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## Parenting for "Authentic Success"

*Challenge Success co-founder to discuss how Lamorinda parents can encourage teens in today's society*

*By Clare Varellas*



Madeline Levine Photo provided

In a world of unbelievably low college acceptance rates, increased competition in high school sports, and the pivotal importance of the resume, the golden college acceptance letter, championship trophy, or prestigious award can seem like the ultimate measure of success to the contemporary teenager.

But world-renowned psychologist and co-founder of Stanford University's Challenge Success program Madeline Levine says these "metric" measures of success are not as important as many high school students, parents, teachers, and administrators seem to think they are, and she is working to spread the news.

"None of us are the best at everything, and what I see is kids have developed an incredibly unrealistic point of view aided and abetted by the parents, by the school, but mostly by the general culture, that if you're not the best, you're a failure," said Levine.

Levine, a well-known clinician, consultant, educator, and author, will be giving a presentation for Lamorinda parents Jan. 23 at the Acalanes High School Performing Arts Center about how to encourage children to not only do well metrically, but, more importantly, to develop good character traits and live happy lives.

"I'm going to be talking about what it means to give a kid a leg up, because every parent wants to give their kid a leg up," said Levine. "Some of the ways we do that are in the best interests of our children, and some of the ways in which communities like Palo Alto or Lafayette or Marin are doing that are really working against healthy development."

Levine, who centers a lot of her work around teenagers in affluent communities, says that the pressure high school students living in wealthy, successful communities feel from adults leads to much higher rates of depression, anxiety issues, and substance abuse.

"The parents in these communities are well-educated and tend to be affluent and have hard-driving careers

themselves, and place a particularly high value on the metrics of success," said Levine. "By that I mean how much money do you earn, which college did you go to, who are you working for. While those are one set of measures of success, they have very little to do with either adjustment or happiness, and at the end of the day we want our kids to be successful, but we also want them to be well-adjusted and happy."

In the past, Levine has written several books: The New York Times bestselling work "The Price of Privilege" and her latest book "Teach Your Children Well." She is also widely sought after as a speaker and a source for television and radio interviews. As one of the heads of Challenge Success, Levine helps oversee the program, which works to provide resources for managing student stress levels and mental outlooks at approximately 120 schools across the country.

"We believe that being entirely focused on grades and test scores leaves little time and energy for other [qualities] to develop," said Levine. "We provide the research-based tools to help raise kids with greater well-being. We don't measure success at the end of the semester, but over decades."

Originally a junior high and high school teacher, Levine says she enjoys working with teenagers, and hates to see their mental conditions deteriorate because of stress levels when there are so many other bad things happening in the world. Therefore, at presentations like the upcoming one at Acalanes, she strives to allow parents to see that there are multiple levels of success, and grades and titles are just one of them.

"Do we all want to see our kids work hard and be successful? Of course," said Levine. "Do we want that at the cost of their mental health? Of course not."

Madeline Levine's presentation is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 23 at the Acalanes High School Performing Arts Center. Tickets (\$10 for one; \$15 for two) are available at <http://madelinelevine.eventbrite.com>.

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