



BOOKS WE THINK EVERY PARENT SHOULD READ

A recommended reading list for parents from the **Generation Real** Project



8 books to help your family reclaim real-world childhood

Recommended by Rob Price, Erica Komisar & Jennifer B. Wallace

✓ **How to use this list:**

Start with the book that speaks to where your family is right now. Each book stands alone. You don't need to read them in any order.

You don't have to read them all.

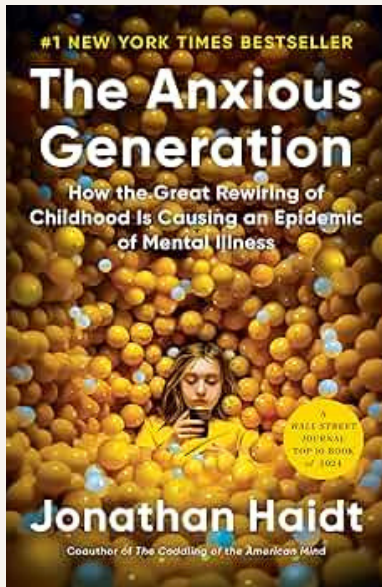
- Read a chapter.
- Start a conversation.
- Try one small change.



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When you're worried about screens



The Anxious Generation

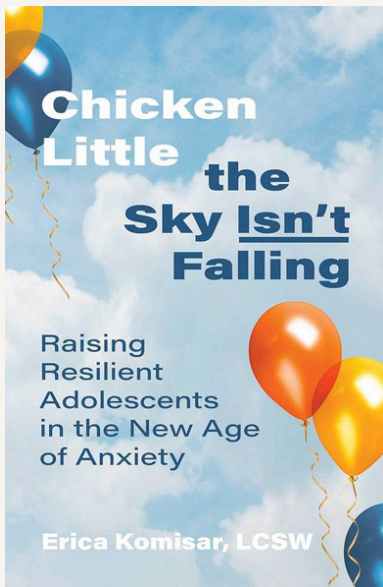
Jonathan Haidt



Haidt argues that the smartphone-driven childhood that took hold around 2012 has rewired adolescent development by replacing the boredom, risk, and face-to-face socializing essential to growing up with a curated, algorithmically optimized digital experience. Drawing on extensive data, he documents the resulting collapse in teen mental health and makes a specific, actionable case for what parents, schools, and policymakers can do to reverse it.

Recommended by Rob Price

This is the book that gave me the clearest picture of what we're actually fighting. Haidt doesn't just document the problem; he names the moment it started, shows you the data, and tells you what to do about it. I've recommended it to more people than any other book on this list.



Chicken Little the Sky Isn't Falling

Erica Komisar, LCSW



One of our own expert advisors, Erica Komisar, makes the case that the anxiety epidemic gripping today's adolescents is real but not inevitable. Drawing on decades of clinical experience, she argues that resilience is built through parental presence, emotional honesty, and the freedom to experience manageable struggle. She offers parents a practical framework for raising teenagers who can handle an uncertain world without being undone by it.

Recommended by Rob Price

I was lucky enough to read Erica's work before we started building the Generation Real Project, and it shaped how I think about resilience. She's not telling parents to toughen up their kids. She's telling them to show up differently. That distinction matters enormously, and she makes it better than anyone I've read.



Great first read



Easy read



Good for family discussions



Great for parents with teens



Great audiobook



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When you want to build confidence ☆



Free-Range Kids

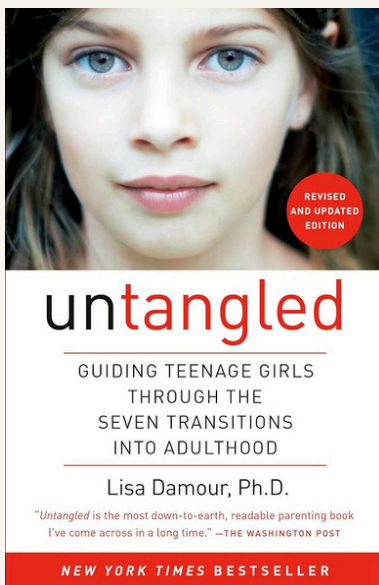
Lenore Skenazy



After being dubbed "America's Worst Mom" for letting her 9 year old ride the New York City subway alone, journalist Lenore Skenazy turned the national outrage into a movement. This book makes a research-backed, often funny case that modern overprotective parenting driven by fear, media hysteria, and a culture of constant supervision is robbing children of the independence they need to develop confidence, resilience, and self-reliance. She shows parents how to step back so kids can step up.

Recommended by Erica Komisar

Skenazy understands something we have forgotten as a culture: children develop confidence and resilience through independence, not in spite of it. When we hover over our children and remove every risk from their lives, we communicate that the world is dangerous and that they are not capable, and their development is stunted as a result. This book reminds parents that giving children a healthy sense of separateness is not neglect. It is one of the greatest gifts we can give them.



Untangled

Lisa Damour, Ph.D.



Dr. Lisa Damour reframes the seven transitions of adolescence as developmental tasks, turning door-slamming and sudden secrecy into evidence of an adolescent growing exactly as they should. Her book helps parents understand the ordinary chaos of raising a teenager without judgment. Damour shows that an adolescent moving away from the center of family life is not a rejection of the relationship but an important rehearsal for independence.

Recommended by Jennifer B. Wallace

Damour helps parents distinguish healthy adolescent development from genuine cause for concern. In replacing fear with understanding, Damour enables parents to remain close, connected, calm, and useful as their adolescent does the necessary, if sometimes messy, work of growing up.



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Easy read



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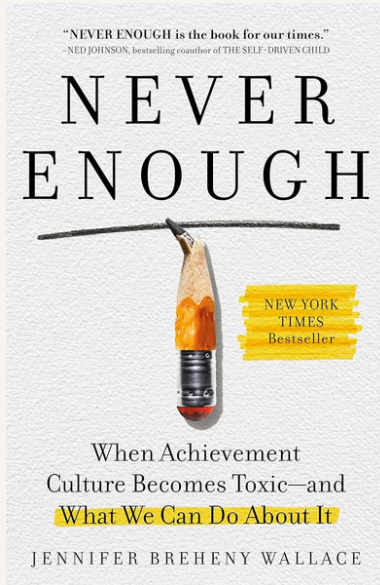
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When achievement feels overwhelming



Never Enough

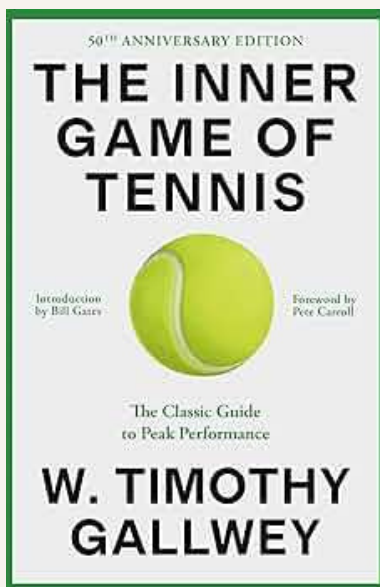
Jennifer Breheny Wallace



Award-winning journalist Jennifer Breheny Wallace spent years researching the hidden cost of achievement culture on American families. Her conclusion: children who feel valued only for what they accomplish rather than for who they are are more anxious, more fragile, and less genuinely motivated. Built around the concept of "mattering," this book reframes what parents should actually be optimizing for and offers a clear path toward raising kids who are driven from within rather than by fear.

Recommended by Rob Price

I've sat across from many parents who are doing everything right by conventional measures, yet still feel that something is off. Jennifer's book names what's off. The concept of mattering, in that kids need to feel valued for who they are, not just what they achieve, sounds simple until you realize how rarely we actually practice it. This book changed how I think about what we're building.



The Inner Game of Tennis

W. Timothy Gallwey



In this landmark book, Gallwey argues that peak performance in any domain occurs when we learn to silence our own inner critic and trust in our natural capacity to learn and adapt. For over fifty years, this sports psychology classic has influenced athletes, musicians, business leaders, and coaches worldwide, helping them unlock their potential.

Recommended by Jennifer B. Wallace

Gallwey understood that one of our greatest obstacles to peak performance is the inner struggle with perfectionism and self-judgment. This is the definitive guide for parents who want to help their children pursue excellence in healthy ways—and without tying their worth to achievement.



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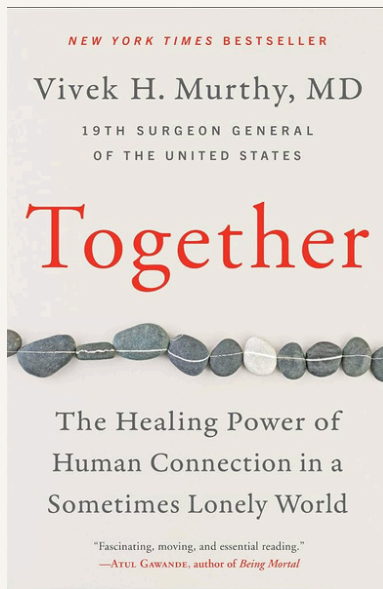
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When your family needs more connection



Together

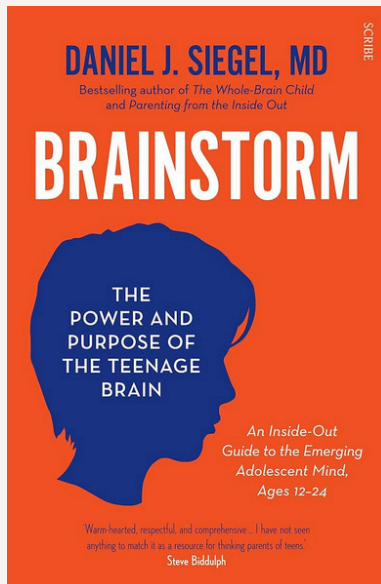
Vivek H. Murthy, MD



America's former Surgeon General makes the case that loneliness is not a personal failing but a public health crisis that is as damaging to health as smoking, and far more widespread than we acknowledge. Drawing on science, personal experience, and stories from across the country, Murthy argues that human connection is not optional enrichment but biological necessity, and that rebuilding it in families, schools, and communities is the most urgent health challenge of our time.

Recommended by Rob Price

I kept hearing about kids who, before coming to our programs, were lonely. A theme that seemed odd given the ease of our connectedness online. Murthy saw the same thing at a national scale. The loneliness our kids are experiencing isn't just a side effect of the digital age, but the way our programs and lifestyles have evolved. Together explains why community, real, in-person, messy human community, is the only thing that fixes it.



Brainstorm

Daniel J. Siegel, MD



UCLA psychiatrist and neuroscientist Daniel Siegel reframes adolescence not as a problem to be managed but as a period of extraordinary possibility. Drawing on the latest brain research, he argues that the qualities parents find most maddening in teenagers—risk-taking, emotional intensity, social obsession, and the drive for novelty—are not bugs in the system but essential features of healthy development. Understanding what is actually happening in the adolescent brain, Siegel argues, allows parents to work with this stage of life rather than against it.

Recommended by Erica Komisar

So much of what parents fear in their adolescents, the risk-taking, the emotional intensity, the pulling away, is not pathology but normal development rooted in the changing adolescent brain. Siegel gives parents the neuroscience to understand this stage rather than dread it. When parents can see their teenager's behavior as developmentally purposeful, they can stay connected and present through the turbulence instead of reacting to it with fear.



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