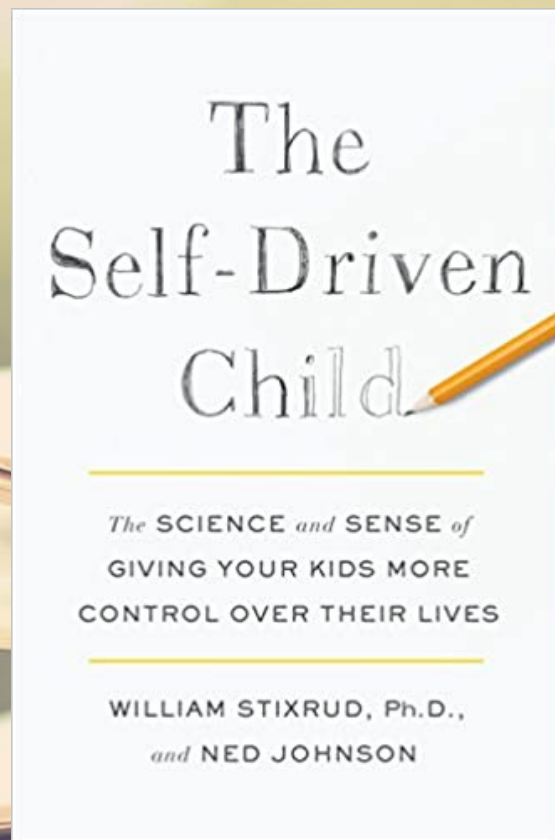




IN THE SELF-DRIVEN CHILD, A CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST AND TEST-PREP GURU COMBINE CUTTING-EDGE BRAIN SCIENCE WITH INSIGHTS FROM THEIR WORK WITH FAMILIES TO MAKE A RADICAL CASE FOR GIVING KIDS MORE AGENCY TO UNLEASH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.



PARENT ACADEMY

BOOK CLUB

Book Distribution Week of 12/19

Book Club Meetings: Tuesday 2/28 & 3/14 at 6:00pm in the District Office Board Room

Register for our Parent Academy Book Club: bit.ly/cmbookclub.

Our final Book Club meeting will include a live presentation from the authors and pizza from the PTO!



In the Self-driven child, A clinical neuropsychologist and test-prep guru combine cutting-edge brain science with insights from their work with families to make a radical case for giving kids more agency to unleash their full potential.

READING REFLECTIONS

What did you enjoy and/or learn from this book?

What did you dislike and/or disagree with from this book?

What questions do you still have?

**aspect of this book to
implement? Why?**

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

**Were there any quotes (or
passages that stood out to
you? Why?**

**How did the book make you
feel? What emotions did it
evoke?**

**What ideas do you have for
enhancing opportunities for the
self-driven student in our
schools?**

What is the most difficult

to 10, with 10 being the highest. Explain your rating.

feel the authors did this?

Has this book changed your practice as a

student, teacher, parent, etc? How?

What do you think about the authors' research? Was it easy to see where the authors derived their recommendations?

What burning question would you like us to ask the authors when they are here?

Conveying research in a way that 's understandable and enjoyable to read for non-experts can be a challenge. How well do you

Rate this book on a scale of 1

A BOOK CLUB STUDY GUIDETO THE SELF-DRIVEN CHILD

False Assumptions We Make as Parents

1. There is a narrow path to success and God forbid our child should fall off it. The stakes are thus too high to let them make decisions for themselves.
2. It is critical to do well in school if you want to do well in life. There will be some winners and many losers.
3. Pushing more will lead our children to becoming more accomplished and more successful adults. 4. The world is more dangerous than ever before.

The Self-Driven Child

Our role:

Teach them to think and act independently, so that they will have the judgment to succeed in school and, most important, in life.

Rather than pushing them to do things they resist, we should seek to help them find things they love and develop their inner motivation.

Move away from a model that depends on parental pressure to one that nurtures a child's own drive.

Perceived control leads to:

better physical health
less use of drugs and alcohol
greater longevity
lower stress
positive emotional well-being

- greater internal motivation
- ability to control one's behavior
- improved academic performance
- enhanced career success

Chapter 1: How do you view stress in your child's life?

It isn't possible, nor would we want, to protect kids from stress
Developing a high stress tolerance leads to resilience

Three kinds of stress:

1. Positive stress motivates children (and adults) to grow, take risks, and perform at a high level.
2. Tolerable stress, which occurs for relatively brief periods, can also build resilience. Critically, there must be supportive adults present, and kids must have time to cope and recover.
3. Toxic stress is defined as frequent or prolonged activation of the stress system in the absence of support.

Kids need:

- a supportive adult around
- time to recover from the stressful event
- to have a sense of control over their lives

It's All in Your Head

- The Pilot (The Executive Control System)
- The Lion Fighter (The Stress Response System)
- The Cheerleader (The Motivational System)
- The Buddha (The Resting State)

Because of technology's ubiquity, young people have too few opportunities to activate their default mode network and, as a result, too few opportunities for self-reflection.

An overactive stress system makes a child far more likely to develop anxiety disorders, depression, and a host of other mental and physical problems.

A brain that is stretching itself and utterly engaged looks very different from a brain that is high performing but under the influence of toxic stress.

Children between the ages of twelve and eighteen show more brain development than at any time in life other than the first few years.

We need to help our kids increase their stress tolerance—their ability to perform well in

stressful situations—and to “throw off” stress rather than accumulate it.

Chapter 2: Parent as a Consultant, not a boss or manager

Whose problem is it?

Three main reasons why fighting about homework (or lots of other things) doesn't make sense.

1. You may find yourself enforcing rules and attitudes you don't really believe in. 2. When parents work harder than their kids to solve their problems, their kids get weaker, not stronger. 3. You can't force a kid to do something he's dead set against.

Parents tend to think there are two ways to be:

Autocratic (places a premium on obedience)

Permissive (emphasize the importance of their child's happiness and attempt to fulfill their child's desires to make them happy)

A Better Way

Authoritative Parenting

This entails being supportive but not controlling. Authoritative parents want their kids to cooperate because they like and respect them, and want kids to learn from their own experiences. Authoritative parents don't give their children free rein. They enforce limits, and say when they don't feel right about something, but they are not controlling.

There's one thing only parents can do: love their kids unconditionally and provide them with a safe base at home. For children who are stressed at school or in other parts of their lives, home should be a safe haven, a place to rest and recover. When kids feel that they are deeply loved even when they're struggling, it builds resilience.

Chapter 3: Kids as Decision-Makers

Adopt the following precepts when it comes to your kids:

"You are the expert on you."

"You have a brain in your head."

"You want your life to work."

"It's your call"

What "It's your call" doesn't mean:

does not conflict with limit setting - isn't about giving kids unlimited choices

isn't about manipulation, or sneakily getting kids to think a decision is theirs when it's really yours. **So**

what does "It's your call" mean?

You are not deciding things that they are capable of deciding for themselves.

Set boundaries within which you feel comfortable letting them maneuver.

Cede ground outside those boundaries.

Help your kids learn what information they need to make an informed decision.

If there's conflict surrounding an issue, use collaborative problem solving. Together, you identify possible solutions you're both comfortable with and figure out how to get there. If your child settles on a choice that isn't crazy, go with it, even if it is not what you would like him to do, ask if most reasonable people (like an

aunt or uncle, a teacher or coach) would consider the choice to be a terrible one.

If a child is seriously depressed or suicidal, all bets are off.

6 Reasons These Guys Are Right

1. Science is on our side.
2. Kids shouldn't feel like an empty extension of their parents.
3. Giving kids a sense of control is the only way to teach them competency—in decision making, and in whatever skill they're learning.
4. You don't always know what's best.
5. Kids are capable. Really.
6. Good decision making requires emotional intelligence. Kids need to learn what matters to them.

Chapter 4: The Non-Anxious Presence

Help Your Kids Find a Sense of Control by Finding Your Own

Kids come into the world with different susceptibilities to anxiety.

Some aren't bothered by it—scientists call kids like this “dandelion children.” Like dandelions, they're fairly impervious to their environment.

Others are “orchid children,” with a very high biological sensitivity to context. They are particularly sensitive to the parenting they receive. They flourish under parenting that is calm and nurturing, and struggle with parenting that is high strung.

Ways your kids' anxiety genes can be turned on

1. Secondhand stress
2. Behavior

To be—and not just fake being—a non-anxious presence, you have to get a handle on your stress.

1. Make enjoying your kids your top parenting priority
2. Don't fear the future
3. Commit to your own stress management
4. Make peace with your worst fears
5. Adopt an attitude of non-judgmental acceptance

ACT

I Accept the idea that my kid is underachieving/doesn't have friends/can't read, and I see this as part of his path.

I Choose to create a vision of myself as a calm, compassionate parent who has a supportive relationship with my son.

I will Take action by offering to help, focusing on his strengths, setting limits where necessary, and modeling acceptance and self-care. I will also seek help from others if my child needs assistance with reading, math, or any area where a third party can help him more than I am able to.

Chapter 5: Inner Drive: How to Help Your Kids Develop Motivation

The right mindset

“Fixed mindset,” see their mistakes as coming from a lack of ability, something they’re powerless to change. “Growth mindset,” focus on their own effort as a means to become more successful. Offers students a sense of control, as they believe that it’s in their power to get better and better at something Promote a growth mindset to

- improve your child’s sense of control

- foster their emotional development

- support their academic achievement.

Praise effort and the various strategies kids use to solve problems, rather than their built-in ability.

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness

Best thing you can do: give them as much control over their choices as possible, including asking them what it is they want to be competent at and in charge of.

A sense of competence

Competence is more about our feeling that we can handle a situation than it is about being really great at something. It’s about feeling consciously competent,

A sense of relatedness: refers to the feeling of being connected to others, of being cared about. **The**

optimal level of dopamine, our “get up and go” aid

Encourage them to work hard at what they love.

Flow

When kids work hard at something they love and find challenging, they enter a state of what’s come to be called “flow,” where time passes quickly and their attention is completely engaged, but they’re not stressed.

The best way to motivate him for the things you think he should focus on is to let him spend time on the things he wants to focus on.

Common Motivation Problems and How to Approach Them

The Saboteur: “My kid just can’t seem to motivate himself to do what he knows he needs to do. It’s like he’s deliberately sabotaging himself.”

Help your kid to see how things that don’t seem so important now may be important to their long term goals

Help him find his own reasons for working hard at the things that are important to him Write

goals down

Help them cultivate discipline in the area they are interested in

Frequent exercise

Social support

Stimulation

A healthy, high-protein diet and enough rest.

Circuit training

Incentives (sometimes these are good if we help kid understand it is to help them turn their brain on to develop intrinsic motivation)

The Enthusiast: “My kid is motivated—just not about school.”

“Working hard to get better and better at something that’s important to you is one of the best things you can do for your brain.”

Apply this sense of total immersion to something school related, and that he believes they are fully capable of doing so.

If he is not at all motivated for school, you have him evaluated for a learning disability, depression, anxiety, or ADHD. Assuming that is not the case, treat him respectfully, but also give him an accurate model of reality. Help him explore what he needs to do to accomplish his goal.

If supporting kids in the pursuit of their non-academic interests is a good move, then withholding those interests as a punishment is quite obviously a bad one.

If a kid isn’t motivated by school, he’s not motivated by school, and you can’t make him want to do better. Taking away something that does motivate him isn’t going to solve the problem, and may, on the contrary, further dampen his motivation.

The Eeyore: “My kid isn’t motivated to do anything. He doesn’t seem to know what he wants.”

Encourage Eeyores to get involved in service activities and negotiate limits on TV and video games.

Expose them to new things. Express confidence that they will find something they love to do. Emphasize the importance of self-awareness

Help your kids pay attention to what they’re good at

It’s at the intersection of interest, talent, and self-awareness that kids are able to find a sense of direction

Stay calm and focus on maintaining a strong relationship with your child—which frequent cajoling undermines

The Hermione Granger: “My kid is stressed out of her mind. In her view, it’s Yale or nothing.”

Are intensely—even unhealthily—driven to excel or to live up to someone else’s expectations. Motivation is largely fear based, as they experience anxiety about not being able to achieve the high goals they’ve set for themselves—or that others have set for them. They tend to have a very low sense of control and to feel “existentially impotent,”

Stop pressuring them.

If you’re bright and motivated, it doesn’t much matter where you go to school

Encourage her to think about her highest values, what’s truly most important to her, and ask her to consider whether, when she thinks about them, she’s driving herself in the right direction. Then help her set goals that

are values based, because when we set goals we're in control of, our minds are happy.

Chapter 6: Radical Downtime

It means doing nothing purposeful, nothing that requires highly focused thought. This is one of the most powerful things we can do for our brains.

Two alternating brain systems:

1. A task-positive or "looking out" system that's activated when we're engaged in goal-directed tasks,
2. A task-negative or resting system that is for "looking in."

The more efficient the Default Mode Network is at toggling on and off, the better you become at processing life events.

Let your kids do nothing

Learning to tolerate solitude—to be comfortable with yourself—is one of the most important skills one acquires in childhood.

Mindfulness

lower levels of stress, aggression, and social anxiety, improve executive functions such as inhibition and working memory, and contribute to stronger performance in math

Transcendental Meditation

Physiological state that TM produces is known as restful alertness

Allows the nervous system to recover from the negative effects of stress and fatigue and makes the stress response system more efficient, so that it responds sharply and adaptively to stressors but turns off quickly

Kids who meditate for as little as 10-15 minutes twice a day will experience a significant reduction in stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms and express less anger and hostility, sleep better, think more creatively, are healthier, have higher self-esteem, and do better in school and on tests of cognitive and academic skills

Chapter 7: Sleep - The Most Radical Downtime

More than 50 percent of teens fifteen and older sleep less than 7 hours a night, and that 85 percent get less than the 8-10 hours that is generally recommended for adolescents.

Sleep deprivation is a form of chronic stress

Emotional control is dramatically impaired by sleep deprivation

When sleep deprived, you effectively form twice as many memories of negative events in your life as of positive events

Can trigger anxiety and mood disorders in children who are already vulnerable to getting them Physical implications: obesity, cancer, suppressed immune function

Critical to learning. Numerous studies have shown a correlation between students' self-reported shortened sleep time and weaker academic performance

How much sleep does my child need?

Preschoolers: 10-13 hours of sleep every day (one hour often comes in the form of a nap) 6-13

year-olds: 9-11 hours

Teenagers 14-17: 8-10 hours

Young adults 18-25: 7-9 hours

Chapter 8: Taking a Sense of Control to School

Get them engaged

Give them a sense of autonomy outside of the classroom

Support autonomy within the teaching environment

Help your kid connect with his teacher

Emphasize to your child that he is responsible for his own education

Help your child strategize as to how he can take control of his own learning, with or without the teacher's help

Offer practical help

- A tutor or educational games

- Apps

- Encourage them to learn some of the material before the teacher addresses it in class

- Encourage your kids to learn on their own

Reduce Academic Stress and Pressure

Remind kids the goal, which is to learn, not just get perfect grades

Help them keep perspective

Don't take the stress on yourself (and if you do, apologize)

Homework: inspire but don't require

Small amounts of homework (one to two hours a night) can contribute to academic achievement for middle and high school kids, but any more than that backfires when it comes to actual learning.

Teach kids when they are ready

Chapter 9: Taming the Beast of Technology

Think of it as a beast that, when tamed, can bring joy and possibility into your child's life. Learning to tame the beast is a

powerful skill—one that will stay with them for years to come. The key is to teach your kids how to stay in charge.

Downsides of Technology

1. Screen time is an independent risk factor for many of the things we don't want for our kids—or for ourselves. Time in front of a screen is positively correlated with increases in:
 1. physical health problems
 2. mental health problems
 3. attention problems
 4. behavior problems
2. Social media takes control away from you and gives it to your peers.

1. Social media turns our attention from our own experience to what other people think of our experience.
 3. Technology sucks time away from activities the brain needs to develop a healthy sense of control.
1. Technology keeps kids from getting the things that we know they need for healthy development: sleep (at least 84 percent of teen cell phone users have slept right beside their phone, and teens send an average of thirty-four texts per night after going to bed), exercise, radical downtime, unstructured child-led play, and the real-life, face-to-face social interaction with friends and parents that is such a powerful antidote to stress.
4. Technology appears to lower empathy. Staring at a screen instead of a person is having a measurable effect on levels of empathy.
5. Technology offers easy access to pornography, leading to a more violent sexual culture.
 1. Recommend letting your child know that you will be checking her texts and social media until you feel comfortable that she's safe. This practice is completely consistent with giving kids a sense of control, by the way. First of all, you're letting them know instead of checking their phone on the sly; and second, you're signaling that there are some areas where they still need training wheels.

The principle of “It’s your call” still applies to technology: be very thoughtful about setting parameters, work with your kids to set them, and let them work within them.

1. You have to model responsible use of technology.
2. They will have to navigate a whole set of social rules and manners that may be foreign to you. Seek to understand them, so you can respectfully help your child shut her technology down when it's time.
 3. Showing an interest and being knowledgeable will help you to effectively negotiate limits and intervene if problems arise. We're much better able to influence our kids when they feel respected and emotionally close to us. Learn about their interests for these reasons, but most important, because doing so matters to them.
4. Get back to nature.
5. One of the best things you can do is express confidence in your child's ability to regulate her own technology use and offer to help. As a consultant, you don't need to pass judgment; you get to inform and make recommendations.
6. Create a contract with your children. If they are a part of the decision making around technology use, they will gain practice thinking critically about the need to self-regulate, and will be much more apt to stick to the agreement.
7. Understand your leverage
 1. Paying the bill for it
 2. Future opportunities
 3. Buy an alarm clock to fend off excuses

Chapter 10: Exercising the Brain & Body

Empowering Mental Strategies:

Exercise #1: Set clear goals

Written

Visual

For older kids: mental contrasting

Step 1: ask your child to set her own goal. It shouldn't be a group goal, and it shouldn't be influenced by you. The goal has to be something that is both feasible and challenging.

Step 2: encourage your child to write down several words about the hoped-for outcome. They should not edit themselves during this process, but rather should feel free to write whatever comes to mind.

Step 3: ask your child to consider inner obstacles to that goal. Note that you are not asking them to think about external barriers. Again, ask them to take pen to paper and to write down those obstacles, considering how they will be affected and what they can do when they surface.

The knowledge that they have anticipated potential setbacks and allowed for contingencies will help them cope more effectively.

Set "personal best" goals

Competing against yourself

Challenging but reasonable goals

Exercise #2: Pay attention to what your brain is telling you

When a child understands what is going on in his mind, he has more control of himself and will tend to behave and perform better.

The amygdala is a threat detector: range of sensitivity among different people

The goal is to create a longer fuse before the amygdala goes off

When they understand what they can do better than most people and what does not come easily, it increases

their sense of confidence that there will be a place for them in the world as adults.

Exercise #3: Practice Plan B thinking

("What are some other things you could do if it doesn't work out as you hope?") is key to maintaining a healthy approach to potential setbacks.

Consider other options and practice getting comfortable and even happy about them Helps
put things in perspective

Exercise #4: Talk to yourself with compassion

If your kid is caught in a circle of “I suck at everything”, try “That’s one way of seeing it. I see things differently. I’d be happy to share my view with you if you want to hear it.”

Remind your child that you’ve been through some tough situations, and say, “When that happens, there’s something I do. Do you want to hear what it is?”

Teach your kids to be as supportive of themselves as they are of their best friend

Exercise #5: Practice reframing problems

“I’m choosing to” is better than “I have to.” It helps to think, “This is annoying but it’s not awful,” or “This is a setback but it’s not a disaster.”

Exercise #6: Move your body and/or play

There is a close overlap between our motor control functions and our mental control, or executive functions, which is one reason why exercise is so beneficial for developing self-regulation.

Chapter 11: Navigating Learning Disabilities, ADHD & Autism Spectrum Disorders

Studies have shown that structure and external motivators are often the most effective ways to help kids with autism or ADHD to focus on a task, finish their work, and behave well in class and at home.

A high level of structure and organizational support should be provided to these kids, so long as they don’t fight it constantly. Kids with learning disabilities and other special needs will learn and perform better when they feel that help is not being done to them.

Parents and teachers have to walk a tightrope between providing enough support to address academic needs, while encouraging kids’ autonomy and trying not to force help down their throats.

1. Fight homework that isn’t necessary
2. Encourage self-understanding
3. Offer but don’t force help.

Kids with ADHD have trouble controlling their attention. True for “predominantly inattentive” presentation of ADHD, who tend to be unfocused and disorganized, and “combined presentation,” who are impulsive and/or hyperactive as well as unfocused and disorganized.

Tend to have low baseline levels of dopamine, and their brains use dopamine less efficiently than most kids

Tend to prefer small, immediate rewards to larger, long-term ones

Those with immature impulse control frequently act in ways they regret and lack confidence that they’ll handle things well

Tend to be very inconsistent in their thinking and behavior, which leads to a sense of unpredictability.

They’re often told to “try harder,” but as some brain-scan studies have shown, the harder they try to focus, the less their brains activate.

Many of the interventions involve trying to protect them from themselves. Helpful in the short term, but delays the kid embracing the idea that he’s responsible for his own life.

40% of parents feel helpless and hopeless by the time their kids are teens, leading to an uninvolved parenting profile, while another 40% tighten the reins and are over-involved in the adolescent's daily life.

Some kids largely outgrow their symptoms in their teenage years, and others learn effective techniques to mitigate the problem.

Parents: voice your understanding that the child is doing the best he can and encourage him to be patient with himself.

message of hope and confidence and one likely to foster a growth mindset.

In addition to medication:

- Exercise

- Meditation

Along with social difficulty and rigidity, kids with autism struggle with stress tolerance and self motivation.

Benefit greatly from strategies that reduce novelty and unpredictability, and that increase their sense of control.

- Visual schedules (pictorial representations of the activities scheduled in a school day, presented in a sequence)

- Minimizing the number of transitions children have to make

- Telling them stories to make the world more understandable

- Teaching them how to understand other people and social relationships

- Making sure they have a safe place to go in school if they're too stressed

Helpful Tools:

- Plan B thinking

- Cognitive behavioral therapy

- Yoga, mindfulness training, and transcendental meditation

Best documented intervention for autism, applied behavior analysis (ABA), uses predetermined goals and a specific set of

behavioral strategies (including rewards and negative consequences) to reach young children on the spectrum, and places minimal emphasis on promoting a sense of autonomy. BUT there are ways to still support autonomy

- "Affinities therapies"—using the deep interests and passions of kids with ASD to help them manage the larger world

- As a parent, the most fundamental message is to focus on being a non-anxious presence.

Chapter 12: SAT, ACT & Other Four-Letter Words

Novelty

- take all the novelty out of test day

Unpredictability

- Do test prep
- Plan B thinking
- Disaster preparedness planning

Threat to the ego

Though they feel like it, test scores are not an accurate reflection of intelligence. Sidestep stress by choosing your attitude about the test. Look to conquer, rather than survive.

Sense of control (or lack thereof)

Novelty, unpredictability, and threat to the ego—can take away your sense of control. Focus on process instead of outcome,

This chapter is recommended for kids to read as it provides helpful advice for tests in general and managing parent dynamics

And parents, chill out!

Chapter 13: Who's Ready for College?

Daily stressors that most college students experience:

- An average bedtime of 2:00 to 3:00 A.M.
- Hours of unstructured time
- A culture where binge drinking is the norm
- Food-related issues
- Stimulant abuse

How to think about college and prep your child

College Is Not an Entitlement: Consider it as a business investment, rather than a right. Has your child shown a track record that implies he is ready to make the most out of it?

Do They Go or Do They Gap? (How to Tell if They're Ready)

- Does your child accept responsibility for his own life?
- Does your kid have adequate self-understanding?
- Does your kid have enough self-regulation to run his life?
- Does your kid have adequate self-motivation for school?
- Can your kid manage day-to-day living independently?
- Does your kid have healthy ways to manage or relieve stress?
- Is your kid burned out?
- Does your child have the academic skills to do college-level work?
- If your student needs academic support, will he ask for it and use it?

Does your child have the social competence to manage a complex social environment? **What to Do if**

Your Kid Isn't Ready? Take a "Gap Year"- travel, work, military service

Spend time focusing on an interest

Gain practical, real-world experience

Can be done through work-study experiences to pay for the year

The following tend to benefit from a gap year:

The worker: high test score and GPA, burned out

The meaning seeker: high test scores and lower GPA, smart but don't apply themselves unless they see a compelling reason to do so

The pragmatist: wants to attend college with a clearer focus

The struggler: high school experience has been clouded by learning differences The

floaters: isn't fully engaged with life and may be slightly immature

Is your kid dead-set on college, but you have misgivings? If you are providing financial support, it's reasonable for you to have a say

Chapter 14: Alternate Routes

Help your child see that there are many routes to success

We don't have to be equally good at everything

Find and focus on your strengths and what you enjoy

NEXT MEETING WITH THE AUTHORS

William Stixrud, PhD & Ned Johnson

03/14/2023 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM