Empowering Tomorrow: A Special Conversation With Groundbreaking Leaders Who Make the Case for Youth Thriving

April 30, 2024

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Panelists

Ellen Galinsky
Author
The Breakthrough Years
& *Mind in the Making*

Karen Pittman
Author, "Too Essential to Fail"
Founding Partner
Knowledge to Power Catalysts

Moderator

Michael Brown
Principal and Co-Founder, City Year
Public Purpose Strategies

The Breakthrough Years

Ellen Galinsky

Needed urgently: Collective action to tackle teen mental health crisis linked to smartphone use

Today's Teenagers: Anxious About Their Futures and Disillusioned by Politicians

U.S. | THE NUMBERS

Teens' Mental-Health Distress Could Be Worse Than CDC Data Suggest

Youth Risk Behavior survey takes place in school, potentially skewing
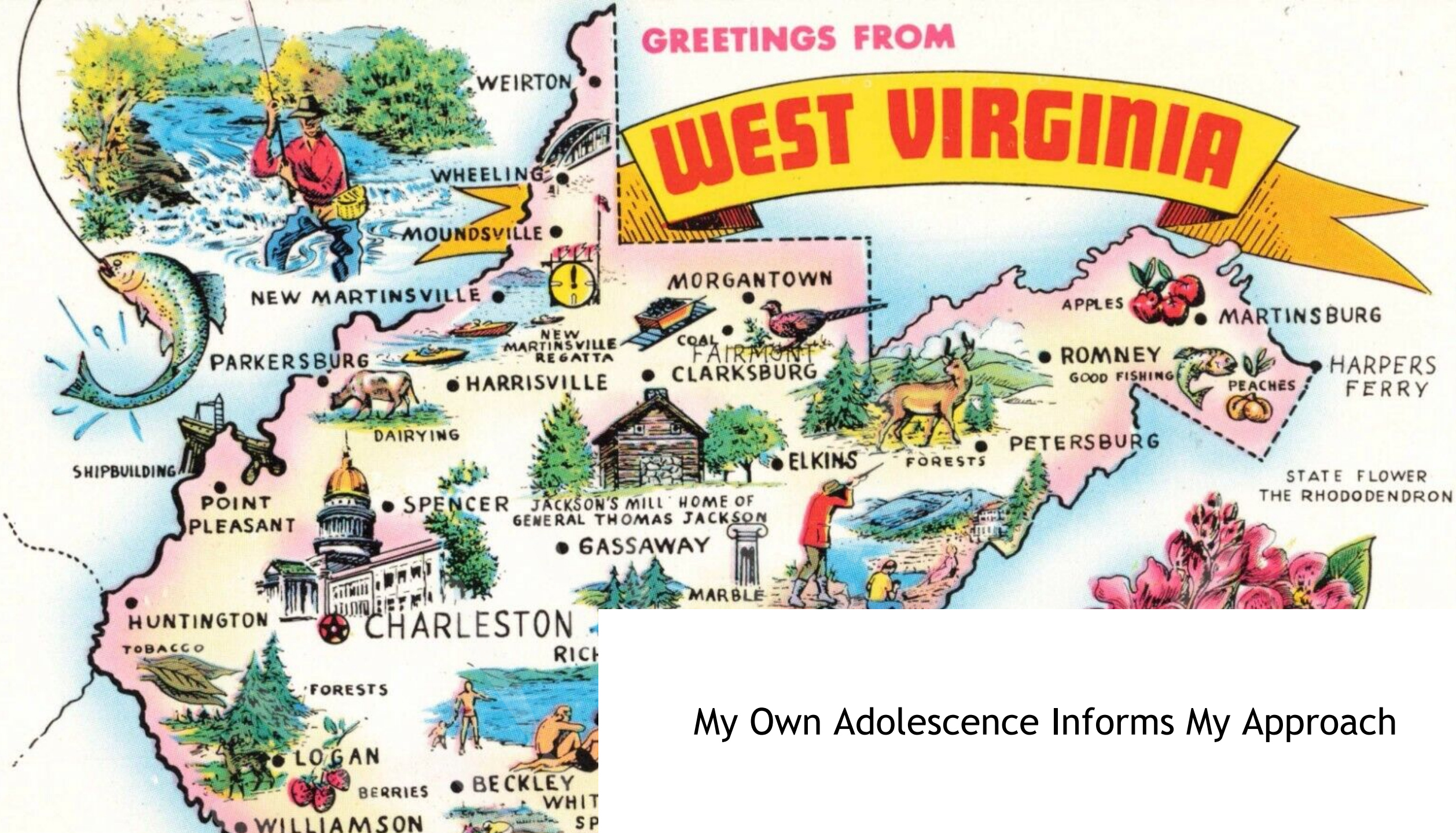
Young People Are In the News

What If We Looked At These Crises Through The Lens of Child Development and Civic Science?

Maybe there wouldn't be the gap between applying knowledge to practice that exists today.

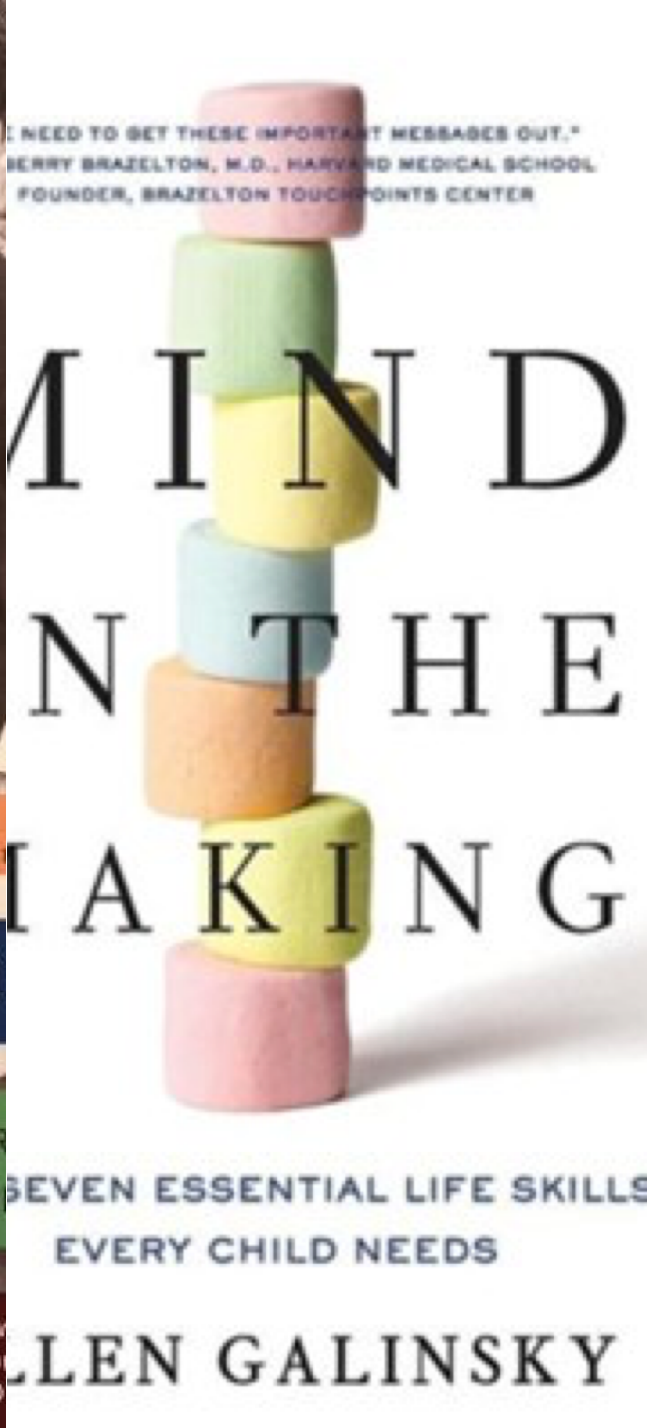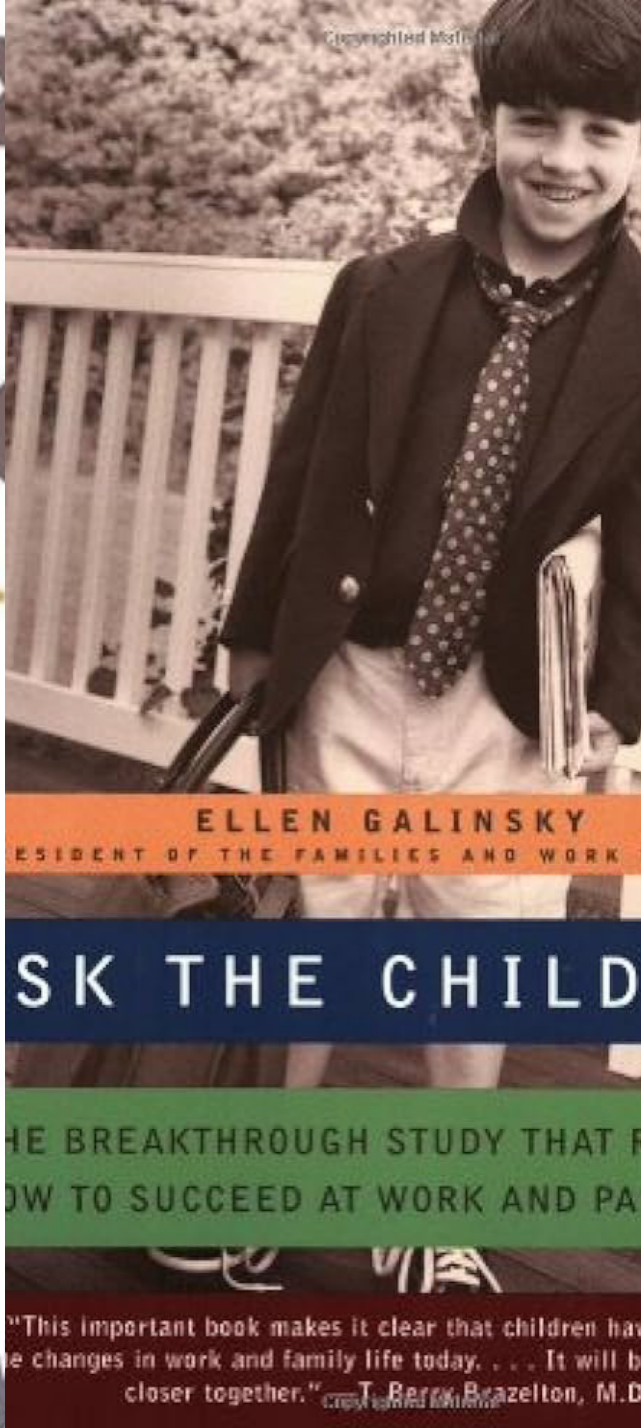My Own Adolescence Informs My Approach

GALINSKY and
LIAM H. HOOKS

THE
NEW
EXTENDED
FAMILY

The Six
Stages
of
Parenthood

"PARENTS WILL
RECOGNIZE
THEMSELVES
AGAIN AND
AGAIN IN THIS
BOOK"

DAY

Ellen Galinsky

"WE NEED TO GET THESE IMPORTANT MESSAGES OUT."
—T. BERRY BRAZELTON, M.D., HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
FOUNDER, BRAZELTON TOUCHPOINTS CENTER

ELLEN GALINSKY
PRESIDENT OF THE FAMILIES AND WORK

ASK THE CHILDREN

THE BREAKTHROUGH STUDY THAT
HOW TO SUCCEED AT WORK AND PAR

"This important book makes it clear that children have
the changes in work and family life today. . . . It will b
closer together."—T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

MIND
IN THE
MAKING

SEVEN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS
EVERY CHILD NEEDS

ELLEN GALINSKY

I've always been drawn to issues where public understanding is out of synch with experience and research

Focus Groups/Interviews: Why Don't Adults Understand Us, Why Don't Adults Like Us

Lisamarie, 17

Breakthrough Years Studies: Civic Science In Action

- Focus groups/interviews with 38 14-18 year olds.

- Interviews with 45 leading researchers.

- A Time 1 nationally representative survey with 1666 9-19-year-olds and their parents.

- Interviews with 52 adolescents and 56 parents from this sample.

- A Time 2 follow-up survey with 1115 of the same adolescents and their parents nine months later, during the pandemic.

- A behavioral study of executive function and decision-making skills with 223 6th, 9th, and 12th graders in 9 schools in 6 states.

Five Messages
&
Five Lessons
from
The Breakthrough Years

What would you like to tell the adults of America about people your age?

Message 1:
Understand Our Development (21%)

"We are smart and try our best, but we still need love."

—Nine-year-old girl

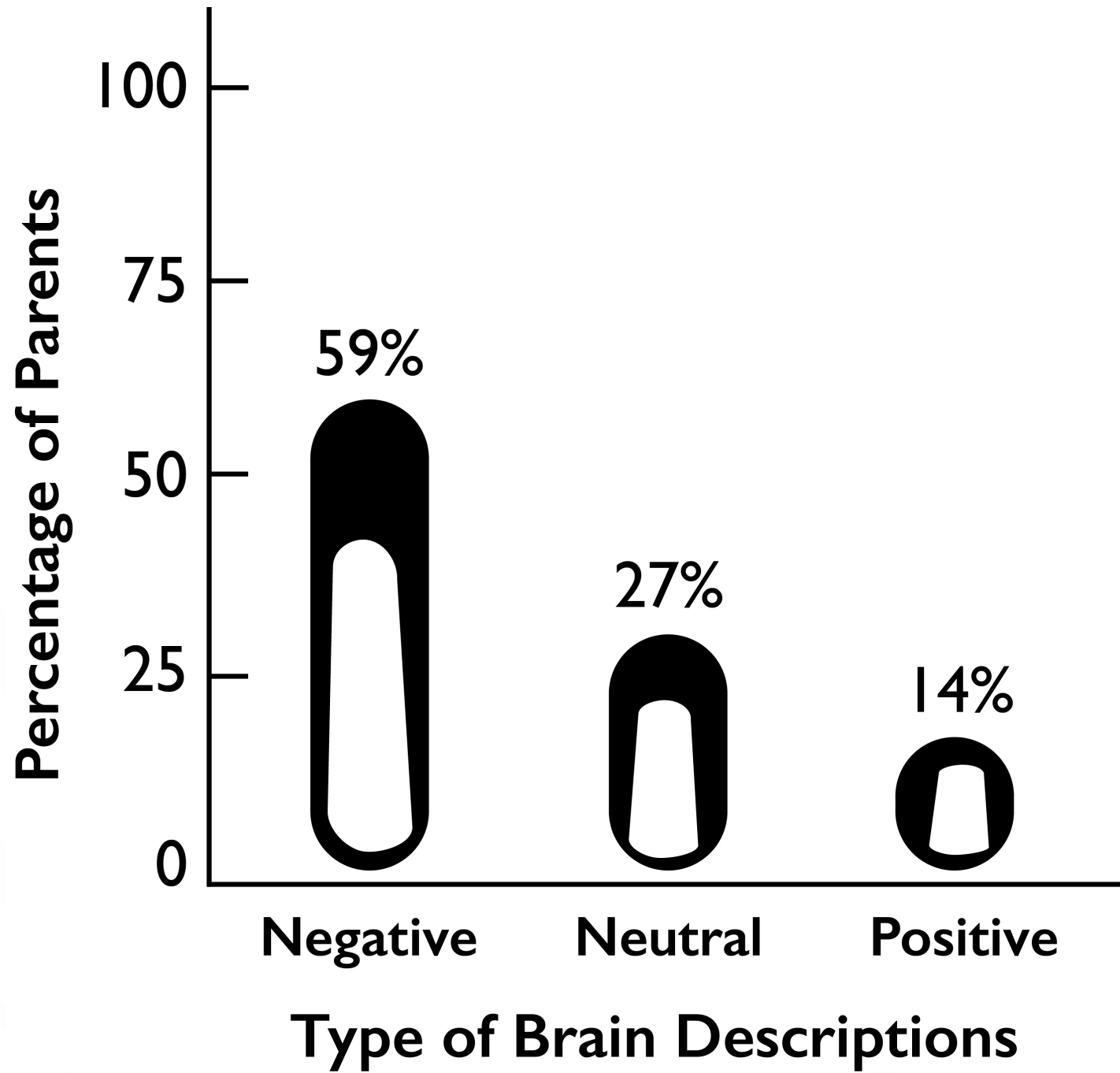"We are difficult, but sometimes all we want is to be understood."

—Fourteen-year-old girl

"We are young adults finding our way thru life, we should be treated with respect and hopefully understanding as to what we are going through."

—Thirteen-year-old girl

When you hear the phrase "the teen brain" or "the adolescent brain," what one word comes to mind?

LESSON 1

If we see the protests as young people not being smart, we react one way.

If we see them as young people learning to be citizens, we react another way.

What we see is what we do!

Message 2:
Don't Stereotype or Label Us (38%)

Taking drugs: "Not all of us fall under the umbrella of being problematic drug addicts."

Being entitled: "We have a lot more to offer the world than many of you see. Sometimes it feels like every adult thinks my generation is nothing more than a bunch of entitled brats that want everything given to them."

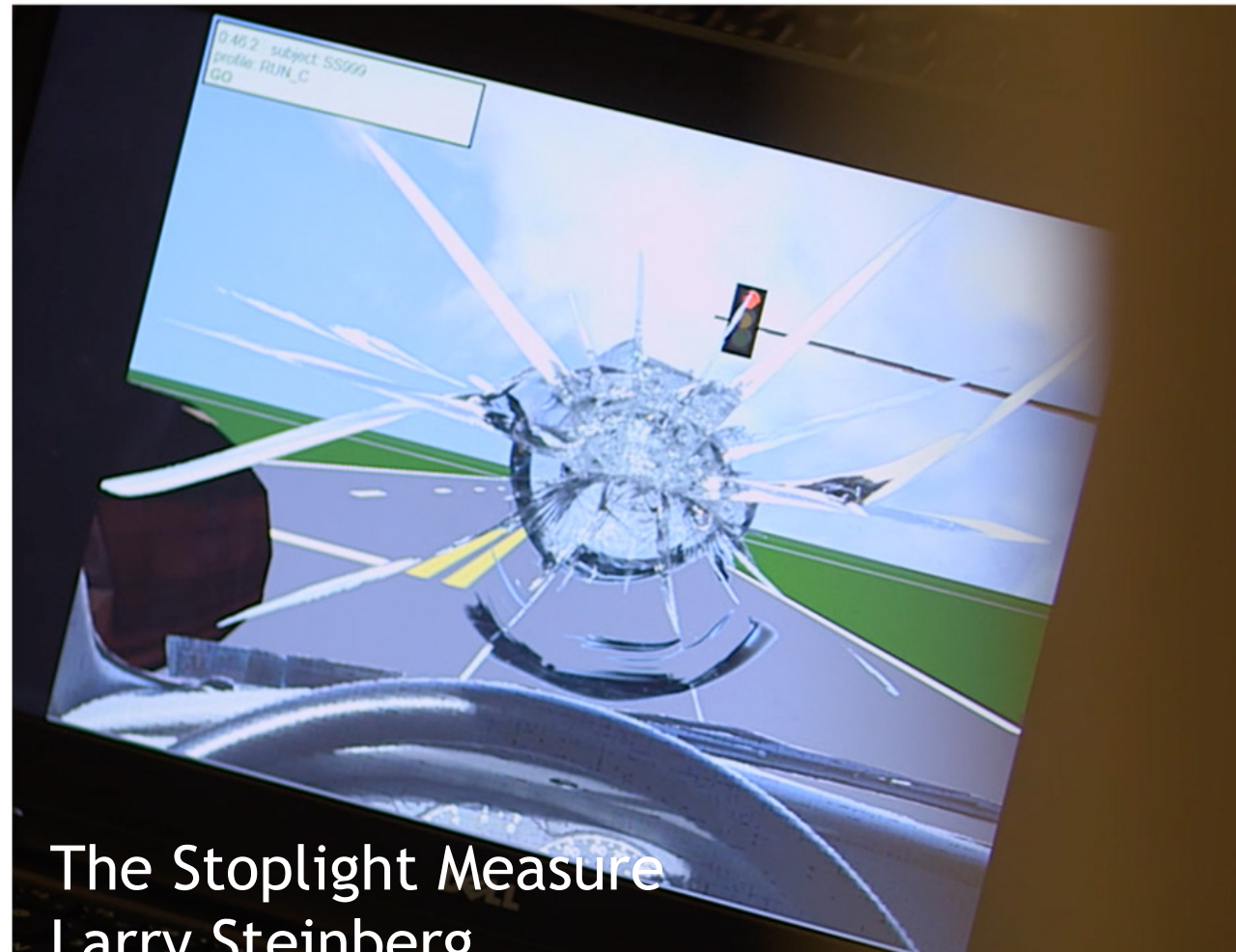**Being troublemakers:** "All kids aren't troublemakers or irresponsible."

Being addicted to technology: "We aren't social media obsessed, we aren't extremely self-involved, our phones don't define us, and the internet is not going to be the end of us."

Natalie, 17
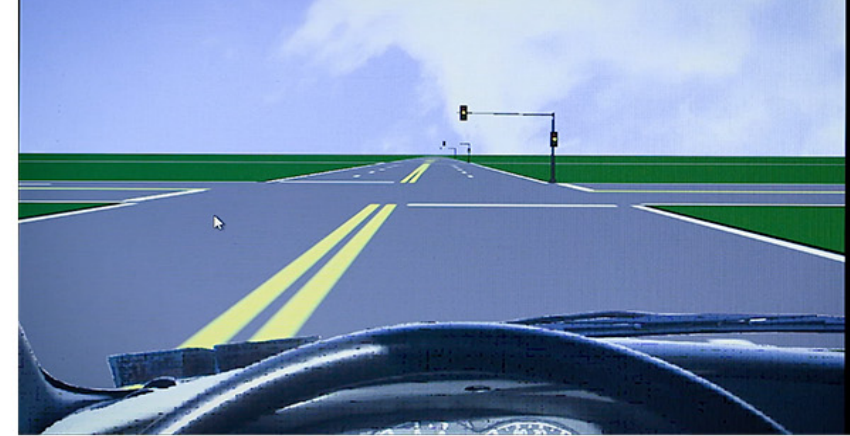
Risky Behavior

The Stoplight Measure
Larry Steinberg

LESSON 2

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE RISK-TAKING (LEARNING TO BE BRAVE)

- **Activities,** like taking a class where they know nothing about the subject, or it seems challenging;

- **Actions,** like standing up for what they believe is right even though someone might disagree; and

- **Relationships,** like starting a friendship with someone new when they're not sure how their other friends would react.

Message 3
Listen and Talk WITH Us, Not at Us (9%)

"Don't ignore kids our age just because we are young. Sometimes we have very important things to say."
—Fifteen-year-old boy

"Each person wants to be heard even if you don't agree with them."
—Sixteen-year-old girl

It might be hard to understand teens, preteens but we go through stuff that might sound dumb, but it is important to us at our age.
—Eleven-year-old girl
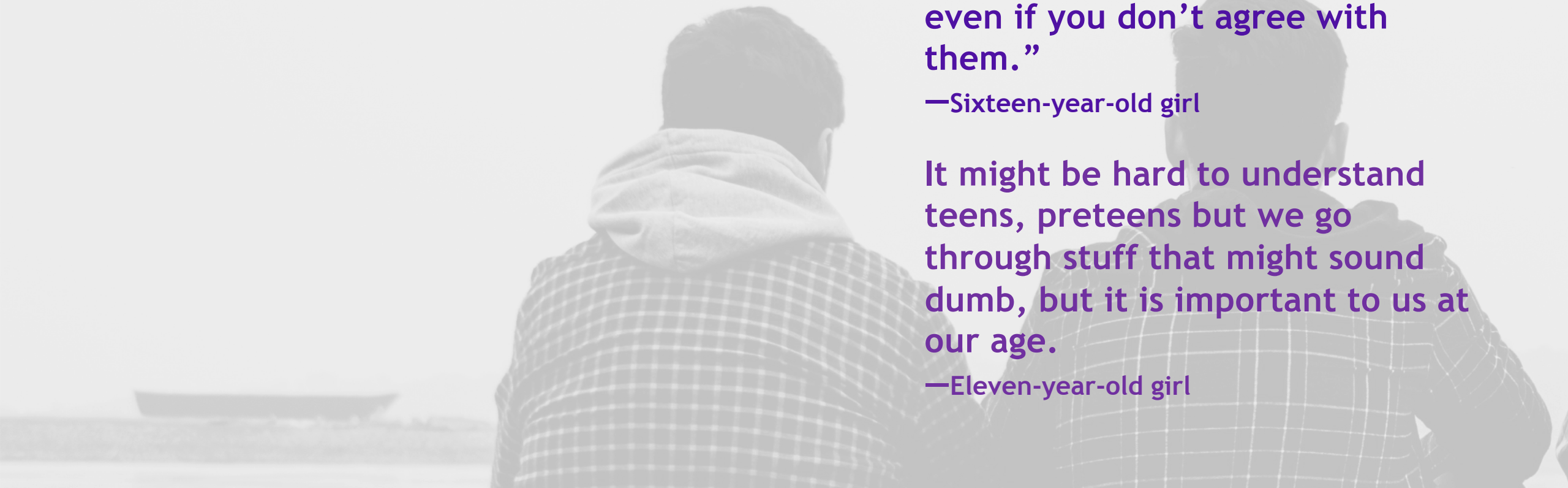
Autonomy Support
Stephanie Carlson

Autonomy Support
Wendy Grolnick

Ashley, 14

Just Say No Interventions Typically Fail In Adolescence

LESSON 3

Engage in Joint Problem-Solving (Shared Solutions)

- Step 1: State the Problem and Determine the Goal.

- Step 2: Generate as Many Solutions as Possible

- Step 3: Consider the Pluses and Minuses of Each Solution.

- Step 4: Select a Shared Solution as an Experiment.

- Step 5: Evaluate the Solution as Necessary, and if It Isn't Working, Repeat the Process and Arrive at a New Shared Solution.

Message 4: We Are Trying to Understand Ourselves and Our Needs (24%)

"We are also still trying to figure out who we are and who we want to be."
—Seventeen-year-old girl

"My generation would like more acceptance and respect from our adults. After all they were once our age and wanted these same things."
—Seventeen-year-old boy

"We aren't as lazy as you portray us to be. We are just trying to figure out this world and how we can make a difference."
—Sixteen-year-old girl

"Give us a chance to figure things out."
—Eleven-year-old boy

Chapter Four - Brick by Brick: The Origins, Development, and Future of Self-Determination Theory

Richard M. Ryan * ⊠, Edward L. Deci †

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Abstract

Self-determination theory is a broad and widely applied theory of motivation, personality development, and wellness. The theory began with a narrow focus on intrinsic motivation but has expanded over time to encompass both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and spawned new perspectives on well-being, life-goals, relationship quality, vitality and depletion, and eudaimonia, among other topics. In this overview of SDT, we first discuss the value of broad theory for psychological science. We then describe the strategy behind SDT's development, and the unfolding of its core mini-theories and topical models, from early studies on intrinsic motivation to the enormous body of research being produced today by a global community of SDT scholars. Throughout we highlight evidence for the critical role of supports for autonomy, competence and relatedness in human development and thriving, and the strong practical and translational value of a functionally-focused, and empirically-supported, theoretical framework.

Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being

Source: Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Brick by brick: The origins, development, and future of self-determination theory," in Advances in Motivation Science, ed. A. J. Elliot (Cambridge: Elsevier Academic Press, 2019), 111-156, https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/bs.adms.2019.01.001.

Source:: Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being," American Psychologist 55, no.1 (2000): 68-78, https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68; and of B. Bradford Brown of the University of Wisconsin as cited in Institute of Medicine (US) and National Research Council (US) Committee on the Science of Adolescence, The Science of Adolescent Risk-Taking: Workshop Report (Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US), 2011).

RESEARCH

Five Basic Psychological Needs

1. **Caring Connections**

2. **Agency**

3. **Mastery**

4. **Identity**

5. **Purpose**

IMPLICATIONS

The Need to Contribute During Adolescence

Andrew J. Fuligni
Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA, University
of California, Los Angeles

Abstract

As an intensely social species, humans demonstrate the propensity to contribute to other individuals and groups by providing support, resources, or helping to achieve a shared goal. Accumulating evidence suggests that contribution benefits the givers as well as the receivers. The need to contribute during adolescence, however, has been underappreciated compared with more individually focused psychological or social developmental needs. The need is particularly significant during the teenage years, when children's social world expands and they become increasingly capable of making contributions of consequence. Moreover, contribution can both promote and be a key element of traditionally conceived fundamental needs of the adolescent period such as autonomy, identity, and intimacy. The neural and biological foundations of the adolescent need to contribute, as well as the ways in which social environments meet that need, are discussed. A scientific and practical investment in contribution would synergize with other recent efforts to reframe thinking about the adolescent period, providing potential returns to the field as well as to youths and their communities.

Keywords

development, adolescence, interpersonal relations, others, positive psychology, contribution, prosociality

Two long-standing lines of scholarship demonstrate the striking predisposition of people to give as well as receive. Experimental games show that participants will donate an average of almost 30% of resources to others, even with no expected reciprocation or benefit to social reputation (Engel, 2011). Children in the first few years of life will provide assistance to others (Warneken, 2015; Warneken & Tomasello, 2006). Numerous variations of games such as the dictator and trust games show that the complexities of social relationships—kinship, trust, cooperation, need—influence giving to others (Engel, 2011; Levitt & List, 2007; Wynn, Bloom, Jordan, Marshall, & Sheskin, 2018). Individual differences in the propensity to give also exist. Pointed arguments about whether this tendency has purely altruistic or selfish roots continue, and people do keep substantial amounts for themselves even when giving to others (Andreoni & Miller, 2003; Bardsley, 2008). Yet there is little disagreement that people possess a strong inclination to provide at least some resources or support to others.

A different but equally established tradition of research demonstrates the tendency for people to voluntarily give time, energy, and resources to their social groups. These groups may be as small as three to four people or as large as a company or ethnoreligious group and can consist of known or unknown members (Hogg, 2003, 2013). Experimental studies demonstrate that even when social groups are involuntary and fleeting, such as in the minimal-group paradigm, members as young as 5 years of age willingly give resources and support to their groups (Balliet, Wu, & De Dreu, 2014; Dunham, Baron, & Carey, 2011). The inherent group-like nature of this giving is demonstrated by the fact that giving and having that giving recognized enhances one's identification with the group (Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2003). Again, individual differences exist and debates remain about key mechanisms, but people will provide at least some resources and support to their social groups.

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Contributing
Andrew Fuligni, Ph.D

Outcomes of Having the Need for Belonging Met

Belonging	Follow-Up Outcomes							
Context	School Engagement	Grades (P)	Grades (A)	Future	Negative Mood	Positive Mood	Stress	Conflict (A:P)
Family	↑			↑	↓	↑	↓	↓ : ↓
Friends				↑	↓	↑	↓	↓ :
School	↑		↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓ :
OSA	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	:
Online				↑		↑		:

A = adolescent report, P = parent report, OSA = out-of-school activities. Arrows indicate the direction of an association (i.e., up arrow for promoting, down arrow for protecting), controlling for demographics. An empty cell indicates there is no statistically significant relationship. Significant relations are p-values < .0005, meaning these correlations are very reliable and unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Outcomes of Having the Need for Respect Met

Respect	Follow-Up Outcomes							
Context	School Engagement	Grades (A)	Grades (P)	Future	Negative Mood	Positive Mood	Stress	Conflict (A:P)
Family		↑		↑	↑↓	↑	↓	↓ : ↓
Friends		↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓ : ↓
School		↑		↑	↓	↑	↓	↓ : ↓
OSA		↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓ :
Online		↑		↑				:

A = adolescent report, P = parent report, OSA = out-of-school activities. Arrows indicate the direction of an association (i.e., up arrow for promoting, down arrow for protecting), controlling for demographics. An empty cell indicates there is no statistically significant relationship. Significant relations are p-values < .0005, meaning these correlations are very reliable and unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Outcomes of Having the Need to Contribute Met

Contribute	Follow-Up Outcomes							
Context	School Engagement	Grades (A)	Grades (P)	Future	Negative Mood	Positive Mood	Stress	Conflict (A:P)
Family	↑			↑	↓	↑	↓	↓ :
Friends	↑	↑	↑	↑		↑	↓	:
School	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	:
OSA	↑	↑		↑		↑	↓	:
Online		↑		↑		↑		:

A = adolescent report, P = parent report, OSA = out-of-school activities. Arrows indicate the direction of an association (i.e., up arrow for promoting, down arrow for protecting), controlling for demographics. When there is no statistically significant relationship between the need being met and the follow-up outcome, we leave the cell blank. Significant relations are p-values < .0005, which means these correlations are both very reliable and unlikely to have occurred by chance.

A pathway to Mental Health is Being a Helper Not One Who Is Helped

Message 5:
We are Drawn To Learn Life and Learning Skills

Learning takes time and failing is a part of it.
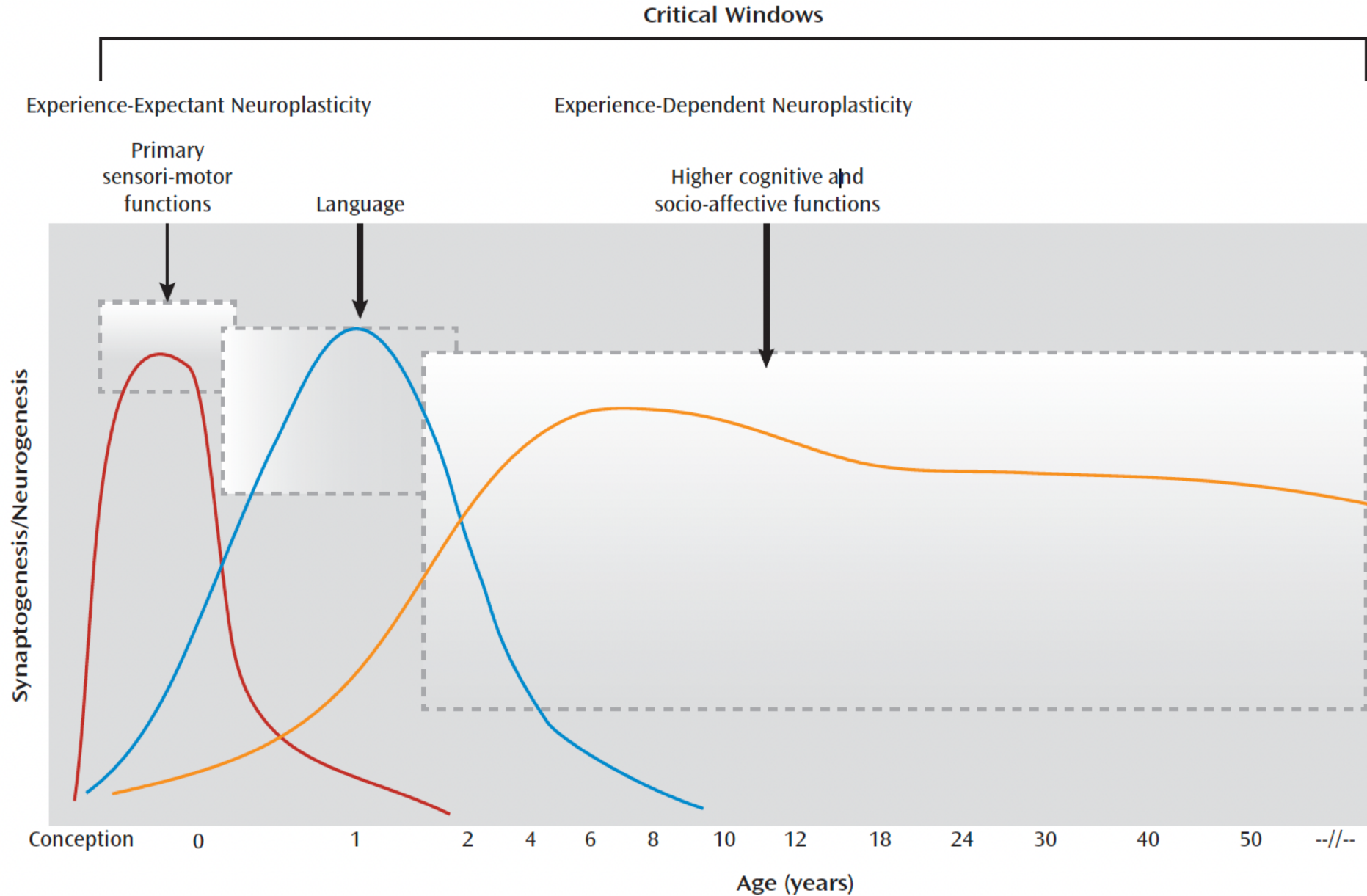
—Seventeen-year-old girl

We like to be interactive learners. We are often scared and overwhelmed by school and life.

—Eleven-year-old boy

Encourage us and help us but let us think for ourselves.

—Thirteen-year-old girl

FIGURE 3. Critical Windows of Neuroplasticity During Human Life[a]

Critical Windows

Experience-Expectant Neuroplasticity   Experience-Dependent Neuroplasticity

Primary sensori-motor functions

Language

Higher cognitive and socio-affective functions

Keshavan, Matcheri S et al. "Cognitive training in mental disorders: update and future directions." The American journal of psychiatry vol. 171,5 (2014): 510-22. doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.2013.13081075

Synaptogenesis/Neurogenesis (y-axis)

Conception   0   1   2   4   6   8   10   12   18   24   30   40   50   --//--

Age (years)

[a] Cognitive training makes use of experience-dependent plasticity that is present throughout the human lifespan.

Executive function skills are "predictive of achievement, health, wealth, and quality of life throughout life, often more so than IQ or socioeconomic status; and are more critical for school readiness than IQ or entry-level reading or math."

There is abundant evidence that EFs are crucial for:

"success in getting and keeping a job,
career advancement,
making and keeping friends,
marital harmony,
weight control,
staying out of jail, and
resisting substance abuse."

"Adults with better executive function skills report that they are happier and have a better quality of life."

IMPLICATIONS
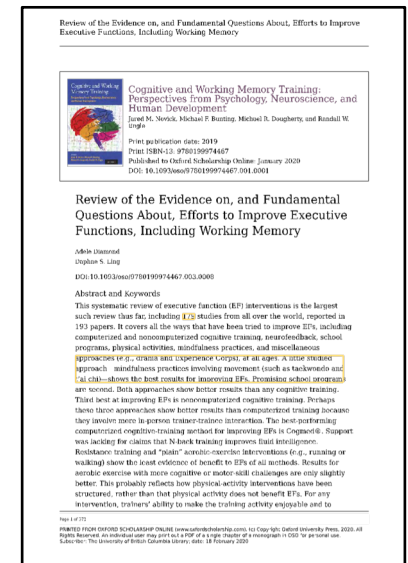
Source: Adele Diamond and Daphne S. Ling, "Review of the Evidence on, and Fundamental Questions About, Efforts to Improve Executive Functions, Including Working Memory," in Cognitive and Working Memory Training: Perspectives from Psychology, Neuroscience, and Human Development, eds. Jared M. Novick et al., (Oxford University Press, 2020),

Source: Adele Diamond and Daphne S. Ling, "Conclusions about interventions, programs, and approaches for improving executive functions that appear justified and those that, despite much hype, do not," *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience* 18 (April 2016): 34-48, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2015.11.005.

What are the components of the foundational executive function skills?

Foundational EF Skills

- **Use what you know**: Keep information in mind so it can be used (working memory)

- **Think flexibly**: Consider alternative perspectives and think flexibly in response to changing circumstances (cognitive flexibility)

- **Reflect:** Notice challenges, pause, step back, consider options, and put things into context before responding (reflection)

- **Use self-control**: Resist automatic and impulsive behaviors (inhibitory control) so you can engage in goal-directed reasoning and problem-solving and persist in reaching goals

What are Life and Learning Skills?

Life and Learning Skills build on the foundational executive function skills:

- **Goal Setting,**

- **Perspective Taking,**

- **Communicating and Collaborating,**

- **Problem-Solving (meaning making, creative thinking, relational reasoning and critical thinking)**

- **Taking on Challenges**.

Most endorsed skills from the Employers' 2023 Job Outlook survey: **problem solving skills, ability to work in teams, work ethic, analytic, communication** and **technical skills.**

FIGURE 1: TOP 5 ATTRIBUTES EMPLOYERS SEEK ON CANDIDATE'S RESUME
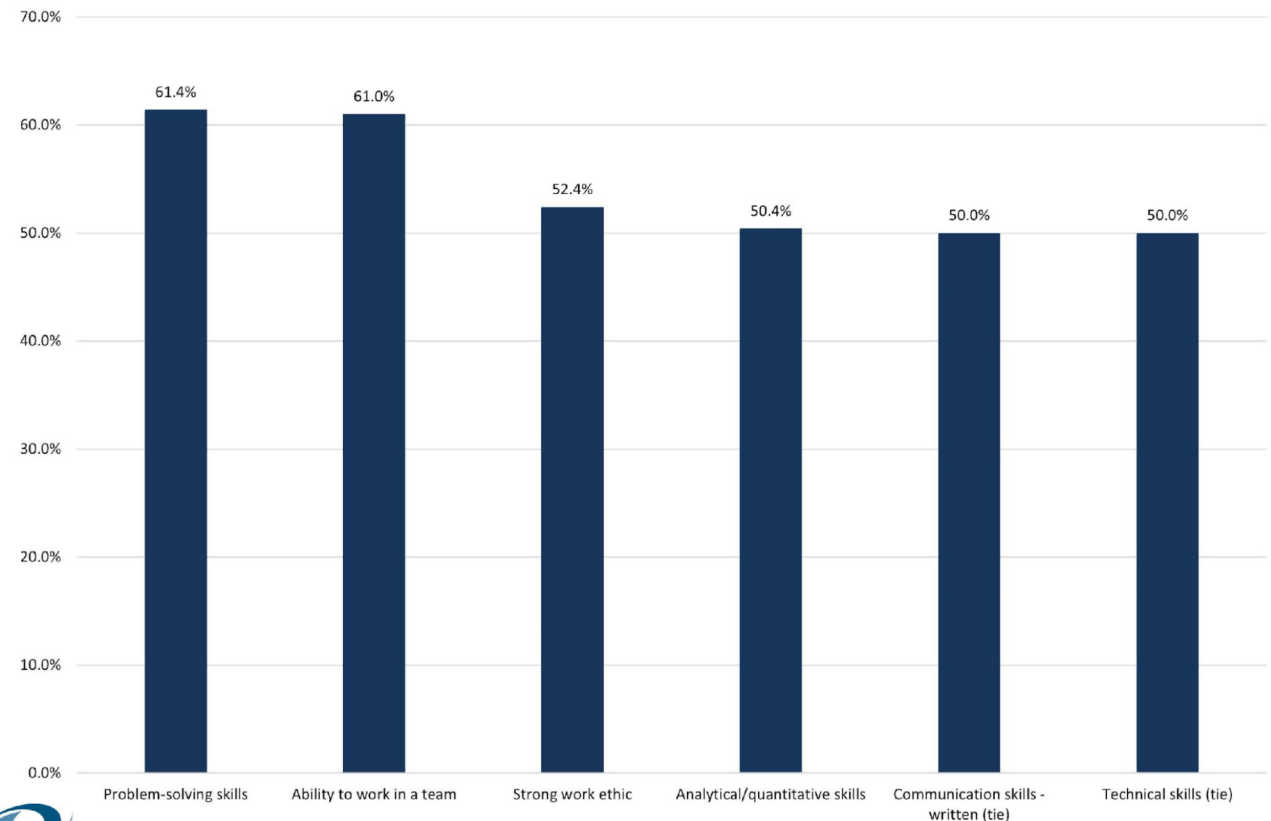
Percent of respondents identifying attribute as very/extremely important
Source: Job Outlook 2023, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Think Of the Skills Young People Would Learn If They Could Contribute!

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The Breakthrough Years

Ellen Galinsky

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