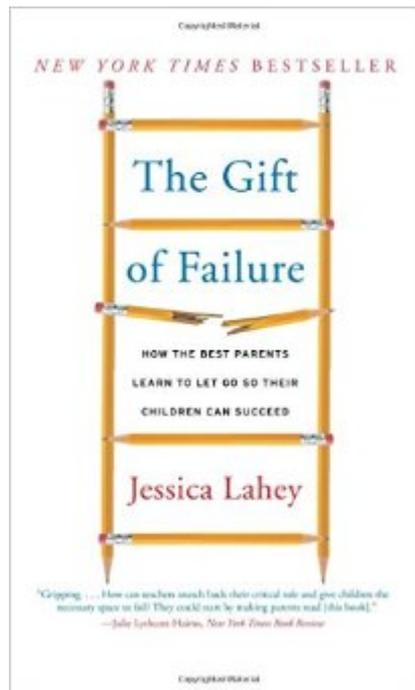


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The Gift Of Failure: How The Best Parents Learn To Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER In the tradition of Paul Tough's *How Children Succeed* and Wendy Mogel's *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*, this groundbreaking manifesto focuses on the critical school years when parents must learn to allow their children to experience the disappointment and frustration that occur from life's inevitable problems so that they can grow up to be successful, resilient, and self-reliant adults. Modern parenting is defined by an unprecedented level of overprotectiveness: parents who rush to school at the whim of a phone call to deliver forgotten assignments, who challenge teachers on report card disappointments, mastermind children's friendships, and interfere on the playing field. As teacher and writer Jessica Lahey explains, even though these parents see themselves as being highly responsive to their children's well being, they aren't giving them the chance to experience failure or the opportunity to learn to solve their own problems. Overparenting has the potential to ruin a child's confidence and undermine their education, Lahey reminds us. Teachers don't just teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. They teach responsibility, organization, manners, restraint, and foresight—important life skills children carry with them long after they leave the classroom. Providing a path toward solutions, Lahey lays out a blueprint with targeted advice for handling homework, report cards, social dynamics, and sports. Most importantly, she sets forth a plan to help parents learn to step back and embrace their children's failures. Hard-hitting yet warm and wise, *The Gift of Failure* is essential reading for parents, educators, and psychologists nationwide who want to help children succeed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Overall the premise of *The Gift of Failure* is a good one – “hypercompetitive, hovering parents need to step back and expect more from their kids. Parents need to rethink the idea that attentive, caring parenting means swooping in to micromanage every detail of their kids’ lives. While this book is light hearted and well meaning, it is oversimplified and short on practical advice for actual real-life scenarios. Just tell your child what you expect, back off and, after a period of minor frustration, it will all work out! But we never find out how to deal with a kid who couldn’t care less what your expectations are, ignores the chore chart on the fridge or who never learns from his failures. It is important to remember that the author’s experiences working at elite private and Ivy League college town public schools inform her ideas on areas where parents should step back because these schools are already on it. Her descriptions of supervised study halls and supervised weekly notebook and locker cleanouts are certainly not routine at my kids’ public schools. And her suggestion to stay out of the college search process is laughable, unless you are at a school like hers where everyone goes to an elite private college with the means to pay for it and students are closely shepherded through the search and admissions process by professional college counselors. At my kids’ school, college counseling amounts to “Most kids seem to like State U, why don’t you apply there?” Same for her advice on letting your kids dabble in different languages instead of sticking with the one they started in 6th grade – “this autonomy seems great until you are paying college tuition to fulfill a language requirement they could have fulfilled for free in high school.

This book had a profound effect on my thinking about how to be a parent. I don’t think of myself as the type who hovers, but I’m starting to understand that I hover more than I realize. It’s not that the author is advocating for hands-off parenting. Instead, she points out a lot of the ways in which parents take the reins and deny their kids all sense of control, and how detrimental that can be. We want our kids to grow up to be responsible and capable adults, but how can they do that when we take away their sense of autonomy? This book made me realize it’s more important for me to teach my kids life skills like how to manage their time than it is for me to be managing every detail. My doing so comes from good intentions and a desire to see them succeed, but at the same time it conveys subtle messages to them I don’t want conveyed. I read a lot of psychology and social science books because the research just plain fascinates me. While this book offers a lot of anecdotes, it’s also infused with an excellent grasp of research. Lahey’s background in education shines through, and her suggestions are grounded in the same evidence-based research that I’ve read. If kids seem different today, it’s because they are, and it’s not just technology that’s driving this

change, it's the way parents treat their children and how they view them. We want them to be successful, but in our test-driven, high achieving culture, we are sometimes guilty of emphasizing the wrong things.

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