but it has harmed them.

And we really have to see that our job is to put ourselves out of a job to raise this human barring significant, special needs raised as human to a place where they can do it themselves.

Jill Stoddard: I love that our job is to put ourselves out of a job. You know, the other thing I'm just occurring to me now is. That these things that we're doing as parents in an effort to be helpful, that the reason for doing it changes over time. It's always about managing our own discomfort, but the reason for discomfort, I think changes.

So when my kids are little, it's maybe more about safety, like physical safety, and also about protecting them from say frustration, like with the juice cap [00:39:00] example, then I think as they get older, A lot of it, you know, if you've been over parenting a kid, their whole life, and now they're 20 and you suddenly say, you know what?

You need to do your own laundry from now on. I think the fear then turns to, Oh no, they're not going to like me. They're going to think. I mean there, because you know, they're, and I've had a couple of different clients where that has been the case. And so I think for us as parents to really be aware of what is this triggering in us, if I let go and let my kid be more independent, what is that triggering in me that I need to work on a little bit

Julie Lythcott-Haims: I think you're one, huh? A hundred percent. Right. And I would add that the final bit. So that's the fear? The overprotection. Oh no, I'm worried. And that, isn't just when they're young for many of us, particularly if we haven't practiced it, when they're younger, giving them a longer, a longer leash. You know, we're terrified when they go out into the world and they, and we need to be on the phone constantly as they're walking to and from class or to their job, you know, they just, they don't know how to be in the world without [00:40:00] us.

And we don't feel that they're safe and they might not be safe because we've never let them develop the instincts around crossing the street. You know, or avoiding that one creepy stranger instead of avoiding all strangers, you know, , you've said, Oh no, they're not going to like me. And that's a huge, , sort of mindset brewing within what I call the concierge style of helicopter parenting, which is how can I make your childhood easier?

I'll just smooth. The path I'll show up and rescue you I'll bring the stuff, you forgot a manager deadlines. But I think the piece, , that I want to add is. The ego of, I need you to have these outcomes, study these things, go to school, like this, have a career like this. I need that so that I can brag about you because when I can show the world what you've become.

I feel better about myself and that's, I think the tiger type of parenting, that's the authoritarian style of helicopter parenting, which is I will make clear that you must tread this particular path in life. My will condition my love upon how well you [00:41:00] marched down the path I've laid for you. And that is all about a parent's ego and their need to feel fulfilled.

Through the achievements of their child and all of these, whether it's the overprotection, the concierge, or the tiger type. It's all about us and managing our ego and discomfort.

Jill Stoddard: Totally. I think one of the things you said that I want to come back to that. I think is so important, kind of hippy, like a ton of bricks is often the things that we're doing are actually creating the exact outcome. We're trying to avoid. If we overprotect our kids, then they're not going to be safe in the world.

, ultimately if we want to have a good relationship with our kids, we're going to actually create a terrible relationship by over parenting. And you know, maybe knowing that maybe the thing I'm doing to prevent a feared outcome is actually making that feared outcome more likely, maybe that's something that can give parents something to hang their hat on in terms of a willingness [00:42:00] to let go.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: In the book I say, , how many of us. Parents are still trying to please our parents. How many of us are in therapy? Because we have made choices in furtherance of what our parent or grandparent expected of us. Like, let us not foist that. Generational trauma on our kids. I'm not against therapy, but I say, let it not be therapy.

Um, in further, instead of trying to plea wondering why you're trying to always please your dad or your mom, you know, there, there are, maybe we can write this wrong in this generation. Maybe we can collectively take a deep breath and appreciate that the universe or God, or however you believe we all get here.

Gave us these children and that they are precious beings who have so much to teach us. We're not supposed to mold them as in the profit. Right? They are not ours. They come through us, but they're not ours. [00:43:00] And, um, there's a humility in that. If you can really accept that this is a separate being and you know what, I'm going to give you one example.

If I can, I had a mom call me up. And with an aha moment where she got that her psychological distance was too close to her child. May I share this example? , I've got two sons. , my older son is in a therapeutic boarding school environment. Think he was aged 16 or 17. We have family therapy once or twice a week.

And this week on family therapy, he said, mom, every time you asked me, have you handled this? Have you done this? Have you completed this every time you remind me that I need to do things. It makes me think that you don't think I can. And sometimes I just want to not do it because. You know, I'm tired of this.

And this mom called me and she said, Julie, she relayed this. She said, Julie, I realize I'm micromanaging that kid constantly. Cause he's my biological [00:44:00] son. And I feel that his DNA, his genetic makeup is half mine. And therefore I am. Responsible for who he is and what he becomes reflects back. Yeah, on me, she said, Julie, my younger son is adopted.

I don't feel responsible for who he becomes. I just love the heck out of this kid. Try to provide them with the opportunities and further ins of what he's interested in. She said, Julie, I realized I have the healthier psychological distance with my adopted son. I don't love them. Him any less. I love them both fiercely, but I have a degree of need to control the one who shares my biological material.

It was such an aha moment as mom. I thought it was brilliant. I share it wherever I go, because you know, it's, it doesn't have to be about, you have a bio kid and an adopted kid, you know, envision yourself like, think about how loving. And interested and curious, you can be about your nieces and nephews and nibbling as some people [00:45:00] call them.

Right. Um, you don't feel responsible for what's happening to them and chemistry. You just can express compassion if they're struggling. Like, Oh no, I'm so sorry. That's not going well, let me know if you need any help. How are those guitar lessons? Right. You can validate what's happening for them. Show a genuine interest, but if you're the parent, Oh no.

What are we going to do? How did that happen? I thought we studied, you know, let me call the chem teacher, like, wait a minute, stop. The kid is in chemistry. Not you

Jill Stoddard: Right, right. Okay. Well, let's talk about, so let's say, you know, we've got kids that are saying, okay, or I should say young adults. See, even me calling them kids is reflective of how we treat emerging adults.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: 23 year olds. I got to raise my eyebrows. It's definitely what we do.

Jill Stoddard: Okay. So we've got our young adults and they want to be independent and forge their path. And one of the lists you talk about, I do love the lists that are in the book, um, and the stories absolutely bring all of this to life.

[00:46:00] One of the lists you talk about is around fending and there are, I think it was like nine different basic ways that young adults can learn how to fend. So will you, will you define for us, what do you mean when you talk about fending?

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Yeah. Um, fend for yourself, something I heard growing up a lot took for granted that I knew what it meant. I've had to drill into it for this book. Fending is knowing it's on you and you are capable. So you can procure your shelter. You can pay your bills, you can procure food. Um, um, you can take care of business.

It's the basics vending. Isn't you got a promotion at work or you bought a new car. Fending is you can keep yourself alive.

Jill Stoddard: Yeah. You said it, isn't just about learning how to do things. It's also appreciating, like, you know, what's expected of you, you want to learn to do this stuff and you have to motivate yourself to do it. So would you, will you go through a couple of the examples of like, what are [00:47:00] some of the, you know, you don't have to go through all nine, but what are some of the basics of fending?

Julie Lythcott-Haims: Well, um, I describe it. First of all, I use the metaphor of watching a game of Dodge ball, a game of Dodge ball. If somebody is fending, they're playing the game, they are throwing the ball at the opponent and they're dodging the ball when it comes. And sometimes. They hit their Mark. And sometimes they get hit by the ball, but they keep going.

You win some, you lose some, you keep going. If somebody is micromanaging your life and not allowing you to learn defend, it's sort of like you're in the bleachers, watching your, someone else play on you, your behalf, it's like you have a designated player and you're watching your game being played, but you're not really doing any of the effort or dealing with any of the consequences or feeling any of the joy, you know, have a great.

Move. Um, so that's the sort of feeling offending like, no, I can do this. The two-year-old who insists. I tie my shoes and I do it right. And they can't get, but they want to, they want

offend, [00:48:00] they want to do it. They want to say stop, stop helping. So, um, okay. So offending items, they're so basic, but. As parents, we've kind of overlooked that you want to send someone out into the adult life capable of attend to the care and maintenance of your body.

Find work that pays your bills. Try hard that's effort, that's growth mindset. You're not going to be perfect, but keep trying, make your own decisions. Get along with others. I mean, humans form a huge. Part of the fabric of your life, unless you're a total loner and human relationships are key to our survival.

So you want to not only have others in your life, but get along with them, keep track of your stuff. How many of us are rescuing our kids and bringing them their forgotten stuff? And if they, if we're wealthy and they lost their coat and they've lost her second coat and third coat, we just keep buying more coats.

Instead of saying, go find your coat. You don't let them, you know, freeze to death and a blizzard. Cause they don't have a coat. You know, you don't let someone miss their recital that [00:49:00] they've worked for a year to prepare for it because they left their instrument at home. Like those are times when we should rescue, but if it's the run of the mill day to day, Oh, I forgot my homework.

I forgot my lacrosse. Stick. Let life teach them the lesson of, remember your stuff. Number seven is reply and show up. This is about manners and commitment to others. Number eight is find your people and care for them. This is about recognizing there's more than you in this life. That's another key component of adulting.

It's not all about you, you know, you have other humans in their life, what do they need? How can you show up in ways that help them and then finally plan for your future? Uh, this is about trying as a 20 something to think about what your 50 something self will need and appreciate. Financially in terms of your self care, your wellness of the choices you've made, you don't want to completely live as a 20 year old worrying about your 65 year old self, you know, sort of deferring, deferring, deferring, happiness experiences, um, pleasures [00:50:00] constantly and further instead of waiting till I'm 60, but at the same time, you don't want to just blow it.

Everything have a blowout set of twenties that you're really going to regret. When you look back on them as a 40 or 50 something.

Jill Stoddard: Yeah. You know, when kids are little they're so egocentric, and this is, you know, you're talking about like developmentally to learn how to engage in perspective taking. And, , as I was reading this book, the book is, is written for young adults. You know, people who are. Adulting or becoming adults.

I really think that it is, of course it is helpful for that audience. I also found it really as a 40, almost 48 year old woman. Who's a parent of young kids. , I found it really helpful as a parent, too, to be thinking about these things now and what can I be doing to make it more likely that, that this isn't going to be an uphill battle for them?

You know, again, I think about some of my clients who. , [00:51:00] or maybe like Ben, who you were talking about that sort of like trying to make these changes now at 30, when there's been so much ground laid, , it's a real uphill battle and, I think that adulting is hard, even if you've had the best parenting and your parents have promoted your independence.

So, you know, I, I do, I really recommend it for both,

you know, the, the teens and young adults, but parents to have kids of kids of all ages.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: I'm glad to hear that. I've look, I wrote it as, you know, the narrative is this close first person narrative, where I'm talking to the young adult as if we are sitting together having coffee. Um, I want them to feel that connection and care. I want them to feel seen, supported, heard, validated, believed in rooted for, and.

I hope that parents of those folks who might be stuck or struggling will also pick it up because I think there's a lot embedded in here that a parent can say like, Oh, okay, I need to do this. And [00:52:00] that. And further ends up supporting this young person, not doing it for them, you know? Not abandoning them, but standing kind of near them as they do it offering love and support, but not overly.

So, and then you've just offered me a third audience, which is fantastic. You're saying that as a parent of young kids, you're seeing stuff in here, I thought you were going to say, it's helping you on your path as a human. You said it's helping me as a parent of seven and nine year olds. Uh, imagine what lies ahead for them.

And I think that's. Nick, I hadn't contemplated that people would do that. Yeah, in some ways this is a roadmap to the rest of your life and know how to, to support our young people in getting there. And really, regardless of what age they are, , terrific to hear that you would recommend it to those folks too.

Jill Stoddard: I would. And so let me ask you another question. I know we're starting to get short on time. , and I have like five more questions, but I'll limit myself. But, , one of the things you talk [00:53:00] about. Is it actually, you know what, I'm just going to quote you again because you say it much more beautifully than I will if I try to paraphrase it.

So you say, , much more important than the work you do is how you behave with humans. Research proves you'll feel happiest during life and at its end. If you find some small set of humans who know the real you and who love and support you, no matter what and whom you love and support and return, and this is something this feels right.

Huge to me. And it's something that I have just kind of like learned by experience over time. And you know, now I'm a middle-aged woman, but what sticks out to me here is like, in this age of social media, It feels extra hard for young people to truly be their real selves. Like we know you have to be your authentic self vulnerable show, your warts in order to truly connect with others.

You can't just be the highlight reel version of yourself to have true connection with other [00:54:00] people. But I feel like there's a lot of pressure on young people. You know, we

know that they're taking five different photos of themselves before they posted, or they're texting five photos to their friends saying which one is the best for me to put out there.

Do you have any specific thoughts about how we can really encourage young people to be their true, authentic selves in the service of true connection with other humans in this age of technology and social media?

Julie Lythcott-Haims: You know, you'd think that a book for young adults would have a chapter called social media, but you've seen the book. So, you know, I'm a little bit more oblique than that. I'm sliding things. In different places. And, , for example, the chapter that really is all about the, Necessity of having meaningful interactions and relationships with humans is called, start talking to strangers.

Humans are key to your survival instead of like relationships matter. , and , so I'm constantly writing about social media in this book without [00:55:00] having the social media chapter, just as like I'm constantly acknowledging folks have mental health issues and learning differences and various other challenges without having a chapter.

That's only about those things. , and what I would say is. What we know from the research of common sense media, which is an amazing organization not-for-profit I'm on the board. they do research about media and kids and young people is if somebody is psychologically healthy, Their social media usage and interactions, neither enhances the sense of self nor decreases the sense of self.

But if you are struggling with depression, for example, or anxiety, social media can make you feel better about yourself. When things go well on social or worse about yourself, if you don't get the right number of likes or people are out right mean or harmful, or if you just feel everyone else's life is better than mine.

So I do a lot of critiquing of the curating culture, the, the [00:56:00] five photos to find the perfect one, or just only posting about the amazing things that are happening in your life. , I do a lot of empathizing with the fact that that is a challenge that this generation is meeting, , that the older generations didn't have to deal with.

, and so I, I'm offering my critique while also speaking to the importance of self-care and wellness. Hoping that the message then is, , it's really not about social media. It's about, can I get right within myself? Can I get to a good place, a place of self-awareness what I deal with, what my struggles are.

Some self-regulation about my feelings and, you know, kind of get to a place of all right. I'm I'm okay. Then your social media use is, is not going to have a negative or an overly positive impact on. On your life. So social media turns out to just be another indicator of really what's going on within ourselves.

Jill Stoddard: Hmm.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: I mean, I do [00:57:00] talk about the importance of being authentic and being your, your real self. And I'm hoping that you know, that that's about the jobs you

choose and the relationships you want to be in. And the identities you claim I'm rooting for all of those things to happen, confident that when those things happen, then that person will go to social media and be like, okay, my friend just had this awesome promotion or bought this new house or went on this trip, but can, and that I'm happy for them.

And that doesn't diminish how I feel about me. Cause I'm also feeling good about.

Jill Stoddard: Well, Julie, this has been wonderful. It flew by. I'm glad I kept an eye on the clock or I'd probably keep you for another hour. I can't believe how fast, how fast the time went, but thank you so much for being here. I think this is going to be incredibly useful for people. The book is amazing. I hope people will check it out.

, if people want to learn more about you. You know, as I mentioned in your bio, you have another book, that's a memoir. I mean, you have so much to offer the world. Where can [00:58:00] people find you if they want to learn more? Okay.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: I appreciate it, Jill. , I, I want to say one more thing quickly, which is just, , a priority for me around this book was to be very inclusive and telling stories. I've alluded to the fact that there are close to three dozen other people in here from all walks of life. And I mean that, , if you're queer trans gender fluid, you're going to see yourself in this book.

If you're black, Brown, Asian, native, or white, you're going to see yourself in this book, whatever your religion is, you're going to see yourself in this book, or if you lack a religion and you know, if you're a dog owner, your fear of vegan, you're going to see yourself in this book.

Jill Stoddard: ,

socioeconomic statuses. Yeah. You really did a great job

Julie Lythcott-Haims: . In other words, I would be arrogant to be useless, to try to write a book on adulthood and keep the examples in some narrow band of the human experience. I've really tried to cast my net wide and I'm grateful to the many people who let me tell their stories on these pages. , So that's a plug for what I call my commitment to inclusion in this book.

I'm actually trying to help publishing figure out how to be more inclusive when writing [00:59:00] nonfiction, , stay connected to me, follow up via my website, Julie Lythcott-Haims.com. Depending on when you actually hear this, I may already have my new membership club launched this as a way to grow deeper with me.

I try to create spaces where we can be vulnerable and authentic and keep it real with one another. And, um, so that's coming, you can learn about that through the website. My social handles are all Julie Lythcott-Haims that's Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and I'm even going to venture out on to tick-tock and Jay Hames as the blade was the place to find me.

So please do connect with me if anything that I'm saying resonates, um, just, uh, let's connect. I'd

Jill Stoddard: And Lyft got is spelled with a Y L Y T H C O T T. Right. And Hames is H a I M S and Julie just recently read from her memoir on Instagram. You're I am so jealous of your. She shed, or you've got a little pot in your backyard that looks like an amazing little escape to do writing and other creative things.

So [01:00:00] you can check her out.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: It's my little outdoor office, 10 steps from my kitchen door, a room of my own, so to speak. Yep.

Jill Stoddard: Lovely. The fire pit and the pod. It's lovely. So people check Julie out. Thank you so much for being here. This was wonderful.

Julie Lythcott-Haims: And thanks to you listeners for spending this close to an hour with us. , I really appreciate everyone who's listening now and , , thank you Jill, for the opportunity.

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