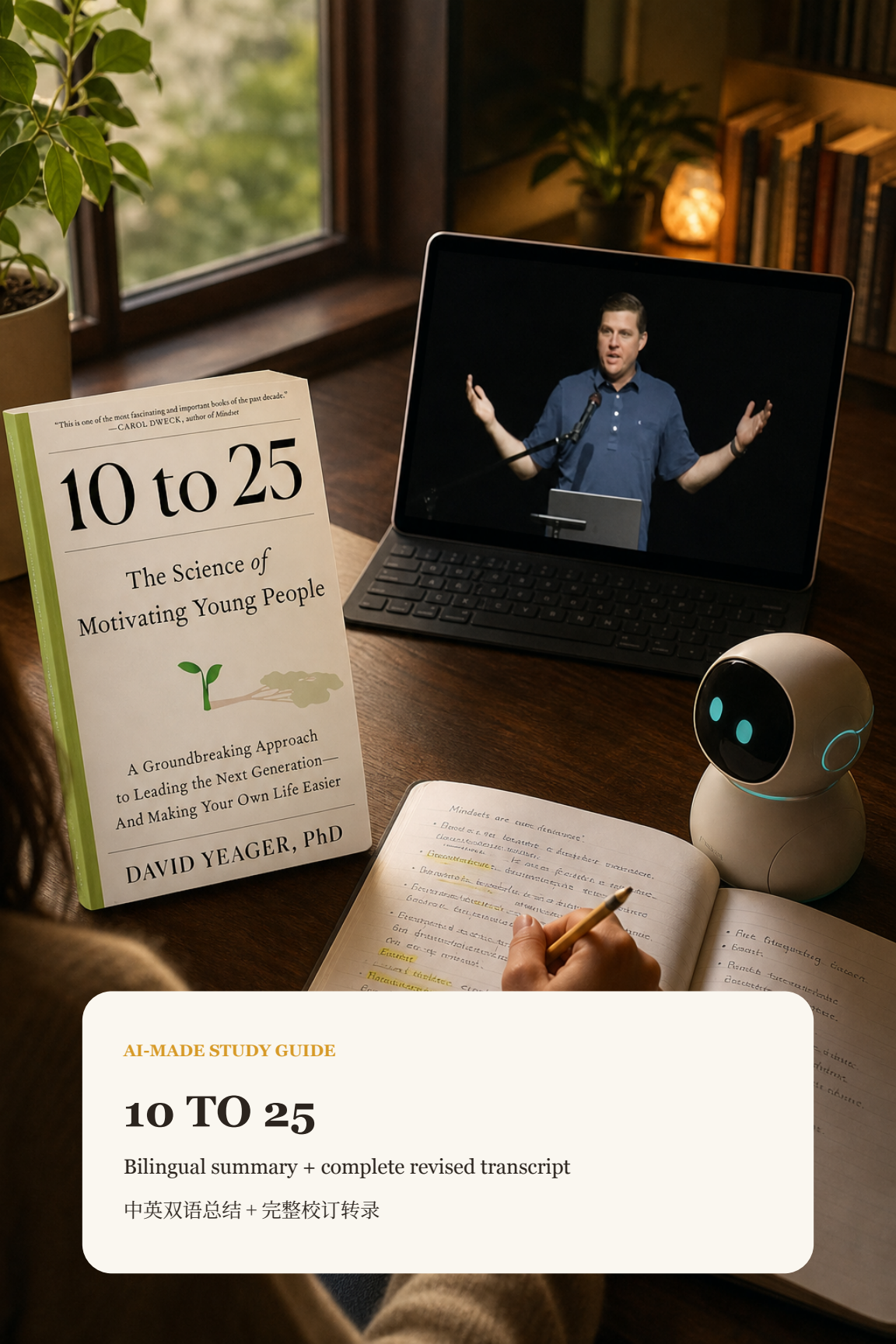




"This is one of the most fascinating and important books of the past decade."  
—CAROL DWECK, author of *Mindset*

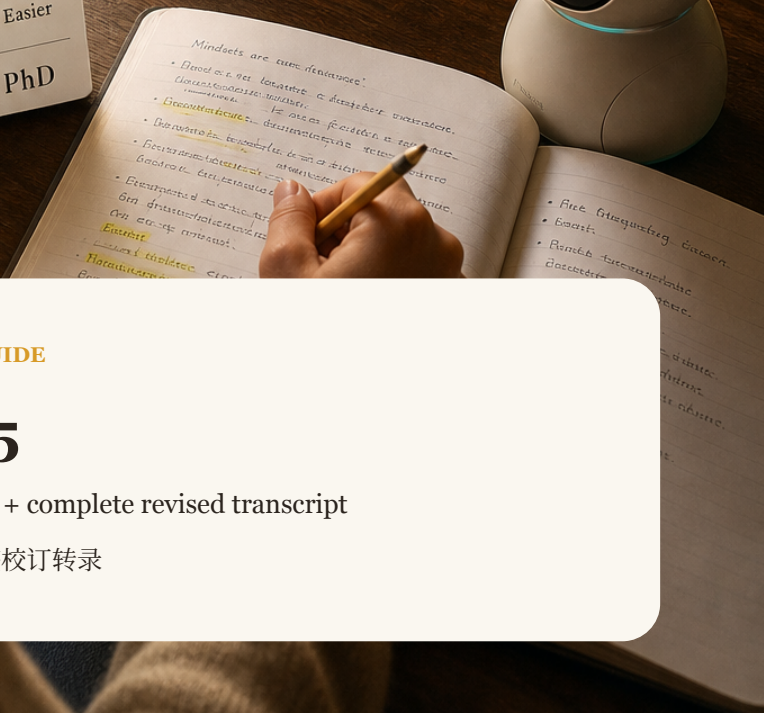
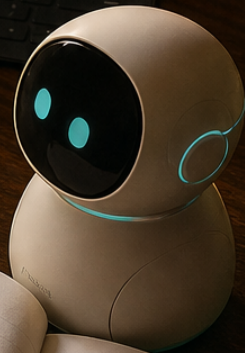
# 10 to 25

The Science of  
Motivating Young People



A Groundbreaking Approach  
to Leading the Next Generation—  
And Making Your Own Life Easier

DAVID YEAGER, PhD



## AI-MADE STUDY GUIDE

# 10 TO 25

Bilingual summary + complete revised transcript

中英双语总结 + 完整校订转录

# 先别急着“管”年轻人，先看看他们听到了什么。

David Yeager 认为，10 到 25 岁的年轻人并不是天生懒惰、脆弱或无法沟通。青春期带来的变化，会让大脑格外关注社会奖赏与社会痛感：自豪、认可、归属、羞辱和丢脸。所以，年轻人听成年人说话时，也在读话里的“地位暗号”：你认真看待我吗？你相信我有能力吗？你是在帮我，还是只想控制我？

这就是“导师的两难”：既要指出问题，又不能让批评把动机碾碎。空洞的表扬、反复唠叨，或为了照顾情绪而降低要求，都没有解决核心问题。Yeager 的 wise feedback 研究表明，当老师把批评背后的理由说清楚——“我要求高，是因为我相信你做不到”——严格反馈反而更容易被接受。

更完整的方法是 mentor mindset：先承认对方的视角，多提问而不是直接命令，把自己的目标和理由说透明，保留真实的自主选择，同时提供高标准和高支持。尊重让耳朵打开，支持让困难可以承受，高标准则传递出“我相信你的潜力”。

这不是一味温柔。Protector 为了避免不舒服而降低标准；enforcer 保持高标准，却不给足支持；真正的 mentor 同时保持高标准和高支持。说得直白一点：不是“你随便做做就好”，也不是“做不到就别来”，而是“这件事很难，我也不会替你做，但我会帮你做到”。

# Respect is not a reward after motivation. It is a condition for motivation.

David Yeager argues that people from roughly age ten through the mid-twenties are not uniquely lazy, fragile, or impossible to reach. Puberty makes the brain unusually sensitive to social reward and social pain - pride, admiration, belonging, humiliation, and shame. Young people therefore listen for the hidden status message inside an adult's words: Do you take me seriously? Do you think I am capable? Are you trying to control me?

This explains the mentor's dilemma. Adults need to correct weak work without crushing motivation. Bland praise, nagging, or simply lowering the bar does not solve it. In Yeager's wise-feedback research, demanding criticism became motivating when teachers made the reason transparent: they held high standards and believed the student could reach them.

The broader leadership model is the mentor mindset: validate a young person's perspective, ask rather than command, explain your purpose, preserve meaningful choice, and combine ambitious standards with visible support. Respect opens attention; support makes difficulty survivable; standards communicate belief in potential.

This is not softness. The protector lowers standards to prevent discomfort. The enforcer keeps standards high but withholds help. The mentor keeps both standards and support high. That approach takes more thought at the beginning, but it reduces the need to control every later step because the young person is more likely to act with ownership.

# Don't collect it. Work with it.

Eric first heard the school principal recommend this book during Orientation. Then people in the community recommended it. Then a classmate found the full talk. At that point the universe was being unusually unsubtle, so this study pack happened.

The point is not to produce one more heroic download that sleeps forever in a folder. Read one section, steal one useful idea, and try it in a real conversation. Learning has no finish line, which is exactly why JOMO matters: joyfully miss the material you are not going to use yet.

## 别把“学习”做成“囤货”

Eric 在学校 Orientation 上听校长推荐了这本书，社群里的同学也推荐，还有同学翻出了作者的完整视频。宇宙都暗示到这个份上了，那就干脆把书、视频、总结和完整转录放到一起。但请别让它成为收藏夹里的新住民：读一点，偷走一个有用的想法，然后去真实对话里试一次。学海无涯，所以更要练习 JOMO：快乐地错过暂时消化不了的东西。

# What 'high standards + high support' actually means

It is not two motivational slogans placed side by side. It is one promise: I will not make the goal smaller just to keep you comfortable, and I will not leave you alone with a goal that is genuinely hard.

中文版：目标不放水， 但人也不放生。

|                | LOW SUPPORT                                                       | HIGH SUPPORT                                                       |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| HIGH STANDARDS | Enforcer<br>Demand performance; leave the person to sink or swim. | Mentor<br>Demand growth; make support and belief unmistakable.     |
| LOW STANDARDS  | Apathetic<br>Expect little and invest little.                     | Protector<br>Care deeply, but lower the bar to prevent discomfort. |

## Five practices to try

1. Validate before redirecting. Show that you heard the perspective, even when you disagree.
2. Ask a real question. Invite diagnosis and choice instead of disguising an order as a question.
3. Make the why transparent. Explain what the standard protects and why the feedback matters.
4. Grant meaningful agency. Let the young person make a consequential decision and own the next step.
5. Pair challenge with support. Keep the bar high and make the route to help visible.

## WATCHING GUIDE

# Use the talk as a set of experiments

00:00 · Beliefs about young people shape the actions adults take.

05:00 · The mentor's dilemma: correcting performance without destroying motivation.

12:00 · Wise feedback and why the compliment sandwich misses the real fear.

24:00 · Puberty, status, respect, social reward, and social pain.

34:00 · Grown-splaining and why controlling language shuts attention down.

42:00 · The adolescent predicament: desired respect versus the respect actually afforded.

45:00 · Respectful instructions, health behavior, and the testosterone experiment.

53:00 · Real mentors who combine ambitious standards with dependable support.

65:00 · Why the mentor mindset is not coddling, and why it saves time later.

## One-week practice

Choose one recurring instruction you give a student, child, colleague, or athlete. Rewrite it to include: (1) their perspective, (2) your transparent reason, (3) a genuine choice, and (4) an explicit offer of support. Try it once. Record what they did, not just whether they seemed pleased.

## 最后提醒

不要把这份总结也变成收藏。读一页，暂停一次，练习一句话，就够了。下一份资料可以先错过。

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Primary sources: David Yeager, 10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People (2024); Family Action Network talk, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79Aoi-amWzo>. This companion is a study aid, not a substitute for the book or recording.

COMPLETE REVISED TRANSCRIPT

# David Yeager, Ph.D. 10 to 25

The Science of Motivating Young People

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Family Action Network · 1:10:11 · September 2024

Transcribed from the clean source audio with Whisper large-v3-turbo on mac4, then reviewed against the book and recording context for proper names, terminology, punctuation, and obvious recognition errors. The full spoken content is retained.

## TRANSCRIPT MAP

# Nine natural sections

**00:00** Opening: What do we believe about young people?

**04:55** The mentor's dilemma

**12:05** Wise feedback: high standards plus assurance

**24:06** Why status and respect matter from 10 to 25

**34:04** What grown-splaining does to attention

**42:06** The adolescent predicament

**45:11** Respectful language changes behavior

**53:06** The mentor mindset in real life

**65:06** High standards, high support, and common objections

## SECTION 01 • 00:00

# Opening: What do we believe about young people?

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So I'm now going to do David's quick intro of his bio. He is, as mentioned, a professor of psychology at University of Texas at Austin, and he's the co-founder of the Texas Behavioral Science and Policy Institute. He's best known for his research conducted with Carol Dweck, Angela Duckworth, Greg Walton, who we hope to host this spring on short but powerful interventions. We like to call them wise interventions, or they like to call them that, that influence adolescent behaviors such as motivation, engagement, healthy eating, bullying, stress, mental health, and more. This book was just published last month, August 2024. He has consulted with Google, Microsoft, Disney, the World Bank, as well as the White House, governments in California, Texas, and Norway. Been featured everywhere, you name it, New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, everywhere you want to point, Scientific American.



And he is ranked as one of the top 0.1% most influential psychologists in the world over the past decade. Our dear friend of FAN, Angela Duckworth, I saw her on a video say, well, I'm not supposed to say this because I have so many friends, but David Yeager is really the top developmental psychologist working in the U.S. today, period. That's it. So, and here you are, and you're about to talk to us. He was a former middle school teacher before his career as a scientist and a basketball coach. Got his master's and doctorate at Stanford, his bachelor's, and another master's at Notre Dame. We couldn't be more thrilled and honored, David, to be hosting you tonight. Come on up. All right. Thanks for having me, everybody. It's a thrill to have you. Thanks for spending your Monday evening with a nerd professor.

Talk about teenagers and so on. But I'm just thrilled to share our research and hear your reactions. So we're going to start with a question. You can get to know the person next to you. Here's the question. Well, your task is to fill in the blank. So given that young people are blank, the best way to motivate them is to blank. So fill in the blank. And if you're standing or sitting by yourself, then you'll have to get to know another person. So, and I teach freshmen. So I might cold call you afterwards if you don't actually do this. All right. It's audience participation time. So I would love someone from this area over here to give me your blanks. Yes. Okay. Given the young people are resilient, the best way to motivate them is to give them opportunities to fail.

Great. And I don't want anyone else to change your answer now that you heard that. And your partner next to you will verify that you're giving the answer you said before. Okay. Someone from this area over here. Given that young people are overwhelmed, the best way to motivate them is to support them. Thank you very much. That's a perfect setup for points that will appear later in this talk. And I will not tell you why. Okay. One more maybe from kind of more of this area over there. Okay. Given that young people are learning, the best way to motivate them is to engage them with curiosity. Okay. Very interesting. All right. I want to point out a few things. So one is that if anyone was like a CEO or a business manager, the most common answer I would have heard is something like given that young people are impossible to connect with and likely to go try to goof off and smoke weed in the back and do no work, the best way to motivate them is to yell at them or bribe them, etc.

And we hear a lot of parents, their answer, given that young people are overburdened with stress and anxiety, the best way to motivate them is to ask less of them, more or less. But those examples, plus the ones that y'all, talked about are informative for the following reason: What we believe about young people in general, and I'm going to talk about age 10 to 25, and I'll explain why, influences the actions that we take in order to engage with them. And that's important because there are different narratives about young people. What drives them? What are they concerned about? What are they capable of? And it's not obvious to many of us what we should believe about them. And in fact, there's not consensus, or at least it seems like there's no consensus. And so what this talk is going to do, I hope, is kind of reveal that there are these different narratives, there are these different beliefs, and they have huge implications for how we engage with young people in the classroom, as managers at work, as coaches on the court, or on the field.

And as parents, at home, or when we're, you know, trying to get, motivate them to get their act together.

#### SECTION 02 • 04:55

## The mentor's dilemma

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All right. Now, this becomes really consequential when we look at some of the biggest frustrations that many people have. So, John Mackey is, until, was until recently the CEO of Whole Foods, the grocery store chain, and right before he retired, and after he had sold his company for billions of dollars to Amazon, he went on a kind of airing of grievances tour, and just complained about everybody. And he saved his harshest words for young people in the next generation. And on one podcast, he said, "Young people seem like they don't want to work. I don't understand the younger generation." And what I'm going to argue is that one of those sentences is right: he doesn't understand the younger generation. And it's not the case that young people don't want to work. In fact, what seems like an inability to motivate whether it's a 22-year-old at work or a 15-year-old doing their trinomials homework for algebra, has less to do with their fundamental inability to motivate themselves and has more to do with how we communicate with them in the environment we surround them with.

And when we don't realize that, then we just engage in this kind of blaming of the next generation. There's a moral decline. The kids aren't the way they used to be, right? Society is going to hell in a handbasket. But there's another way to look at it, as we'll see. Now, I don't want to pretend like the problem of motivating young people is easy to solve. And to show that to you, I want to talk about my best friend from growing up, Alex Sweeney. He's an ENT surgeon at Baylor Medical School in Houston. And just to be clear, his day job is to perform biblical miracles. So he does cochlear implants that restore hearing to people who can't hear, right? And he's got this unbelievable ability to perform these incredible medical procedures. And yet, when it came to motivating the junior residents on the floor of Ben Taub Hospital, the county hospital in Houston, he was unable to reach his residents.

So he came to me with this problem. He's like, you know, David, I'm doing rounds, and I got someone who made this mistake, or didn't ask for this lab, or didn't do this follow-up, and I have a conversation that's clear as day. I tell them, look, you should have done all these things differently. And then the next shift that shows up, and they don't fix any of those things. And he's like, "It's ironic. I can make people hear with my surgical skills, and I can't make brilliant med students listen to me." And he's charismatic, friendly, like, you know, former quarterback. There's no problem with him. It's a legitimate problem that many of us face, even when we want to get it right. And I've been talking a lot about this problem of the mentor's dilemma, and one day I gave a talk, and a friend of mine who is a partner at a law firm came up, and was like, you know, I have this problem, too.

I will comment on the junior associate's legal briefs, and I'll say, "We can't file this for the client yet, or we can't send this to the Supreme Court. It needs tons of work. It's not good enough yet." And the junior associate, who may be straight out of Northwestern, or Chicago, or Georgetown, has been told their whole lives that they're the smartest and best, and they look at the partner like their soul has been crushed. Like, how dare you say, "I'm not a good writer, that I can't do this." And they interpret the feedback on their briefs as a sign that they'll never make partner. The partner, meanwhile, is thinking, "I billed \$1,000 an hour. Like, this cost \$3,000 to give you this feedback. That's how much I believe in you." And they're offended by it. And again, these are all smart, accomplished, motivated, successful people that are having this problem.

And the more I talked about this, the more I heard about these problems, the more I felt like there's some fundamental mismatch between how we as a culture think about the next generation and how we behave that is causing a problem that hopefully is something that could be resolved. So, what's happening here? You know, there's a lot going on, but I'll just say as a developmental psychologist, my stance is to go back in our ontological history as a species, and say, "Well, what are we like when we're born? And is it anything like those disengaged, disaffected teenagers, 20-year-olds, etc?" And what's interesting is you don't see slacker babies who, like, can't get it together, right? Like, from birth, you see babies that are just, like, craving learning from difficulty, right? A baby doesn't try to take a step or two and then fall down and say, "I guess I'm not a walker.

I'll never get that toy," or whatever, right? I mean, they really want the toy that the mom really doesn't want the baby to have, and they're willing to fall down lots and lots of times in order to go get that, right? Think about the fact that every typically developing human on the planet will acquire the complexities of grammar and syntax by two, two and a half, or three. And they'll do that without ever doing a worksheet or getting a sticker, chart, or a trophy, right? There's these great studies at MIT where they give a young child, two to three years old, a toy in which, in one group, they've explained all the different bells and whistles and all the different secrets that are on the toy, and they let the baby play with it. And in the other group, they kind of accidentally discover one, and then they trip, and they hand the baby the toy, and the adult walks away.

And what you find is that the more difficult it is for the baby to figure out all the secrets on the toy, the longer they play with it. If they know everything, it's, like, uninteresting to them. And yet, somehow, we go from a species with a love of learning the most difficult stuff and bored by the easy stuff to something where, in adolescence, something changes. And we get kids who are disaffected, disconnected, like, unable to be motivated. And if we're honest, this continues, for many of us, into our regular jobs as adults. So, what is the problem? That's the big developmental question. And it's easy to, like, blame COVID, you know, or social media, right? But the difficulty of connecting with young people is something that's been with us as a culture for as long as there's been recorded history.

## Wise feedback: high standards plus assurance

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So, in the third century BCE, Aristotle wrote something that could have been an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, like, yesterday, right? The young are in character prone to desire and ready to carry any desire they may have formed into action. They are fickle in their desires, which are as transitory as they are vehement, right? Basically, young people are a bunch of lazy idiots is more or less the message. And it's not unique to the last three years, five years, 15 years. In general, older generations that are more established and have more power and access to our institutions tend to trash young people. And in fact, the same, no offense, my parents are baby boomers, but the same generation that's spending a lot of airtime trashing the current younger generation, they themselves were the long-haired hippies in the 60s that the great generation complained about, right?

And so, you just see it again and again, the psychologist Dan Gilbert talks about it as the illusion of moral decline. That every older generation thinks the next generation is causing our society to go to hell in a handbasket. And there's a kind of reason why this happens, as I'll explain. But the general fact is that when older adults think back on our poor decisions when we were teenagers or in our 20s, then it's usually as a glory story about what a blast we had. But when we complain about the same things happening in the same age now, it's like, I mean, look at these, look at these idiots that are ruining our society. Now, that stuff comes into play when you look at the very narrow problem like the mentor's dilemma. This problem of giving critical feedback across the generational divide.

And I want to just focus in on that, double-click on that, and kind of suggest that there's a way out of it. So, if you remember, as I was suggesting, the mentor's dilemma is this problem where a leader, like a surgeon or a senior partner or a parent or a teacher, is trying to give critical feedback to someone younger than them to improve their behavior, skills, etc. And the reason it's a dilemma is that there are two choices that don't feel great. One choice is I'm really tough and critical, but I crush your spirit and make you hate me. The

other is I more or less lie to you and tell you that everything's great, but I'm very kind and friendly. And neither of them feel good because, on the one hand, you might push away the young person who you care about because you're too harsh.

On the other hand, you're being dishonest and you're not helping them improve, even though they know that you care. There's a way to resolve the mentor's dilemma that was developed originally by Geoffrey Cohen, who's spoken here, and we have researched in some of our papers. In addition to Geoffrey Cohen, Valerie Purdie-Greenaway was a collaborator in this work. And in our study, we had seventh graders write first draft essays, like five-paragraph essays, and then we had the teachers cover them in comments. And they did what teachers normally do. So they were very positive. They said things like, "Good job," and they were critical. They said, "Here, I need more detail." In their minds, they're doing something that we call the compliment sandwich. So if you know what this is, it has another name as well. A compliment sandwich is where I say something like, "I love your enthusiasm, but all of your work is terrible and has to change." But thanks for turning it in on time.

You're very prompt. Right? Now, the reason people do the compliment sandwich is because you tend to think, "Well, there's more positives than negatives." Right? It's like you're balancing an equation in chemistry class. It's like an overall positive ion or whatever because it's got more positives than negatives. But the problem is that young people aren't doing that kind of mental math. What they're really asking fundamentally is, "Does this person who has power over me and my outcomes take me seriously and think I'm capable of something important?" And this is true in the junior associate writing a brief where their partner's critiquing it. If the partner fundamentally thinks the junior associate is incapable of making partner, that's the main concern. It's not whether the partner likes you and thinks you have a cool taste in music and a great attitude. It's like, "Are they going to get rid of me?" Right?

Similarly with the surgeon that's doing rounds at the hospital. "Is this surgeon going to tell my supervisor that I'm unfit to be a doctor?" And so those deeper, more existential questions are on the line, especially when it's in a domain that someone cares about and where the evaluator could have a say in that person's future. And so in our experiment, we tried to tweak the feedback so that way

young people could answer that deeper, more fundamental question about their competence and their belonging. And we did that by having teachers handwrite a note that conveyed what we called wise feedback. We didn't write wise feedback on the note. Instead we wrote, "I'm giving you these comments because I have high standards and I know that you can meet them." And the two things there are, first, the appeal to the high standard.

And second, the assurance that the young person could meet that standard if they followed through on the provided feedback. Teachers handwrote these notes. They also handwrote control group notes. Teachers didn't know which kids got which note. So this is a double-blind clinical trial. Kids got the essays back in sealed envelopes. They took them home. And then they had a week to decide whether they're going to turn in a revised essay or not. What we found was surprising even for us. We found that kids were twice as likely to revise their essay if they got that short note conveying wise feedback. And think about this. And I think about this a lot from the perspective of a former teacher. These teachers spent hours grading these essays, covering them with comments. And in the control group, 60% of those kids were like, "No, I'm good." No revised essay.

So complete waste of effort. And from the perspective of the teacher, I get it. That's crushing. But then a small statement clarifying the meaning of your behavior. That your intentions are designed to help the young person meet a higher standard. That doubled the rate at which the students were like, "Yeah, I'm going to revise this essay." Now, I'm a parent of four. And I think about this in the sense that if twice as many of my kids put on pants and got to school when I asked them to, then at least two of my kids would have pants on when they got in the car on the way to school. It would be awesome, right? But certainly, I was also a middle school teacher, and I would sit there on Sundays grading essays, thinking in my mind, "Oh, they're going to be so appreciative of all this critical feedback.

They're going to get back my comments, and then they're going to immediately lift me up on their shoulders, like Robin Williams in *Dead Poets Society*, and carry me around like a conquering hero." And instead, they were more like, "This guy is such a lunatic that he spent his free time on his weekend trashing an 11-year-old's essay." Right? And there's this mismatch between what your intentions are as someone giving feedback and what it means to the other

person. And the lesson from the wise feedback study was that you can sometimes have the exact same behavior. These teachers graded the essays and gave the feedback. It's the same for everybody. But just be more transparent about where that behavior came from. And that's a big lesson for me. But I will say, when we published this study 10 years ago, and it's been written about a lot in the media and so on, it led to a lot of people asking me, "Hey, shouldn't we start, I don't know, selling high standards and assurance stamps or post-it notes?" And in this study, I didn't tell you yet, but we found a rather striking reduction in achievement gaps between white and black students.

These were all white teachers giving feedback. Half students were black and half of students were white. And it helped all students, but it especially helped black students who we knew previously in this school were less likely to trust that they were being treated fairly by their teachers. And the reason they believed that was because the discipline incident showed students of color were the only students who were disciplined for defiance and disobedience. So these are like judgment calls where a teacher says, "You're a defiant kid." Those type of discipline incidents were only handed out to black students. It just seems implausible that no white student, grade six to eight, ever disobeyed a rule in the school. So students are coming to the class thinking, "I'm going to be treated unfairly by teachers." But this white feedback note created a kind of bubble in which they could say, "You know what?

I can trust that this teacher's criticism, although harsh and difficult to swallow, is in fact in my best interest." Now, the worry, of course, is that if people latch too much onto the post-it note as the secret sauce, then it'll come across like a kind of glib platitude. And I don't think the magic is in the post-it note. I think the magic is the feeling that someone with power over your outcomes took you seriously and treated you with respect at a moment where your status was precarious and you had cause to question whether or not this powerful person saw you as a person of value and worth. If someone went out of their way to take you seriously in that kind of moment, I think people remember that. And probably most of the people in this room can think back on a time and remember it, like in your stomach, a time when some authority figure, a parent, a coach, a great teacher, a dance instructor, a band leader, debate coach, someone who saw something in you at a time when you might not have believed in yourself.



If you've ever had that, most people think back on that as a turning point in their life. And I think the opposite is true. Most people can think back on a time where someone had power over them and they abused that power and maybe falsely accused them or humiliated them or shamed them. And I've interviewed a lot of adults about these kinds of things and it's usually something in adolescence. And people can remember like the sights and sounds and even smells of where they were when either of those two things happened. And that kind of it's called a spotlight memory effect or flashbulb memory that you can vividly remember certain moments and experiences, even if you've forgotten years and years of other conversations you've had. That's interesting developmentally. Like why is it the case that our hippocampus devotes serious real estate to those brief moments where someone either respected you and made you feel proud or humiliated you and embarrassed you in front of others.

That puzzle was kind of what I set out to research in this book.

#### SECTION 04 • 24:06

## Why status and respect matter from 10 to 25

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I wanted to know what's happening in the adolescent brain that makes them hypersensitive to that status or respect experience. But also who are those adults who like live this post-it note in all of their daily experiences. And as you'll see I call those people mentors. And I don't mean big brothers big sisters on Thursdays we take you bowling or that you talk to a new hire to take them out for coffee. What I mean is that you aligned your words and actions and spirit with someone else's long-term well-being. And a moment when they questioned their value to others. To me that's what a mentor is. It's when you live that post-it note. And I wanted to understand like who are those people? What are they doing? And why is it so effective? Here's the main punchline for the rest of the talk.

And so if anyone has a crisis and you have to leave then at least you'll get the main takeaways for the talk. This is what 100 years of the developmental science of adolescence is teaching us. One is that teenagers brains and

hormones make them hypersensitive about status, how they look to others, and how they feel about themselves. That sensitivity enhances the fear of failure not just in an academic setting but also in a social setting. So as I'll explain, as the start of puberty happens, specifically gonadarche, you see a rather striking increase in testosterone levels in both biological males and females. And that sensitizes the brain to social reward, so that's like pride, and also social pain, so humiliation, shame. The thrill of impressing someone who's typically impossible to impress never feels as good as it does when you're in the middle of that pubertal hormone sensitized developmental period.

And the pain of being publicly humiliated and ashamed probably never feels as bad as it does in that period. That's what I mean by sensitive to status and respect. I don't mean overly concerned about likes on social media, because I tell you what, my parents are just as concerned about that as a lot of teenagers are. It's more that the spotlight memory in your brain for social experiences and the feelings that came with them. And that can enhance the fear that you have failed socially, specifically publicly, in front of others. In the classroom, what does that look like? That's like raising your hand when you're confused and potentially having the rest of the room realize that you don't know what you're talking about. And therefore, wondering whether you are in the wrong class. Do you not belong there? Are you an idiot?

Are you wasting everybody's time? All those fears. What does that look like in your social life? It's like holding someone's hand for the first time. Someone you have a crush on. Right? That is terrifying when you're 11, 12, 13. Right? They could push your hand away and then make fun of you to everyone you know. Right? The stakes of something like that. Or even sending a text message. The stakes are so high. Right? And that causes young people to be really afraid of doing poorly on those kinds of things. But it's not all bad, because that sensitivity also helps adolescents, and often into the 20s as well, as I'll explain, take those risks for the first time in order to learn how to be socially successful in their groups. So it's terrifying to hold someone's hand for the first time because of the fear of humiliation.

But the thrill of being accepted and loved and admired, having someone think you're attractive, think that you're cool. That is really appealing. So these experiences, like, again, grabbing someone's hand for the first time, are

coexisting intense fear and intense desired thrill of social success. Those happen in parallel. And as young people take more and more risks, like talking to someone for the first time, or raising your hand, or any of these other things we're talking about, they'll learn what works for them and how to be successful in our society. Once we understand that, it's possible to start harnessing the adolescent brain and the hormone-sensitized changes to the brain, rather than being afraid of it. And we can harness that social reawakening for the sake of promoting engagement, learning, better behavior, healthier behavior, as we'll show. So that's the main takeaway, and the book has a lot of examples.

But let me just show you a little bit of the science that I find interesting. There's a beautiful study coming out of the Netherlands, Eveline Crone's lab, where they took a large group of kids aged 10 to 25. And they measured their -- they took saliva samples twice over a one or two year period. So they staggered the first year, and then one or two years later, got those same kids or young adults to come back. Which means you could draw a slope for each kid in the sample to look at their changes in testosterone. And what's nice about that is you can produce a graph like this one you see here. And so, in general, girls start puberty before boys, so that's why the red line is to the left. Testosterone levels go up higher for boys, but they still go up dramatically for girls over this period.

They peak a little earlier because, as you -- everyone knows, girls mature a year and a half or so earlier than boys. But the critical part is that the extent to which your testosterone increased -- so each kid's slope predicted changes in their brain as it related to social sensitivity. Because they had kids do a bunch of other tasks where they could measure in the brain how sensitive the social reward regions were in their brain. And there's more complexity to it, but for both boys and girls, going out on maturation leads to increases in testosterone like -- increases in hormones like testosterone, and those sensitized regions of the brain like the nucleus accumbens, to pay a lot of attention to social reward and failure. At a behavioral level, at an emotional level, this leads to kind of interesting things about adolescence.

So here's a great study I love -- Leah Somerville is a Harvard neuroscientist -- took teenagers in the lab where they went to the fMRI machine, which is a huge magnet that scans the blood flow in different regions of your brain, and you use that to infer activation in certain regions, because there's iron in your

blood, basically, is the logic. And so the magnet can detect that. And so they did something very clever. The kid's in this huge loud magnet machine, and then the researcher gets on over the intercom and says, "All right, we're about to get started here, but I just want you to know we brought in someone your age, and they're just going to watch you do everything you're doing for the next 30 minutes." And just the knowledge that you're being watched by someone else your age led to a sense of embarrassment.

And like, you're not even allowed to move in this machine, so there's like nothing to be embarrassed of. But just knowing you're being judged and evaluated by someone else your age led to an increase in embarrassment, especially in the same age range where we're seeing these massive increases in testosterone. How about risk-taking? There's a lot that's been said about teenagers, you know, risk behaviors. We know there's a crime curve of when teenagers commit certain crimes or get in certain accidents. In these studies, the way they measure risk-taking is there's a task called the Balloon Analogue Risk Task, where you have to blow up a balloon as large as it can go without it popping. And the bigger you get it without popping it, the more points you get. But if it pops, you get zero. And this is the number of pops.

So this is how close they get to the edge and then go over the edge of the risk. And that curve follows more or less the curve of testosterone and the fear of social evaluation. And when they do these studies where there's a peer in the room with you, and especially if you think that peer is a risk-taker, then kids are even more of a risk-taker. Interestingly, if the other kids in the room are like very safe, then you conform more to what you think they would value and look up to. And so kids actually take fewer risks. What that suggests is that a lot of what seems like teenage neurobiological idiocy, that teenagers have just like a pubertally-induced frontal lobotomy and can't make a good decision, actually is them deploying their considerable cognitive resources for what they perceive to be socially valuable in their group.

And there are a lot of studies which suggest that same kind of finding. But I love rethinking adolescent risk-taking, which is real. I mean, kids do speed and, you know, go cliff jumping because their friends are. Those are real things. But there are a lot of risks that are very good for them, whether it's raising your hand or holding someone's hand for the first time, or even merging on the freeway for the first time is terrifying for a lot of people.

# What grown-splaining does to attention

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Using public transportation, right, picking up the phone, talking to a stranger. Anything that could be awkward or terrifying, young people kind of need that risk-taking to do for the first time and realize that they can do it. And if they never do that, if you didn't learn how to merge in traffic in your teens, it's very hard to learn in your mid-20s. There's a lot of studies on this. If you never drove on the freeway as a teenager, you're far more likely to be taking only public transportation in your 20s and 30s. So there's something special about taking a risk at a time when you're trying to make a good reputation for yourself that's potentially positive for development. Underlying a lot of that is a desire for independence and autonomy. The feeling like you are a valuable, independent contributor in your group.

Now, what that means is that when we try to either parent or lead young people in ways where we're in charge and we act like your brains are deficient and idiotic and you need to listen to me, that is when we engage in something I call groansplaining, where the adult knows all the good decisions and the young person doesn't know any of them, then you interestingly see some very important differences in the brain. There's a wonderful study that shows this from a group out of University of Pittsburgh. My collaborator, Ron Dahl, was on this project and it's a very simple study idea. And it was, what happens in the teenage brain when your mom is nagging you? Nothing. And so, yeah, so you might think that a teenager would be like, you know, mom, you've got a point. All of my behavior is pretty terrible and I should change all of it in exactly the way that you described.

And, you know, I'm grateful for the feedback. So keep it coming. Let's, let's, let's change, let's shake it up around here. Let's go. So is that what happens in the teenage brain? Unfortunately, the answer is no. In this study, they had moms prerecord answers to the sentence that started with one thing that bothers me about you is. And then they took the teenage daughters and had them in the brain scanner listen to the audio of their mom completing that sentence. And my mother-in-law is in the audience. So this is, I'm not pointing

you out. And now I just did point you out. So this is a real quote from a real scientific article, which cracks me up. One thing that bothers me about you is that you get upset over minor issues. I could tell you to take your shoes from downstairs.

You'll get mad that you have to pick them up and actually walk upstairs and put them in your room. You'll get mad if I tell you your room is a little dirty and it just needs sweeping and dusting. You get upset if your sisters want to do something that you don't agree on, but three of them do, and you don't want to do it. You get upset too easily. You just need to calm that down. So 100% success rate for this behavior change message? Let's see. So what they find, if you look in the graph in the upper right, that is the affective network of the brain. So this is more or less the emotional region. And the researchers interpret this as, are you more or less angry? And in general, what you find is an increase in anger in response to the nagging relative to neutral language.

So the middle graph is what's called the cognitive control network. This is the classic prefrontal cortex, right? The region of the brain that does a lot of the planning for goal-directed behavior. And what you see there is a rather striking decrease in activation in the regions related to planning. So teenagers are not saying, "Thank you for the information. Here's my plan for how to change." They, again, have like a nagging-induced frontal lobotomy with no plans for how to change their behavior. So the bottom one is super interesting. This is the social cognition region of the brain. So if you've seen TED Talks from Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, people like that, they talk about the temporal parietal junction. This is like my ability to mind read. And there, too, you see a huge decrease in activation. And so why is that important? A lot of what adults or older people say to younger people to try to change them, involves an implied message, not like a direct and clear message.

And just to show that to you, think about this sentence on the left. You'll get mad if I tell you that your room is a little dirty and it just needs sweeping and dusting. Now we read that and think, well, obviously the mom is saying to clean your room. But that's not literally what they say. That's implied. Right? You could imagine someone taking that literally and saying, yeah, it's dirty. Someone should sweep and dust this. That's a great point. Like, are you going to do that? Or someone else? Like, who's going to do that? Right? And if that's the interpretation, that, of course, would infuriate the mom. Because the mom

is thinking, I was clear as day here. And I've told you what to do. And the kid's like, no, you didn't tell me what to do. You just said generally something where I'm supposed to read between the lines and read your mind.

So the kid doesn't do it. And then the mom's now extra mad that the kid didn't listen. And the kid's like, who is this lunatic yelling at me? Right? And so the adult says one thing. The kid hears something different. And then they fight over the misinterpretation. And I love this study because this is a good example of something that happens in so many different settings. Not just parenting. And by the way, they could have done dads and sons here. And when my son read this book and read me right about this, he was like, Dad, you should read your book and listen to it a little more. So I don't mean to throw anyone under the bus. But I think that the general idea is that when we groan-splain what a young person should do, we think we're doing them the favor of being hyper-clear and listing it out.

But the way it's coming across is that we're controlling their personal choices. And because of that, that's the deepest form of disrespect for someone who wants nothing more than to be independent and to kind of be in charge of their own life. To have that adult-like sense of agency. And the unfortunate reality is that disrespect shuts down the very regions of the brain that they would need to recruit in order to learn from the information and the feedback. So the reason why wise feedback works is because it first conveys respect. With that, their ears are open. These regions of the brain, cognitive control, social cognition, they're open. They're open for business. And because of that, the information can get through and it can start influencing their behavior. In general, I think that there's a serious problem that we face again and again that gives rise to a lot of the things I've been talking about.

And it's what I call in the book adolescent predicament. And this is simply the idea that there's a mismatch between the feelings of status and respect that young people want to experience and what we afford them as a society or as a culture or as leaders or as parents or teachers. So with developmental time, as I've been showing, there's this hormonally induced thirst or hunger appetite for status and respect.

# The adolescent predicament

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But as a society, as young people grow and therefore pose a greater risk to themselves and society, we take more and more control away from them. And so there's what I call a respect gap, a disparity between what biologically they feel ready for and what socio-culturally we give them. Now eventually, as you get to your mid to late 20s, you start being given authority, power, responsibility, etc. And so you kind of catch up. But there's a pretty long period in our society, especially the technologically advanced society that we live in, where it's very hard to have one of the leading careers until your mid to late 20s. There's a huge gap between starting puberty at 10 and being taken seriously in your mid to late 20s. Right? It's almost double or more of your age. It's a long period to be in that respect gap.

Just to bring this home, there's a study I don't write about in the book, but when I teach developmental psychology class, I always talk about it. And it's a study where they asked kids when they should have certain rights, and then they asked adults about those same rights. So an example would be being able to write a letter to the editor that's critical of your principal's decision making. So the average kid thinks they're ready to do that at 7th or 8th grade. The average adult thinks they're ready at 10th or 11th grade. So that's just an example of two and a half years where kids are like, "I'm ready for this right and responsibility," and adults are like, "You're absolutely not." And by the way, this isn't just like hypothetical. There are active debates right now about repealing the amendment that allowed young people to vote at 18.

Right? So at the very age at which our kind of working memory and our cognitive flexibility is at its best, 18 to 25, there's a concern that judgment and decision making is at its worst. Right? So these are ongoing debates. And what happens often is when they're in this predicament, then small differences in our communication and language styles make a huge difference in terms of behavior. To show that to you, I want to tell you about a study we ran in the medication adherence context. So you may not know this, but there is a kind of shocking lack of adherence with medication among adolescents and early 20-year-olds who have chronic illnesses. So about half of all cancer outpatients don't take their chemo as prescribed. And the problem is not that



they don't know they have cancer. The problem is not that they don't know that chemo will get rid of cancer.

And the problem is not that they want to die. Okay? So it's not an education problem, but they don't do it. Another example is transplant recipients, especially kidney and liver transplant recipients, about half of all patients don't take their anti-rejection meds. And I learned about this from my wife, who's a nurse, and when we lived in California, she worked at a nephrology clinic.

#### SECTION 07 • 45:11

## Respectful language changes behavior

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And her job was to call the adolescents after they got their labs drawn. And so she would call mom, be like, yeah, your kid's tacro, which is the anti-rejection med, your kid's tacro levels are at zero. And then she would say, is your son taking his medicine? And then she would overhear the mom say, are you taking your medicine? And the teenage son would be like, yeah, mom, get off my back! And then she would say, okay, well, if he's taking it, then either he has a biological disorder in which he perfectly metabolizes tacro to zero, or he's lying to you. And in either case, he has to come in immediately. And then she would overhear the mom say that, and then the kid would be like, okay, yeah, mom, I'm not taking my medicine. Right? And this is a huge problem because kids, for instance, who have a kidney transplant, they are fully aware of how terrible dialysis is.

Like, they don't want to go do dialysis, it's awful, it's a terrible experience. And they're, in general, rather grateful that they have often aunt or uncle's kidney that has been transplanted. So all of the traditional incentives are there for them to comply with the behavior. And yet, again, half of them aren't taking their meds, and that means that the ages at which there's the highest rejection of organs are the 10 to 25 ages. So we decided to do an experiment that would kind of try to understand the subtle differences in language that might drive better and more compliant, healthy behavior. And in our study, we couldn't use actual cancer patients or transplant recipients because if, like in the

control group, they didn't get the right message and didn't take their meds, that would be a problem. We can't have our control group, like, reject a kidney.

And so we needed a medicine that was kind of like the inconvenient two fistfuls of prednisone that kids have to take if they're organ transplant recipients. So it's unpleasant and inconvenient. But it couldn't have real health consequences. And so our experiment, we decided to have participants eat huge spoonfuls of Vegemite. Have you guys heard of Vegemite before? So like imagine, so what's Vegemite? It's an Australian spread, they put it on toast. Imagine you brewed a huge barrel of beer, and then you took all the beer out, and then put the leftover yeast on toast. That's like Vegemite. And a very funny YouTube video is Americans eating Australian foods. Highly recommend. Vegemite section is definitely the funniest. And what we did is we had participants, 18 to 24 roughly, sample a half spoonful of Vegemite. And this is what the secret camera captured as they were doing that in our experiment.

And you can just see the like telltale signs of disgust. Like their eyebrows are furrowed, and like their noses squinched up. And zero percent of our participants were having a good day in this experiment. And everyone got a hug and a comfort animal at the end, by the way. And so after they did this, they were then asked to take a spoonful that was four times more Vegemite than this. And the question is, when do they actually comply with that request? And we randomly varied whether we asked them in a way that was aligned with values of status and respect or inconsistent with those values. So in the respectful and disrespectful conditions, there was a preamble that said, hello, my name is so-and-so, I'm a medical student, and I'm here too, dot, dot, dot. In the respectful condition, we said, ask whether you might consider taking this medicine.

Disrespectful. Tell you that you should take this medicine. And the respectful condition, you're a UT Austin, where I am a professor, you're a UT student, so I figured I would explain the scientific reason why it would be helpful for you to take it. Disrespectful. Based on what I know about medicine and disease, the smart thing to do is to take this medicine. Then we say, you know, some people have reported that this medicine is unpleasant to take because of the bitter tastes, and that is the understatement of the century. Respectful. Respectful. You might find it helpful to think of that slight discomfort as doing your part to help others. Disrespectful. Try to ignore that. Respectful. Thank

you for considering this request. Disrespectful. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Right. So in one of them, on the left, we're presuming independence, autonomy, agency, we're asking for their opinion, we're hoping that they make their own decision.

Et cetera. On the right, we're kind of giving all the autonomy and independence and decision-making to the adult authority, who's telling you what to do based on their expertise. So the right is a pretty good example of what I've been calling grown-splaining. What we find was a rather striking increase in the rate at which young people were willing to take the medicine, depending on the small differences in how the request was framed. Now what's especially interesting is we found that this disparity between the two groups, respectful versus disrespectful, was greater among participants who prior to the study had higher levels of testosterone. We found that from the saliva samples that we took. So the more that they were like that pubertally, hormonally sensitized teenager, the more they, they, it mattered to them how they were asked. Right. They're asked to do the same behavior, the same overall rationale, but the way they were asked made a bigger difference if they were high in testosterone.

And the last thing I didn't tell you yet is that we then took those low testosterone people and we gave half of them a nasal inhaler to make them temporarily have 300% testosterone levels. So we took like 18 to 25 year olds and turned them into raging hormone teenagers. And they too then looked just like the baseline high testosterone people. So that's the first experimental evidence for this model I've been telling you about, which is that instead of thinking of pubertal hormones, both boys and girls, as making them crazy, it's instead making them really attuned to the social implications of how they're being talked to. My colleague and friend Adriana Galván, who's a neuroscientist at UCLA, likes to say that, everyone's talking about the teenage brain and that they lack a prefrontal cortex, but that's not the case. They have a prefrontal cortex.

It's, it's just that they deploy it for goal directed behavior that's different from what we want. Like we want them to listen to us immediately. When, when, when adults say, I want a kid to respect me, what they mean is do exactly what I say immediately without further clarification. That's what adults mean. What kids mean when they say the word respect is take me seriously as a person who

can make a good choice. Talk to me like an adult. So there's an equivocation about that word. And it's not like idiotic for kids to think that way. It's actually, it makes a lot of sense if you realize that the main goal of a young person going from being a child who's taken care of to an adult is to figure out what they bring to the table and how they contribute.

So these are like our basic insights.

## SECTION 08 • 53:06

# The mentor mindset in real life

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And then what I want to do when this is the last part of the talk is to talk about how this respectful language, whether it's wise feedback or in the Vegemite study resolves that adolescent predicament. But it, it, but then there's a new question of how do you go from one time statements to a whole relationship or even a culture that honors and values where young people are coming from. And I'll just say I had to go on a journey of learning, right? So I had done these experiments and we had lots of theories and the journals were very happy with what we had learned. But I didn't feel like I could go to a room like this and say, all right, here's what you should do. And so I, I wrote the book, not cause I, I knew everything about what to do for kids and parents and so on, but because I wanted to know what to do as a manager of 22 year olds in my lab, as a parent of four kids.

Um, and also, um, as a, as a coach and all the ways I interact with kids. And so, uh, for two years, I sat in the back of the classroom of the best calculus professor at the University of Texas at Austin. And I thought, well, if he's, he's doing something great. Maybe I can learn from that. Maybe I can find some secrets. Uh, so Uri Treisman, uh, won the MacArthur Genius Award for his calculus instruction. Um, the, by the early nineties, something like 40% of all black people in America with a PhD in mathematics were graduates of his calculus class. So he's single handedly the greatest creator of equity in advanced mathematics. Um, and he founded a, a famous policy center called the Dana Center that's influenced math education around the world. Um, but he still teaches freshman calculus every year.

And I just, I sat in the back and retook freshman calculus the, the year after I got tenure and I watched what he did. And I, the stuff he does is unbelievable. He's a really weird guy, uh, does weird stuff. Like he has a ceramic dog, uh, that he has on the table named Chester A. Arthur. And, um, he talks to it like it's a person. Uh, and, and then never lets on that he knows that it's actually a ceramic dog. Uh, and then students send it postcards when they study abroad and it's just weird. I don't know what to tell you. Um, and, but, uh, and it's like disarming at first. Um, but the most important thing that he does is he's, has like absurdly high standards. So he's not creating equity by being a wimp or a pushover or lowering standards and letting anyone, you know, to, to advance calculus.

He, he says on the first day of class, this class will be so hard that most of you will cry at some point. You will all get to a point where you say, what the hell did I just see? You might just get there at different times though. And so he is, is very hard. So the exams he gives at UT Austin, a public school, are the same exams as Harvard's freshman calculus class. But he's exceptionally supportive. So his TAs are available literally for all-nighters. And in the first problem set, his students don't start until one in the morning. And they look at it like, oh, this is really hard. And then they remember he said that the TAs will be in the lab all night if needed. And between one and two, the students trickle in. And so he has 130 freshmen in the lab from two to five in the morning.

And then they all solve the problem set and they come out in the morning like bleary-eyed staring at the sun. And they know from then on that he and his TAs are there for them. That even when his standards feel impossible, he will not reduce his support. He doesn't do anything for them. And the TAs are never like, here's how you do it. They're just asking questions. They're causing students to work together in groups. But the nice thing is, because the whole class is there, they don't look around and say, everyone else is just smart at math. That's why they're passing. Because they know everyone had to come in for help. And that's important because what he realizes that a lot of people don't is that when something is super hard for you, the first question you ask yourself is, am I the only one?

Like, is it easy for everybody else and therefore there's something wrong with me? Or I am deficient in some way? Right? And that, that conclusion that there's something wrong with me as a person, that is the origin of shame.

Right? Embarrassment is about a behavior. Shame is like, I'm no good as a person. And that's the number one worry that a lot of people have when they face a new, challenging, and difficult situation. And so he is, his whole class is designed to push you to meet a very prestigious level of achievement, but prevent the shame that comes from feeling like you're the only one who's inadequate. So it's generally, it's very high standards, very high support, and I get, I write about it a lot in chapter 11 in the book. But ultimately, I looked at the math, the rest of the math department at UT, and they're all just like the worst teachers you've ever seen in your life.

Not, but like most of them are really terrible. And there's a question of like, okay, how come the world's greatest calculus professor couldn't even get the rest of the math department at his own university to do this stuff? And I realized I needed more than just one exceptional super teacher. I needed more scientific approach. And so we conducted a statistical analysis of what might be called bright spots. So if the x-axis here is the predicted performance for a classroom and the y-axis is their actual performance, what you want to do is go find people with high residual scores. The people who like over perform compared to expectations. So like that gray dot on all the way on the right, that's not terribly impressive. Like if all of your kids' parents have PhDs in physics, it's like not that impressive if 80% of them pass college physics in your class.

Because you expected that. What's really impressive is that black dot in the middle there where maybe you only think 20% of students based on their prior test scores are ready, but then you get 95 to pass. We did this analysis. We found the 20 best teachers across the state of Texas in this network called OnRamps. It's a kind of amazing network. By doing this kind of analysis and we brought them all to Austin and we spent three days with them. They were kind of like the hidden Uri Treismans across the state and then we had the real Uri Treisman facilitate a three-day workshop with them and figure out what they do. And my favorite is this guy named Sergio Estrada, who I was just sitting at the table and I would ask a question. And I didn't talk about me or who I am because I didn't want them to parrot back my research to me because I already know what I know.

I just wanted to hear what they had to say. And everything this guy said, I was like, that's the most profound thing I've ever heard in my life. And it turns out

that he teaches at Riverside High School in El Paso. You can see the border of Mexico out the window. Some of his kids walk an hour from Mexico across the river every day, walk back. It's a tough school. There was a stabbing death last year. Two percent of his kids are college ready, if you looked at their SATs. And every year, 95% pass college physics in his class, including the pandemic year. And so for three years, I just called him on Fridays. I was like, Sergio, what the hell are you doing? This is amazing. And I interviewed his wife, his best friend, his former students, and just heard all these stories.

And then I expanded from beyond educators, which is my initial interest, to anyone who might lead young people. And I found, for instance, Carol Dweck and I emailed the CEO of Microsoft, Satya Nadella, and we said, "Who's your best manager for young employees?" And we found someone named Stef Okamoto. She's the Sergio of Microsoft, we called her initially. And now she knows Sergio. She likes that compliment now. And at some point, this former NBA player named Shane Battier, who played for Duke for a while, emailed me. And it was a very weird experience, because I'm, you know, just, again, as we've established, a nerd professor. I don't know why an NBA player is emailing me, asking for my opinion about something. And I, you know, I talked to him for a while. Turns out he wanted me to do some stuff for his kid's school, which is great.

But then I said, you know, I'd like you to introduce me to the Sergio of basketball coaching. Obviously hoping he would introduce me to Coach K. And he did not. He introduced me to this guy named Chip Engelland, who is considered the NBA's best shooting coach. And so if you follow basketball, the San Antonio Spurs are this kind of miracle organization that keeps drafting often European players with mediocre jump shots. And then Chip would turn them into superstars. So before he worked for the Spurs, he was Steve Kerr's shooting coach, Grant Hill. But then he worked with Tony Parker, who became a Hall of Famer, Kawhi Leonard, future Hall of Famer, Shane Battier, and others. Anyway, I interviewed Chip. My daughter interviewed him too. He's the real deal. Keivan Stassun is an amazing mentor in PhD level physics. He's responsible for about half of the racial diversity at NASA in their astronomy program.

And he's graduated over 100 students of color, Native American students, and now students with autism from his PhD program. So he is like the definition of

inclusive excellence. Franita Ware, wonderful educational consultant, came up with the term Warm Demander, write about her. And then also, Encircle, in the bottom left, this is an amazing after-school program for LGBTQ+ youth across the street from the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. So these are kids who feel like their whole identity is not being affirmed by their religion. They're either told or implied by their parents that either they, you know, are losing eternal life because of their identities, or that if their parents accept them, they're causing their parents to lose eternal life. And so they're dealing with a lot of, kind of, potential shame and guilt. And so suicide is the leading cause of death for young people in the state of Utah, and it's three or four times higher for queer youth.

And, Encircle has never had a successfully completed suicide since it opened. So they must be able, they're doing something. So I spent the last, like, four years just studying all of these great people. What do they have in common? And just to conclude, the, the kind of big punchline that is, that will come up throughout the book, is they all are the walking, talking embodiment of that wise feedback note. They have very high standards and very high support. And I call that the mentor mindset. And it's very simply the idea that you don't compromise between upholding standards that are sometimes very uncomfortable and having care and concern that a young person meet those. Right? And there's a huge misconception out there. People think if you're a great leader, mentor, whatever, then all your interactions with young people are fun and games.

There's just smiles around. But as, as I already told you, something like 70 or 80% of Uri Treisman's calculus students cry tears of despair at some point in his class. But they almost all finish, like 98% do.

#### SECTION 09 • 65:06

## High standards, high support, and common objections

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And then they go on to amazing careers in math and science. And that's not because he's causing them to cry. It's because calculus is really, really hard. And if you want to be a leading scientist, or, you know, a computer scientist, or



you want to, like, be a leading engineer, you have to know the really hard stuff. And so he doesn't lower standards to protect your feelings, which is what I call a protector. But he also doesn't maintain exceptionally and unrealistically high standards and then say, I guess if you meet him, great, but if not, see you later. That's the enforcer mindset, where you're just enforcing high standards. He's also obviously not apathetic. I don't talk much about those people. They tend to not care. If they do care, they end up in the either enforcer or protector. And so let me just kind of end with some common objections.

And by the way, the mentor mindset practices are throughout the book. I have lots of chapters. There's about 80 pages of workbook on how to adopt the practices of those exceptional people. But let me just end with a couple of objections. I hear some people say, well, doesn't this mentor mindset idea take too much time? And my answer is, well, first of all, the post-it note was one sentence. Anyone can do that. Right? Second of all, there is an upfront investment. You have to think through how to grant someone autonomy and agency. But it pays off because later on, you don't have to babysit the whole time. Right? If someone only does what's good for them or what's right for the organization when you're breathing down their neck, then the second you turn around, they'll go back to doing whatever they were doing.

And you're going to spend all your time putting out fires and recorrecting people. And you're just way better off and a lot happier if you're the kind of leader who can say, here's a super hard task no one's ever done before, and then come back and people have worked diligently on it and just have a few questions before they finish it. And so I found in every case that Sergio, Steph, et cetera, their lives were better because they used the mentor mindset. They weren't overwhelmed and burnt out. Second is people say, well, I'm not a mentor. And I hear you. That's why the book is not called The Mentor Mindset because I don't think people go through the airport and look and be like, well, here's a new thing that's going to give me a bunch of homework to do.

I don't think people are looking to, quote, be a mentor. If you're already in a relationship with a teenager, you're parenting or a kid you're teaching, and I'm like, do you want it to be like a mentor where you change that person's life and they're grateful until the day they die that you were there for them and they show up at your funeral and tell a great story about what a wonderful person you are? Most people would say, yes, that's what I want. So I'm not talking

about, again, an extra job requirement, having to get coffee on Thursdays with the junior person and you have to give them a bunch of advice. What I'm talking about is finding those moments like the post-it note where you're just aligning your expertise and resources with someone's well-being and long-term interests. And last, you know, people say, well, what about people who can't meet a high standard?

And my answer is, look, everyone can improve no matter where they are. That's the growth mindset belief. And certainly as a mentor in a mentor mindset, you're titrating what you're expecting based on not just what they can do, but what they want to do. And ultimately, it's about the young person's goals for themselves, not what you're trying to force them to be. But it's amazing what you can see young people accomplish if they get that right combination of high standards and high support. And I would love a world in which not just in the college educated jobs, but in the trades and in all parts of the workforce in retail. Like how much better would our lives be if any young person, regardless of whether they go to higher education or not, is going to end up with a manager, for example, who takes them seriously, expects a lot of them, and supports them until they like really kick ass at their job.

And I think a lot of the disaffection we see with younger generation is that they don't see a legitimate path to being a respect worthy person with a prestigious contribution. Like you're either on this like one linear path through increasingly stratified higher education or you're a nobody. And I think we need to change that attitude as a society and as a culture. And that's why I think everyone has a role to play as a mentor. If you're a parent, if you just care about young people, or you just care about the future of our democracy, I think we all have a role to play. So that's why I'm giving this talk. That's why I hope you read the book and don't hate it and find lots of useful stuff in it. And I'd love to stay in touch if you do so.

Thank you very much.

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End of complete revised transcript.