



Episode #140:

**Julie Lythcott-Haims on How to Raise an Adult
and Help Our Kids Successfully Launch**

January 15, 2019

Debbie: Hi Julie, welcome to the podcast.

Julie: Debbie, thanks for having me.

Debbie: Well, I have to um just confess something and that is that I started this podcast about almost three years ago and I had this list of dream guests that I wanted to have on the show and you were on that list.

Julie: No way!

Debbie: Yes.

Julie: That's so awesome.

Debbie: It's true. So this is a very full circle moment for me. I'm very excited to share your, your work with my listeners.

Julie: Well thanks. That means a great deal. I really appreciate it.

Debbie: Well, my pleasure. And there's so much to talk about. I have way too many questions so I want to dive in.

Julie: That's great because I'm really long winded.

Debbie: Well, my hunch is that it, you're going to end up answering a lot of my questions in your answer, so I think it'll, it'll even out. But just as a way of introducing yourself, give us kind of the condensed version of kind of who you are as a parent, your work in the world and you know, we're specifically talking about your book, *How To Raise An Adult* today. So if you can just talk, talk a little bit about the context for writing that book.

Julie: Sure. I'm 51. I'm a mom in Silicon Valley, California. I've got a 19 year old son and a 17 year old daughter. For many years I was the dean of freshmen right up the street from my house at Stanford University and in that role over the course of 10 years, I grew really concerned about the number of undergraduates who seemed very reliant on their parents to handle the day to day tasks of life that college students have always been able to handle in the past, but now somehow no longer could. Not all my students, but a growing number every year. Not just a Stanford problem. I was seeing at Stanford, what administrators and faculty were seeing all over the country, but what I saw on my campus concerned me enough to want to investigate what was going on and to try to tell parents, hey, back off. It's okay.

Your son or daughter is 18, 19, 20. They can do this. They can talk to faculty on their own. They can resolve their own roommate disputes, they don't need you to be checking their homework. And then one day after years of kind of preaching this backoff message, I came home to dinner with my own family and leaned over my 10 year old son's plate and began cutting his meat and there was a big aha

moment for me in that. I realized that the problem I was seeing on my college campus was a problem I was complicit in at the parent on the parenting side. I was doing too much for my 10 year old, which meant I wasn't going to be able to let go of him at 18 when he went off to a campus somewhere. So that dual vantage point of being a parent trying to do the best for my kids and a college dean working with other people's grown-up kids, uh, allowed me to put together the thesis for *How To Raise An Adult*, my book on the harm of helicopter parenting.

Debbie: Yeah. I mean, I remember when it came out and it so resonated with me. I also think it was around the time that Jessica Lahey's book came out. Yeah. So they seemed like such great companion pieces and I definitely, you know, and I had Jessica on the show and we talked about this. I had so many 'yes', 'yes' moments, you know, reading your book. And one of the things that I, and I want to get into more in depth here is that when I read books like that and when I, when I know, you know, what I hear from my audience is that we always have this 'yes but' moment because you know, when you're raising a differently wired kid who might be on a delayed timeline or their trajectory just looks different, we kind of find ourselves stuck in this place of okay, but how do we do this?

When are we overstepping? When, when do we step back? What does this actually look like? Because we can't really compare, you know, with their same age peers necessarily. So I want to talk with you, let's take a step back. I want to talk with you about fear. That's something that you talk a lot about. That's something that is pervasive in my community of parents. Fear about, you know, everything, what this path is going to look like, will our child be able to launch, all of these things. Can you talk about what you discovered about fear based parenting and what that, where that comes from?

Julie: Well, you know, you've, you've hit the nail on the head, uh, when attributing cause to our method of parenting these days. So I say that, that we're parenting these days from a place of love, ego and fear. And the fear is the sense that um in this globalized world, this 21st century economy with robots and artificial intelligence, a 24/7 365 news cycle that's constantly buzzing us in our pocket, in our hand. We're just hyper aware of everything that's happening everywhere in the world. There are a lot of things that frighten us and we let that fear animate our behaviors as parents. There's a, there's a wonderful evolutionary biologist named Robert Sapolsky who's written the book *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, presumably in contrast to humans who do get ulcers. And he says that this news cycle, for example, we can hear about everything going on in the world. An abduction, you know, 3000 miles away, makes us feel our child is at risk.

Unlike our ancestors who lived in caves when their fight or flight response was activated, when the saber tooth tiger came by, you know, they either fled the tiger, fought the tiger and won, or died. With us, when the equivalent, the modern equivalent of the saber tooth tiger arises, we can't flee from it because it's not really in our present moment, we're reading about it. It's, it's coming in on our phones. We can't flee it, it's kind of always there. We can't fight it. It's just always there, this thing we can't fight. It's information rather than an actual thing to confront. And it sort of looms out there. It looms in our minds and it's so our,

our fight or flight response is activated, but we never get the relief of the thing being over. So there's a heck of a lot of fear and we've decided it's best if we control our kids' environment, control our kids' efforts, control our kids' outcomes, uh, argue with teachers, argue with coaches, handle the deadlines, bring the forgotten stuff, like where our fear is, if I don't do those things, my kid won't make it.

And in the short term we help our kids by handling the stuff of life for them. But in the long-term, if we've always been the handler, then they literally have not learned how to handle things for themselves. And while their bodies grow from being child bodies to adult bodies, we have deprived them of building the skills that that adult is going to need to have in order to fend for themselves out in the world. So it's sort of this paradox that is excruciating but necessary for us to understand and implement. We actually have to back farther and farther away from our kids as they age so that they can do more and more for themselves. And yes, sometimes falter, sometimes fall, sometimes experience a hurt or embarrassment or shame of something that will teach them, oh, I shouldn't do it that way. I need to do it differently next time. This is essentially it. This is what it boils down to. How to raise a kid to be that healthy adult. We have to give them a longer and longer leash every year instead of pretending that they're safe and okay and fine when we're holding them on our tight leash forever.

Debbie: So what would you say to parents who are listening to this and are thinking, yes, I, I know I need to do this and I'm afraid that if I step back even in little ways, my child's world might come crumbling down. Like I don't know how to frame this question, but maybe talk a little bit about what's an okay kind of hurt to go through and what isn't. Like are there criteria that you have in terms of things that we can, that where we need to step in and areas where it's okay to kind of let them falter?

Julie: Yeah, absolutely. Big picture I would say that these days we've decided everything is a potential disaster. Everything is potentially harming them for life. And so we've decided everything requires our vigilant scrutiny and control and our handling. So what we've got to do is kind of re-norm things. We've got to stop thinking of everything as a saber tooth tiger that's going to kill our children and see most things as important life experiences they need to have because they teach our kid lessons that make them stronger and smarter out there in the world. I'm flipping through my book as I say this because I actually have some examples. So, um, I actually found a great list of things we're supposed to let our kids experience. I found it in someone else's book and I wrote them and asked them for permission to reprint it in mine.

So here we go. For anyone who has How To Raise An Adult that's on page 239 in the chapter Normalize Struggle. It's about how to let the bad things happen. And it's a list called 'Mistakes and Curveballs You Must Let Your Kid Experience', and I got this from Michael Anderson and Tim Johanson. This is, Anderson is a psychologist, Johanson is a pediatrician in Minneapolis. Both of them, they wrote a book in 2013 called Gist: The Essence of Raising Life Ready Kids and they had this great list, mistakes and curveballs you must let your kid experience and I'm just going to read them. Not being invited to a birthday party, experiencing the

death of a pet, breaking a valuable vase, working hard on a paper and still getting a poor grade, having a car breakdown away from home, seeing the tree he planted die, being told that a class or camp is full, getting detention, missing a show because she was helping grandma, having a fender bender, being blamed for something he didn't do, having an event cancelled because someone else misbehaved, being fired from a job, not making the varsity team, coming in last at something, being hit by another kid, rejecting something he had been taught, deeply regretting saying something she can't take back, not being invited when friends are going out, being picked last for neighborhood kickball.

Now, Debbie, I don't know about you, but I think my blood pressure just went up a little bit just reading this list. Okay. Right. None of us wants our kids to experience any of those things and in some ways I'm thinking, wow, this feels so out of date. This was written five years ago and it already feels like some of those things are absolutely intolerable for us as parents like getting hit by another kid. But let's break that down. Getting hit when you're three in a sandbox at preschool is different than getting punched when you're in middle school or high school.

The three year old isn't intentionally setting out to harm you. The three year old isn't developmentally capable of really formulating that, you know, I'm going to harm you kind of mindset. Um, they shouldn't hit. But is it bullying? No. A three year old isn't capable of bullying. A 13 year old is capable of bullying. We tend to call everything that results in the slightest harm, bullying. And we've got to get better at saying, you know, what's not very pleasant but still normal within childhood versus actual pathological bullying. You know, we have to be willing to tolerate that for our children to grow and learn to socialize with other kids and learn to advocate for themselves in the classroom and with adults to be able to talk to a coach, to be able to get a job one day, to be able to manage their own deadlines and keep track of their own belongings.

They have to do the work of trying out those things and failing a little bit and talking with us about what might you do differently next time. Trying again and so on. They have to have so many attempts at trying something, anything, before they're going to be good at it. So we, we actually have to want this for them. What Michael Anderson and Tim Johanson say is, the things on this list might make you wince, which turns out to be kind of the point. Not only must you let your kids experience these things, you're supposed to nod your head and say silently to yourself, perfect. That's perfect. It's just what he or she needed to happen at least once in his childhood.

Debbie: So amazing. I mean, yeah.

Julie: Yeah, but so let me speak now directly to those of us who have kids with some kind of learning differences. Uh, my own son, my eldest has ADHD, inattentive type and uh, I have his permission to talk about this, I wrote about it in the book. So it can make it really hard for him to focus and get things done. And as a parent with a kid who struggles with that, you know, I can do everything for him. I can make sure he gets everything done by being there to basically be the stimulus that reminds him constantly or that puts his hand on that pencil and gets him to

start writing something. But we can cross a line by effectively becoming our child's executive function. If our kid's executive function is delayed in developing, we can cross a line by becoming their executive function. And that is a step too far because then they'll be forever reliant upon us and we've prevented their own little executive function capacities from developing, developing, developing, and finally being where they need to be.

We're in such a hurry for our child to have it all figured out and to be able to kind of keep up and keep track and all of that, we end up doing it for them. Depriving them of the opportunity to ever be able to do it for themselves. So it's all fine lines, but it's, you know, we, we have to accept our kid's got ADD, we have to take an interest in, or whatever it is, take an interest in, okay, well what do the experts tell me my kid should be able to do at this age and stage given the disability? And how can I support my kid in being as capable as she or he can be given the disability? And frankly what I hear from parents of kids who are contending with a disability is that they learn earlier than other parents, hey, whatever plans I'd had when I got pregnant, you know, my partner got pregnant. Whatever plans I had, this kid is going to be a champion swimmer. This kid's going to be a brain surgeon. This kid is gonna be an investment banker. This kid's going to be president of whatever.

You know when the, when you discover your kid has a significant disability, you get humble and you realize, oh hey, all those plans I had, well, they're not so relevant right now. What's relevant is I've got a kid who's got some things they are contending with, some real struggles perhaps, and I got to take an interest in this kid and what she or he can do as opposed to what I wish they might've been, in a perfect world. Parents of kids with disabilities learn that lesson, which is one of humility and acceptance far sooner than parents of kids developing typically who might hold out that dream for 18, 20, 25, 30 years.

Oh, I want my kid to be a this and if only I push them hard enough or if only I withhold my love long enough, my kid will turn into that because they'll want to please me. Right? Those of us whose kids contend with these challenges learn or we should learn, earlier. Hey, wait a minute. We've been thrown a curve ball. You know, and how can I support my kid in being the best they are capable of being instead of dragging them down some path, you know, with my own effort largely a part of it, toward the future I had hoped the kid would have. Does that make sense?

Debbie: Yeah. It makes so much sense. It's something that I believe so deeply is one of the many gifts of these kids is they do disrupt our plans so much that we can, as you said, at a much younger or earlier age in their journey, redefine what success looks like and that is so much more freeing. It can still be scary. I don't, you know, I still get caught up on the timelines and where should my, you know, my son's 14, where should he be in relation to his peers and that kind of thing. But it does force you to kind of open up your mind a little bit about, about what this might look like and letting go of what you thought it was going to look like. Do you want to, first of all the executive functioning thing too, yes um that is such a great reminder that we can, we can cross that line. I don't think I've ever heard it put that way and I think that's something probably a lot of listeners are nodding

their heads and saying, yeah, I'm, I'm walking that tightrope right now. I wanted to talk about success a little bit because I, you know, I just rewatched your Ted talk, which is amazing. It's great. Listeners, I'll leave a link on the show notes, you should definitely check it out. But I really love the way you talk about, you know, how important it is that we reconsider what success looks like. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Julie: Yeah. Um, so here I am in Palo Alto, California, which is a hotbed of over parenting, where the definition of success put forth to kids is incredibly limited and narrow and elitist. And I think kids in our community feel, hey, in order to be successful, I've got to have a company that has an initial public offering by the time 25, I've got to drive a Tesla, I've got to go to one of those big brand name universities. I've got to invent something the world has never seen before. I mean, it sounds absurd, but these are the kinds of things that are happening in the Palo Alto area and the Bay area as are happening in other areas with great technological advancement and so on. And our kids grow up thinking that's what I have to do to matter to my family, to my peers, to the world.

So I hear teenagers talking about how am I going to make my big contribution to the world. You know, when I was a teenager, what I was most concerned about and I did work hard and I did study hard and do well in school, but I was most concerned about my relationship with my boyfriend. My teenagers are worried about making an impact on the planet. You know? So. All right. So in my Ted talk, I, I tried to make this point that success in life isn't about the high grades and the high scores and all of the activities and sports and accolades and awards and leadership and community service, which is the suite of things we expect a teenager today to stuff into their childhood in order to have a college application that will impress a college dean at one of these highly selective places that's requiring a completely stuffed to the hilt, perfect, flawless childhood.

Those things aren't actually the markers for success in life. Turns out there's a long study of humans that was conducted that is still ongoing, that showed that the humans who were professionally successful at the end of their lives, you look back and you can kind of see the causal factors or the correlations. The people who are professionally successful had done chores as a child. And I tell this and I, when I tell it in front of live audiences, some people clap and some people gasp and the people clapping are like, yep, my kid's got chores. And the people gasping are like, oh no, I've been stuffing my kids' childhood with all of this enrichment, you know. It's not Kumon, it's the vacuum. It's like, yeah, you think you're giving your child everything they need by, you know, teaching them Mozart in your womb and making sure they know Algebra by the time they're five, but it turns out that those who were professionally successful, did chores as a child. And if you are exchanging all of that enrichment for the expectation that a child helps out on a daily basis at home, you are undermining your kid's chances for thriving in the workplace.

So the good news there is we can just fix that in a moment. You can just turn that around today. The second thing I talked about in that talk is that happiness in life comes from love. So our kids have to be unconditionally loved at home so they have a chance of actually loving themselves. So they have a chance of getting out

there in the world and giving and receiving love to and from their fellow humans. So the talk basically boils down to chores and love. These are the foundational building block items that their childhood must rest upon so that they can ultimately have that healthy, successful, joyful, meaningful, purposeful adult life we want to have, we want to have for them, we want them to have.

Debbie: You know, I will admit, and I'm again, I'm sure listeners are like, uh, you know, with, with the chores thing, I fall into this trap of not wanting to get push back because, you know, especially when my son was younger, I was just constantly trying to keep peace because when he would get dysregulated it was really just sucked honestly for all of us. It was big emotions, it was meltdowns and it was just easier, right, for, for me and I'm sure for many parents out there to just not go there. And, and now I've got this 14 year old where, as um, as we're recording this, I'm, I'm painting this house that we're trying to move into in New Jersey and my son is with his grandparents now, but was here last weekend and I gave him a screwdriver and I was like, it's time to take down the window treatments. And it really put him out. And I was like, tough toenails, dude. But if I feel like I'm having to start over training him almost, is that what we need to do? Just say, okay, we went down the wrong road and we're going to get on a different path right now.

Julie: I love your phrase, tough toenails. I've never heard that before. Some of your listeners are chuckling along with me. Um, before I answer that question, tell me how the screwdriver effort turned out.

Debbie: Well, it hurt his hand. Like there was a lot of complaining. Um, especially when he thought he was done. I'm like, oh, actually there's a whole other floor that you need to do. So there was a lot of griping, but he did it. Um, I thanked him. He said, you're welcome. And then he kind of went on with his day. So ultimately it turned out just fine. It was just a little grumbling.

Julie: So that's the lesson. Yeah, there's gonna be some grumbling and the later we start asking kids to pitch in, the more grumbling there will be. I didn't realize chores mattered until I started doing the research for my book, and so when I laid it on my kids who were, I don't know, 12 and 10 at the time, I like to say what they lacked in chore skills they made up for with analytical reasoning. If chores are so important why haven't we been doing them so far? Why haven't we been doing them all along mom? And you have to own up to it. We these days like to be our kid's friends, their best friend. We hate to create conflict, so we want to say, oh, I'm sorry honey. I know you don't want to do chores. I don't want to do chores, but there's this expert out there that says chores are really important, so if you wouldn't mind, it would really be nice, right?

All of this BS language that just undermines our authority as parents. Don't do any of that. Instead you say, if you're instilling chores in into the family life late, you say, you know what? I've realized that I should've been doing chores for some time now. Chores are an important thing for kids to do, helps you grow, helps you learn. I've got a set of things that I need your help with and we're going to sit down and each one of you can take something you really like but then you've also got to take some things you like less. We're going to sort out who

does what and if the kid pushes back, you say, you know what? Yeah, absolutely. I understand you don't want to. We should have started this long ago. You wouldn't have been complaining if I'd started you at five and here you are, my bad, but let's get on with it.

You know, you acknowledge your mistake but you don't dwell on it and get all overly apologetic for it because they need to see that we're in charge, that we're setting expectations and boundaries. And they might grumble when you first put that screwdriver in their hand or ask them to get on a ladder and do something, but usually, I asked how did it play out because usually after a human spends some time making something, fixing something, handling something, dealing with something, they feel competent because they've done something. It's the antithesis of being over parented to actually get to put your hands on a screwdriver and unscrew some screws and then complete a task without a parent hovering over you and handling it for you or checking in constantly or micromanaging. Our kids are hungry to prove they can do things and so when we actually make them do things and step back and they do the things, all of a sudden that human, that little human child is feeling some agency like I did that, job well done.

You can see them kind of dusting off their hands and beaming with pride like I handled that. If you give them too small a task and praise, praise, praise the heck out of them their psyche says, be quiet lady. Be quiet, man. I didn't do that. You know, don't make such a big deal. It was like infinitesimally small this thing you asked me to do. Oh my gosh, you opened a can of peanut butter. Congratulations. Like No. Stop. Give them an actual task to do. Walk away. Let them do it and just a brief thank you, thanks I appreciate that you took care of that, move on.

Debbie: I love that.

Julie: They want our approval. They want to be recognized when they do things, but they don't want this wildly blown out of proportion praise for some tiny little thing because they, they know and you know, your praise is overblown and that doesn't help anybody.

Debbie: Would you say that that's a universal desire for humans in general to feel that sense of, you know, I'm just wondering if people are listening and saying well my child is never, you know, doesn't seem to be interested in, in feeling that or doing anything to help. Is it, is it that we have beaten that out of them or, or hovered over them so much?

Julie: Yeah I mean think about our, you know, you can think about our current year, our decade, our century, our era, uh, but go back in time, go back 500 years, go back a thousand years, go back in the present to cultures that are far less, quote unquote advanced than us. There are plenty of communities, plenty of different cultures around the planet where folks are still hunters and gatherers, you know they're still having to find the food they're going to eat and make it and cook it and handle, you know, the upkeep of the home that isn't about Tesla's and technology. It's about kind of the basic, just getting through a day and eating and sleeping and caring for one another. Right. And in those cultures, small children

help out. They help out with food preparation. They help tend fires. They help look after small children, younger children, they pitch in.

It's just what humans have always done. We have always, up until recently is my point, been useful. We have put ourselves to work and we have gotten things done just in order to survive, but now we're in this much more evolved place. Turns out that sitting, sitting down all the time just working on a computer, being served constantly by other humans, but not really putting in the sweat equity ourselves. I'm not an anthropologist, I'm not a psychologist, so the people who know far more about this than I am, but I have read a lot of people's work which suggests this is dulling our sense of self as humans. We feel good when we get out there and sweat some and make something happen. We feel good when we chop wood, we feel good when we stack logs. We feel good when we create a wall out of bricks or a wall out of wood.

When we make things with our hands, we feel we have a purpose and it's not to say that we lack a purpose if our work is white collar and we never have to chop wood or stack bricks, but the point is that there is something intrinsic in our nature as humans that wants to make things, create things, you know, sort of have the satisfaction of achievement and accomplishment and there's nothing like hands on work that gives you that sense of achievement because it's concrete. It's different than, oh, I created a spreadsheet, look at it. It's awesome. I mean, we can feel a sense of achievement from that, but it's not quite the same satisfaction as as that that physical achievement of a job completed. I am way out of my wheelhouse now with this answer, but this is what I have learned and I believe in it so strongly.

I see kids who are just, they're just handled and managed and all they have to do is sit there and be driven from place to place. And we do have high expectations. They have to work hard, you know, to get the right grades that we want them to have and they have to be on that team that we want them to be on. So they get into the right college or whatever. I mean it's not like they're lazy, but there is so much of their lives that is managed, planned, constructed, perfected, fixed, handled for them and that deprives them of feeling the basic agency humans need to have in order to be healthy and whole humans. And a lack of agency, that lack of sense of this is my life and I am responsible and I will do tasks and they will be completed by me. A low sense of agency contributes to higher rates of anxiety and depression. It's all connected.

Debbie: So, okay. I want to talk, I want to be cognizant of the time here, but I want to talk a little bit -

Julie: Sorry, I told you I was long winded.

Debbie: No, I love it though.

Julie: I'm gonna go for my short answers now, we're in the short answer session people.

Debbie: It's all good. Yeah. We'll have the rapid fire. I did want to just ask you about advocacy. You know, you talk a lot about the importance of parents not stepping in and you know, intervening with coaches or teachers and. And that's something I know you experienced in your, your role at Stanford and, and I think as parents of, again, atypical kids, we're, we're often reluctant advocates, but we find ourselves in that role. Do you have any thoughts about how to transfer or bolster our kids advocacy skills, self advocacy?

Julie: Yeah. So the first thought is really this philosophical umbrella over all of this, which is folks like it or not, we're going to be dead one day and we hope we die before our kids do right? None of us wants our kids to predecease us. So if the universe unfolds as we want it to, we die first. And our fervent hope is that when we are gone, our offspring can survive without us. Now that's necessary for all mammals. That's our, that's what we do as mammals. We are with our offspring until they can fend for themselves. Now as humans, hopefully they can fend for themselves by 18, 20, 25, 39, whatever you think adulthood is these days. Right? But we might still live near them or with them, but we know, hey, my kid's got it. My grown son or daughter or whatever can handle earning money, paying bills, being in relationships, taking care of a house, household, et cetera.

All right, so that's the point. We're, we're successful as parents, barring significant special needs, when our offspring can actually stand on their own two feet or make their way on their own, all right? So given that that's our goal, given that's our purpose, then we have to dial back to the present moment of today and say, what am I doing today in order to instill more independence, more skills in my kid rather than fostering a dependence on me. So for every child, with every skill there's an opportunity to learn and grow or to be overly cared for, which is the sort of opposite. When it comes to challenging situations with authority figures, you know there's a teacher that has given a grade or an assignment the kid doesn't understand, a grade that people aren't happy with or an assignment's hard to understand, there's a coach that's not giving kid enough playing time or enough attention or whatever the case may be.

Our instinct is to go and handle that. What we need to be doing is talking with our kid and saying, you know, if you'd like, if you're not happy with that situation, we can talk about what might happen differently and then together we can go and talk to the teacher or coach. And together is kind of that first step away from the parent doing it all by themselves. Go together, let your kid be there listening to you, advocate for them with respect, but also being an advocate and then we have to transfer the I do it with you to I watch you do it. Okay, so I'm actually here now explaining a four step method for teaching any kid any skill which applies to talking to authority figures, but also making a meal or crossing the street. First you do it for them. Second, you do it with them.

The third step is you watch them do it. So now they're doing the bulk of the work, but you're still there in case. In case you need to pipe up and say, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Or wait a minute buddy, you can't cross the street yet, there's a garbage truck and there's a car hiding behind that garbage truck. You're still there with your authority, you know, in case. And then finally, step four, they can

do it independently. So we are on this journey to teach our kids through step one, two, three, and four, how to ultimately do things all by themselves. So if your kid has not, is seven and has not yet spoken up for themselves with a teacher when there's a concern, it's time for you to start letting your kid show up with you as you do it. And then you talk to the kid afterward and say, next time when something like that comes up, you'll be able to do it, uh, to do the talking and I'll be there with you if you like.

But ultimately one day you'll be able to do it for yourself. Okay. This is a four step method I learned from a friend of mine here in Palo Alto, Stacey Ashlund, who's an amazing mom. But Stacey's got two kids, one developing typically and one with significant special needs from birth. And Stacey taught me this four step method, which I, with her permission I put in my book. First you do it for them, whatever it is, then you do it with them, then you watch them do it and then they can do it independently. And for anyone who wants more on this, come to my website, JulieLythcottHaims.com, I'm sure Debbie will put the link in the notes, and right up on the first page of the website I, I talk about this four step method and there's even a little link to an animation created by the magazine The Atlantic, that demonstrates visually in a cartoon format. It's really clever, the four step method for teaching any kid any skill.

Debbie: It's so great because it isn't timeline dependent. I love that. And even crossing the street is something we're still working on. Um, but I love being able to apply that, so. Okay. I have so many more questions and we're going to wrap this up. So maybe someday when your, when your new book is coming out, um, we'll have you back the show, but before we say goodbye, I also, I need to at least mention your book Real American, which I read and loved and if you want to just take a minute to tell us about that and your new project and where people can connect with you.

Julie: Awesome. Thanks. And in the meantime I'll work on being not so long winded. My, my second book is a memoir on race. On being black and biracial in a country where black lives weren't meant to matter. It is a prose poetry memoir, which means I've written it for the ear as much as for the eye. I try to make the language sing on the page and have a rhythm and movement and it's a quick read, but a very vulnerable share. And if you're interested in issues of race in our country, in our moment, please check it out. My third book is a sequel to How To Raise An Adult called How To Be An Adult, an offering to 18 to 35 year olds about being an adult. I think we've made it look terribly unpleasant and too many of them say, I don't want to hashtag adult. And my book is an offering to them, I hope, a compassionate offering that says, yes, you can and you want to because it's amazing to actually be an adult and here are narratives of a bunch of other people that I've interviewed that demonstrate how people are going about adulting.

And if you want to catch up with me, uh, keep in touch with me for the longer term, come to my website, JulieLythcottHaims.com. You'll find links to all my social media on there. I'm on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter and I have an occasional newsletter you can sign up for. So yeah, let's stay in touch. I'm always delighted to hear from readers. That tends to happen particularly on my

Facebook pages. Uh, so How To Raise An Adult has its own page. Check it out and uh look forward to being in touch.

Debbie: Thank you so much. And yeah, listeners, I'll have links to all of Julie's info on the show notes pages. Definitely check out her books and her and her big Ted talk and, and her small Ted talks as well, her TedX's. Julie, thank you so much for taking the time for this conversation. I'm really grateful to bring your voice to the show.

Julie: Well, Debbie, thank you. I think the hardest part about parenting is recognizing that this little being is entitled to live their own life. They're not our pet, they're not our project. They're not our trophy for a job well done. They are a separate human being from us. And when we can actually act with humility and accept the fact that God or the universe or whatever you believe has handed us this child, that this is a task that we must assume with great care and humility. We've got to help them become themselves rather than act as if somehow their life is simply a reflection of our efforts.

Debbie: So beautifully said. See listeners now you know why I wanted her on the show so badly. Thank you Julie.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [Julie Lythcott Haims' website](#)
- [How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success](#) by Julie Lythcott-Haims
- [Real American: A Memoir](#) by Julie Lythcott-Haims
- [Julie's TED Talk: How to Raise Successful Kids](#)
- [Julie's TEDxGunnHighSchool Talk: Throw Out the Checklisted Childhood](#)
- [Julie's TEDxStanford Talk: Be Your Authentic Self](#)
- [How to Be An Adult](#) by Julie Lythcott-Haims (Julie's forthcoming book)
- [The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed](#) by Jessica Lahey
- [Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers](#) by Robert Sapolsky
- [Gist: The Essence of Raising Life-Ready Kids](#) by Michael Anderson and Timothy Johanson