

## Segment Q&A

- I'd like to highlight a handful of social skills, and psychological capacities, that we found to be helpful as young people make the transition into adulthood. First, learning how to adapt and be resilient in the face of changing circumstances, disappointments, and failures. Developing clear, and a more differentiated, set of goals. This rests on learning individual strengths, limits, and interests. It rests on identifying available options, and ways to leverage them. And to be able to set goals that are a good and realistic match to your abilities. Match is especially important, and it's shaped by input from parents, teachers, mentors, and adult peers. Sense of purpose, having a spark, something that fuels passion and meaning, and gives a shape to your plans. And this, too, rests on having at least some opportunities for self-exploration. It's not given, but it's found. The capacity for intimacy, and close social relationships. A central task of the early adult years is learning how to build relationships that are characterized by trust, self-disclosure, closeness, commitment, and concern. Achieving intimate relationships is really a gateway to adult development. This is not only about romantic relationships, but it's about relationships of all kinds. Learning how to form, and especially how to maintain, all kinds of relationships. Learning about intergroup relationships, this is an especially important feature in our diverse world. Young people have to understand, and be able to relate to people like them, but also to recognize that they are just one of many subgroups in the larger society. They must be open to, and have relationships, with member of other groups, in order to expand their feelings and their attitudes, in order to gain cultural knowledge, and in order to build empathy for other kinds of people. Reflective capacity, this means having some self-awareness, and the ability to take the perspectives of other people, and to take these perspectives into account before we act. One must learn to analyze one's motives and experiences, and extract lessons, to shape future goals, decisions, and behaviors. Self-regulation, the ability to control one's impulses, and one's emotions, in order to bring them into compliance with the expectations in social settings. We know that this is a highly predictive trait of many positive outcomes in childhood and in adolescence, but it's probably no less important in adult life. I'd like to offer some advice to those who work with adolescents on how best to prepare them for the transition to early adulthood. To start off, I'd like to say that any society that requires higher education for access to good jobs with living wages and benefits, and one that's characterized by gross inequalities is going to be a society where many young people fail. And a society where many young people fail can't be a truly great society. No matter where one sits on a political spectrum, we must commit to supporting and investing in young people. This we know. How things unfold in the 20s is terribly consequential for the rest of adult life. And what happens in this decade both perpetuates and crystallizes tremendous inequalities among young people. The 20s are a crucial period for intervention. Poor outcomes have long-term, cumulative effects. Professionals who work with young people therefore have a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of individual youth, and in doing so, we are also making a difference in our society because we're affecting the long-term decisions that they make. The power we have in making a difference is especially true for youth whose family relationships are fragile or absent, or youth who have been attached to the foster care, special education, or juvenile justice systems. These individuals are abruptly cut off from support at 18 or 21, precisely at a time when their more privileged peers are getting significant infusions of support, both financial and emotional, from their families. Any mentoring that we can offer these youth can make an extraordinary difference in their lives. We can also make a significant difference in nurturing the lives of boys and men in modeling responsibility, goal setting, and healthy relationship skills. Those will go a long way in improving the lives of men, and perhaps more importantly,

in improving the lives of the people connected to them. Many of the world's problems are the result of problems of men. We must also recognize that life has changed since we were young. Providing advice based on what we knew isn't always good advice for today. We need to better appreciate the complexity of the world that young people are trying to navigate, resist the impulse to say, when I was young. Instead, ask young people how they feel, what they're struggling with, what brings meaning to their lives. Stop and truly listen to what they have to say, rather than tell them what they have to do. This is true for professionals and parents alike. For parents, I'd offer the following advice. First, the support of parents, financially and emotionally, is probably the single most important predictor of success for young adults in the United States, especially given the lack of government support once children reach the legal ages of adulthood. Involved parents provide many advantages that are necessary in today's world. New generations of parents have wanted deeper emotional connections to their children, and they got it. In my view, that's a good thing, but that doesn't mean it's easy. There are no guidebooks for how these relationships are supposed to go once children are grown, or when parents are middle-aged or old. But a warning to men, the close relationships that we see today between young adults and their parents are really much more about young adults and their mothers, not their fathers, despite how far we'd like to think that the American father has come. How involved should parents be? Well, what we might call Goldilocks parenting is probably best, that is hitting just the right amount of parental involvement. If you're over-involved, and you know who you are, step back, but if you're under-involved, step up. What we might call the hard knocks school of parenting of a bygone era, 18 you're out, no support thereafter, is not at all an effective strategy today. Building the self-esteem of children will carry them far, but children also need to know disappointment and failure, and not all disappointment and failure is created equally. Some hardships are more consequential than others. Parents must choose when to make the save, and when to let a child fall. If you want to see just how much involved parenting matters in the United States, track the lives of young people who don't have it. Many serious problems in our society stem from parents who are absent, neglectful, or abusive. The media and public obsession with helicopter parents is focused on the wrong end of the spectrum. Involved parents, even hyper-involved ones, aren't creating these kinds of significant social problems. Involved parenting is especially important for boys and men. Many of the crises of child development concern boys, and many of the crises of adulthood concern men. Both boys and men benefit from more involved fathering. There's significant problem with the debt of young adults as well, not only college-related debt, and that's partly because they haven't learned anything about finances in school, or at home. Give your child experiences that foster their financial capability and literacy, and learning how to spend well and save well. Don't get hung up on your kids living at home. In the US the ideal of an early departure from the parental home has always been more of a myth than a reality. Most living with parents happens in the early 20s, by the second half of the 20s, it drops dramatically as the transition to adulthood has gotten sorted out. As noted earlier, for many young adults living at home can actually be a smart way to get ahead. And moreover, it keeps many young people out of poverty and safe.