EP\_1264\_JENNIFER\_COHEN\_AUDIO

**Dave:** You've said straight up that modern parenting causes fragile children. Why

**Jennifer:** that? It showed that 27% of kids were taking their parents to job interviews because they weren't comfortable to go on their own.

**Dave:** We are failing our kids. Anxiety is skyrocketing, resilience is vanishing, and kids are crumbling under the smallest challenges and the way we're parenting today.

It's making things worse. Parents do their best to do the right thing. They protect, shield and smooth the path. But what if. Of everything that we believe about raising successful kids is actually setting them up to fail. Jen Cohen isn't just another parenting expert. She spent her career studying high achievers.

**Jennifer:** We are creating a generation of weaker kids with less coping skills and more mental health issues than. Ever before

**Dave:** dissecting what separates the strong from the weak, the successful from the stuck. She's a Wall Street Journal bestselling author, an expert in resilience, and the woman behind an iconic Ted Talk about kids and her conclusion.

We are raising the weakest generation in history. Kids today have fewer coping skills than ever. They avoid discomfort. They collapse under pressure, and it's not their fault it's ours because modern parenting has become a trap. We tell our kids to be safe. We take away the risk. We overprotect, overpraise, and accidentally create fragility when we want to create strength.

Jen is here to expose the truth about what we've done to our kids and how you can fix it before it's too late. And if you don't have kids, listen to the show because these are the people you work with.

**Jennifer:** We are basically snowplowing and taking away all of the challenges and the struggle from our kids, and we're not even allowing them the ability to learn how to fail.

**Dave:** How do you raise resilient and healthy and mentally strong children in a world that's a little bit fragile? The world won't go easy on our kids. What if we taught them to be tough and kind? You are listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Group. Today's episode is recorded live in studio in Los Angeles at Jen Cohen Studio, who might just happen to be our guest today.

And you might say, who the heck is Jen Cohen? But that's because you're probably not reading all of her books or paying attention to the things that she's been doing in the world for a long time. She's had a big voice in health and in entrepreneurship was just on her show and. We're gonna talk about something that goes beyond just health, and we're gonna talk about her viral TED video, that as an entrepreneur, a mom, and an expert in health, how do you raise resilient and healthy and mentally strong children in a world that's a little bit fragile?

So this is the kind of thing that is critically important, because if we wanna live in a world with. The kinda society we want. We have to take care of our kids and we have to take care of our elders and actually make them into our extremely young elders, because that's what the world needs right now.

We need wisdom and we need energy, and we need kids who can change the world and we need to not break 'em. So we're gonna talk about her. Ted talk and the things she's learned, and she's a Wall Street Journal and bestselling author and has done all kinds of stuff in business. We have to go into all that because this is about parenting and this is maybe about the way you were parented, the way that we make society work.

Jen, welcome to your own studio in the show.

**Jennifer:** Thank you. I feel so familiar being here. Thank you for having me.

**Dave:** You've said straight up that modern parenting causes fragile children. Why?

**Jennifer:** Well, I think that we're living in a very, a, a time that's been, it's changed a lot since when we were kids, right? Like it's, right now it's all about gentle parenting and what it's done is made our children and our people softer and softer.

I. Every year where people now are just don't have the coping skills and the coping mechanisms to deal with life, work, personal. And I really like, this was not an area that I was really kind of doing in my career, right? Like parenting skills or parenting, but mental toughness and resilience was really an area that I've focused on for so many years.

It's been like part of my platform and I realized that. The truth of the matter is like, if you wanna be mentally strong and mentally tough, you don't start when you're an adult. You start when you're young and a child, right? Mm-hmm. So why not do something where we're giving our children or the younger generation, like ways and, and like key skills to become.

Proper, proper adults and be mentally strong and mentally tough as they get older.

**Dave:** It seems like experiencing failure and regret. And pain and sometimes guilt, but not shame is critically important when you're a kid. So you can experience that and then recover from it and realize it's not gonna, it's not gonna kill you.

**Jennifer:** No. I mean, the rea the reality is like the more people fail, and this is like, this is not just me talking, this is tons of research and data and over spanning over many, many years. But what, what we need is failure. To become successful, what we need is to learn how to be resilient. And the only real way to learn how to be resilient is to fail over and over again.

Yes, pick yourself back up and do it again. But what's happening now is parents are because of, we're living in a, in a society now where it's really all about. Triggers and helicopter parenting and safe spaces. We are, we are basically like snowplowing and taking away all of the, the challenges and the struggle.

Yeah. From our kids. And we're not even allowing them the ability to learn how to fail.

**Dave:** Safe spaces make me angry. Actually they did. I did my work. I'm not triggered by them. They just make me sad. Because. Okay. Danger coffee. I'm not trying to plug myself here. It's danger because who knows what you might do.

I want dangerous spaces. It doesn't mean that they're unreasonably dangerous. It means that you can take risks and have consequences, but the risks are worth it. And if we teach our kids, they have to have a safe space to take a risk. It's not a risk anymore.

**Jennifer:** No. And first of all, the whole idea of the, let's just call it what it is, right?

We're living in coddle culture. Mm-hmm. We need to switch this whole idea of coddle culture to more of a challenge culture, right? When we were young, what's happened, actually, if I can give you a little bit of background, what's happened when. What we used to do as children, right? We used to play outside.

We used to like take our bikes. We used to, like, we used to be able, we, we'd have to fend for ourselves a little bit. We'd climb trees, we'd fall, we'd break our arm. We would, right? Like this is, this is how we would, we would have more adventure, we'd have more social interaction. That has all been taken, uh, taken away from us as a culture.

And, well, the first thing is it's called technology. You know, smartphones. That was like, that's, that's basically what happened. What we used to do by people who were born after 1993, no, no longer had the same type of culture that we grew up in where we kind of had to kind of fend for ourselves and, and play and socialize and, and create that kind of dynamic date, right?

Like this has all have been, this has been. Completely eliminated by the smartphone, by social media. And that is another reason why there's so much depression, anxiety, suicidal rates, all these things have gone up as technology and smartphones have gone have gone up.

**Dave:** I think a lot of us know phones are bad for kids and social media and all that.

The idea that our culture's that way, it feels like it goes deeper. I'm just thinking, my kids went to a Waldorf school, right. And they used to have trees they could climb. Right. And my kids, when they were really young, they'd climb 30 feet up in a tree. And as a dad, I'm like, I'm just gonna take a deep breath.

They're unlikely to fall 'cause they don't wanna die. Right, right, right. And they never, they never fell. But they were so powerful because they could do that. And then one day. A parent complained and the school came through and they cut off all the limbs that the kids used to climb the trees so they couldn't get on the tree anymore.

And my kids came home angry, like they took 'em away from us and I was proud that that was their attitude. But it was one, I'm just going to say it. I would interpret this as a mentally deranged parent. It was like there's something that might be dangerous. Dude breathing is dangerous. So it isn't just social media.

It feels like a few fearful nis are breaking everything.

**Jennifer:** Well, it's a combination, right? It's like, of course, it's like social media is the first piece of it. Right?

**Dave:** Okay. That's the causal thing.

**Jennifer:** That's one of the things. But what's also happened is this whole. D like change in how people parent, what happens now?

Parents wanna either be the kid's, the, the, the children's friend, that's the first part. Or, and or they also are completely overprotective where what we're doing is we're overprotecting on in real world and we're under protecting on. Online. That's really what's happening, right? They're overprotecting online.

Overprotect, yeah. So parents are like trying to like, create these things online where their kids are not, you know, they're, they're, they're under protecting online. So they're under protecting online. Right? Because that's really where all the, that's where actually the, the, the, the true creeps are, that's where people are like, these pedophiles are people.

In real life are not doing those things as much. Like there's one thing, remember with the, with the big white van and like the kidnapping and the abduction in, in the nineties and now that doesn't happen anymore. You're having, you're having the pedophiles and the creeps on on social media who are kind of, who are kind of getting the kids.

So what's ha But, but why, why I am bringing that up is parents have become very fearful of their kids playing outside. Going on a bike, doing all these things, and it, and it kind of escalated where the helicoptering happens. The overprotection happens where, like I said, the kids now that what's happening in society is that we've been, we've basically become so fragile where kids now are not even able to go to job interviews.

There were thi there were, there was like a crazy study that showed that. That 27% of kids were taking their parents to job interviews 27% because they weren't comfortable to go on their own.

**Dave:** It's so weird that adults or teenagers feel like being comfortable is a normal thing in a job interview.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, exactly.

That's a great point.

**Dave:** I felt like I was gonna fill my pants in my first few job interviews until I learned how to do it and some companies didn't hire me. Right. And I did like it. But isn't that life? Well, it it is life. And it, it seems kind of weird though because it's so easy to blame social media. It seems like you're really blaming parenting.

**Jennifer:** It's like I said, it's not, social media is like one, one aspect, right? Which the social media, a piece of it is more about the kids. Kids in general are just not, they're not playing outside anymore. They're not playing with their friends anymore. They're not socializing anymore. People aren't dating anymore.

That's a whole other piece of the pie that

**Dave:** feels like that's processed food and lack of hormones, isn't it?

**Jennifer:** Well, that it's. A bunch of, it's a bunch of things. The processed food is because people are becoming very sedentary and everything is quick fixes. Everyone wants a quick fix. They're online. Like everything like chat, GPT, everything is how to get something quicker.

There's instant gratification. People's, people's, you know this, right? Like your, your ability to even concentrate. Even on Instagram, look how it used to be, like how, how things went from being a minute to 30 seconds to 15 seconds. Now people can't even concentrate for 10 seconds. I

**Dave:** hate Instagram and, sorry.

Thank you for following me there. Don't you

**Jennifer:** have a huge following on Instagram? I do,

**Dave:** but I use, do you you like

**Jennifer:** TikTok better?

**Dave:** Oh God, I, I used to write. 3000 word pieces that were easy to read that would explain this is the thing that we're paying attention to, here's what to do. And if you have the eight minutes to read that, it'll change your life.

And people don't read those anymore and used to be able to post them with links and the social media companies took off the links. So now we do these weird things where. I'm supposed to say something in 20 seconds and I do my best. And then you get the trolls come in and they're like references. I'm like, well, you could read one of my books with a thousand references, but no one in social media in a video can give you a reference 'cause there's no time and people, that's what people want.

Or maybe that's just what social media is giving people. It's not what I want. I just, I miss the good old days when. Facebook would let friends post medical journals. I had the best feed ever. 'cause I, all my friends are like, here's all the cool stuff happening and it's all gone and it's just, you know, rapid cut videos that are neurologically sickening.

So my kids aren't on social media though, and I, I'm very, I'm just so grateful for my kids. I think they're wonderful. How old are your kids? They're 15 and 17.

**Jennifer:** Okay, so they're older. So. They,

**Dave:** they are. And they didn't have social media 'cause we didn't let 'em have screens and all that 'cause they're in a school that was, you know, play outdoors and they lived on a farm.

But I'm pretty, but that's, it took a lot of work. I had to live on an island and 400 hours a year of extra airplane time to do it. And I'm lucky I could do that. How's anyone supposed to do this in the world?

**Jennifer:** Well, you just said it yourself. You know, this whole thing that we're talking about today is how to raise mentally strong kids or how to become resilient.

Right. Well, you just kind of said it in a, in a nutshell, right? Number one, you took the, you, you took initiative to create certain boundaries for your kids we're saying, you know what, you're not gonna be allowed to be on social media. Or you gave them, you gave them like. Guidelines and boundaries. That's the first thing you move to a farm where they're forced basically to like play outside.

Yeah. You picked a school where that was available. So the first thing to all of this is parents have to become, have to actually be parents and give their children rules to abide by. So

**Dave:** Jen, I'm gonna push back on this a little bit.

**Jennifer:** Go ahead. Push back all you want.

**Dave:** So I built a 32 acre farm. I am CEO of multiple companies, and the mother of my children was able to stay home.

She had a few clients, but she spent the vast majority of her time being a care provider. And yeah, we raised our sheep and our pigs and our cows and our chickens and we ate them. And that's pretty damn idyllic. And I could only do that because I could afford a farm hand who helped to run the thing.

'cause otherwise I would've been running it. So I totally agree with that. This isn't practical for anybody. Well, listen,

**Jennifer:** listen, listen. Yes, you're rich and you're successful. Okay? However, I'm ta You don't have to be rich and successful like you to. Put boundaries and guidelines on your, what your children are doing at a young age.

You can say to your, you can, like, for an example, you don't have to give your kids a sa a smartphone when they turn 11 or 12. Do you know you can give your kid for if it, if it's for safety purposes, give your kid a flip phone so they're not there. Scrolling the internet, checking online. Don't allow them that ability.

First of all, how old are your kids? 10 and 12. And so this is what just happened with my kid. So my, everybody, every one of my, every one of my kids' friends, my 12-year-old, every single one of them has a phone

**Dave:** and they have Snapchat, which is how all social stuff happens now. Oh,

**Jennifer:** snap. Snap. Yeah. My kid's not so what, so how did, how do I.

How do I take care of that? Or how do I deal with that? Number one, I try to create just to kind of, to your point, I try to, I try to bring parents together, other moms together, say, let's all band together and not give our kids a smartphone until they are. 15. Right? I was the only, no one wanted to listen to me, so then I was a devil incarnate.

My kid was the only one who didn't have the phone, who hated me. That

**Dave:** could be a little bit of a pressure on kids,

**Jennifer:** right? It's, it's terrible because then, then you have the other issue, which is like they feel, they feel ostracized. They felt left out that they're fomo, all these things, right? But you know, my, my job as a parent isn't to be liked all the time.

It's that that's not my job. I'm not trying to be their friend.

**Dave:** That's, you can't say that

**Jennifer:** it is. But why? Since when is it my, first of all, this is part of the problem. Parents want, they wanna be. BFFs with their kid, the, they don't wanna be hated, they don't wanna be disliked, so they'll just acquiesce to these things that actually in the future cause a lot of damage and harm.

So, to, to, to me, to finish my thought is what I did was I got my kid some flip phone so he can call me and he can text me. Okay. Is he happy about it? No, but again, my, I, I'm not trying to be my kid's best friend. I'm trying to like, give my kid the tools to be better off later on. You know? So that's the first thing.

So if you, like, you don't have to be living on a farm with 32 acres and having a sheep and a dog and a, and a cow and a monkey, but you, you what you do. We do need

**Dave:** the dog or the monkey just to be really quick.

**Jennifer:** Okay? You don't need the dog. And, and so that's the fir And the other thing is put your kids in sports.

Like tell, you know, put your kids in team sports where they're learning how to socialize and they learn how to like show up on time and they learn how to like, deal with other kids and, and be a teammate. These are really important things to do.

**Dave:** I don't think team sports work anymore.

**Jennifer:** Why not?

**Dave:** One of my kids went to something called Greek Olympics.

**Jennifer:** Mm. Okay. And

**Dave:** this is where schools from all over our region, they bring all their kids together to compete in traditional Greek games. This child, I. Like, okay, I wanna win something. Okay, great. So what's the event that no one's gonna train for javelin?

So we bought a javelin and trained like hell in the front yard. So, okay. That, that's one where no one gets practice time. So, my kid go, this is hard to not say which one. It's my kid goes and we get there and we drove a couple hundred miles to get there. All, all kinds of, you know, regional meat and the organizers go, oh.

We're not gonna have individual winners. We're gonna measure on the first day, the average group time, and then we're gonna celebrate the percentage of improvement across everyone. And I was so disgusted and so was my kid. Like I worked hard on this and we can't have a winner. So the team sports are broken because it's about making you feel good in those too.

**Jennifer:** So I'm glad that you bring that up because another thing that I talk a lot about is these participation trophies, right? Where everybody wins by getting a participation trophy, which by the way, what are you teaching your child in life? There are winners and there are losers, and if you wanna be a winner, you have to work really hard and you got.

You gotta practice, you gotta put in the work by just everybody getting a participation trophy. What are you really teaching? Right? It's also the same as when every, when the, you know, for science fair, right? When all the parents are actually doing the science project for the child as opposed to letting the kid like do whatever they do and then, you know, get whatever mark they're getting or grade whatever you say, I'm Canadian.

The truth myth is like what happens, right? Like basically you're having every one parent's competing with the other parent for the gold star. That's what's actually happening, right? These are all the things that, these are my like not to dos, right? Like what I'm, my entire message of why we're like what I'm trying to say to people and I think we need to band together and.

Like I said, eliminate these, these participation trophies, these, these snowplowing, all the challenges, letting, allowing our kids to learn failure for themselves and. Give them a try because the coping skills are what's lacking. Having the, the inability to, to have these skills as an adult or as you get older, that what's, what's the repercussion of that?

You're not gonna be able to have any type of real, personal relationship, professional relationship. What happens when you go into a job interview and you don't get the job, you're gonna crumble because you've had no experience in any failure. Yeah. Right. Part of like, part of my success was I was so used to like nose and failures and mediocrity, that it built my resourcefulness and it built my, my ability to be so desensitized to the feeling of failure that.

I didn't, I wasn't scared to kind of keep on going and asking and doing, 'cause if I failed, all right, I'll just try again. That's the, that's the message, right? Like you wanna be, you wanna be able to give your children a chance where they feel that they can like go after something time and time again, and potentially like maybe get it, maybe not get it, but at least like that's competence.

How do you get confident without having any competence?

**Dave:** I never thought of this, but this lack of failure thing. When I was in high school, I went from a grade high school to a really crappy high school in a farming town. I was the top grade in the class. I didn't have to do any homework. I, it, it was just not challenging for me.

So I'm top of my class with no work and I went to college. I failed out of college because I had never had to work hard because I always got, you know, I always got a good grade, right. And it took me quite a lot of work. Including fixing my brain to realize, oh my gosh, I, I've gotta actually do this. It would've been really good if I'd have been challenged and failed as a, as a kid.

And what I think is happening is parents bully teachers.

**Jennifer:** Yeah,

**Dave:** totally true. Yep. Teachers are fed up and a lot of teachers. They also are just saying, I, I don't want any child to experience any kind of discomfort in my class and all. And something has shifted in the expectations of teachers and the way parents treat teachers.

So I. What is a way that a parent can create opportunities for a child to fail and be rejected and still feel safe?

**Jennifer:** Well, I think there's two things I think that you, again, I'm not I think that you can allow your kid to fail and still I. And still put safety as a, as a, as a top priority. Right. How would you do, what's an example?

Like an example would be like I said, the having, doing, doing their your child's homework, doing the science fair project. I mean, your, your kid's still gonna be safe if they get a D or an f if they don't put the work in, right? Yeah. So there's ways to do it where you're just not, you're, you are, you're not a, you're, you're not.

Tending to every emotional need, like these, these triggers and these safe spaces, allowing your kids to feel a feeling and not in that, and not in that woowoo way, but like the feeling of, you know, failing, having to go through that emotion of. Or trying out for a team and not making the team, let them go through that emotion of not not doing it.

Realizing if they don't practice at basketball, I'm making this up, they may not get on the team and therefore, what is that teaching your kid? Maybe they should practice more, maybe they should put more effort in, or maybe not. Everybody will always win. Maybe what you have to. To dig deep in is where are you talented?

Where does like that? That's how people figure stuff out. What's happening here is, is that if, if you can pay X amount of dollars, you could be on your club soccer team, you could be on the club basketball team. Now, if you can always just like, if you can always just take that. That pain away from your kid?

Where's your kid gonna learn? Where's the kid gonna feel? Are they gonna come to you when they're, when they're 30 years old? Are you gonna pay all the, do you wanna pay the bills of your kids when they're 30 years old? Do you want them to live at home? Do you want them to never find a date like. This is like, it, it becomes a situation where like if you're trying to like seriously create like a full grown human being, you're gonna have to put in some like hard work at the, at the, at the, at the front end.

That's my point. And so like, what's wrong? Like also chores. Chores is a great thing. Harvard did this huge study over like 75 years and they showed that kids who actually had chores it, it taught, it taught kids like so many valuable life lessons. Right, like responsibility. A million, right? But yet.

We're, we're kind of like a livid, like eliminating that as well. Give your kids chores, I should just say give your kids chores. And te it teaches your kids not just, not just responsibility, but it gives kids confidence. And they've shown that the kids who had chores versus the kids who did not have chores over a span of CA certain amount of years, the kids who had the chores were a.

Abundantly more successful in every walk of life.

**Dave:** One of the mistakes that I think I made as a parent is I would pay my kids for the chores.

You know, I, I wanna get your, your take on this. Yeah. Because I. Chores are necessary in order just to support your family. And that's, that's how it is. This is how you contribute to the family. You don't get paid for that. You want to get paid. You have to go above and beyond and find a way to do something extra.

And I did not do that. And if I could go back, I would have, and it's advice I picked up from another friend. And then you're saying, you know, the work that's necessary is necessary and you don't get paid for that.

**Jennifer:** Right.

**Dave:** Right. And so some of this could be, it's just, it's too easy. And some of it could be to, I know that I did my best to give the kids chores that were, I.

A little bit unpleasant, so they'd have to do them, you know? Oh yeah. You gotta do an hour of shoveling sheep shit. Right. And I know they hated it when they were little and I, well, okay. Being uncomfortable, if you like to not do this, you can start a business and I totally support your right to start a business and hire someone to shovel the sheep shit for you if you want to.

And one of my kids did hire the other one one time, which was hilarious. And really, well, yeah, totally right. Okay. You didn't wanna do it. You, you pay your sibling to do. It works for me. But. I didn't hammer home the idea that there is an amount of work you will always have to do in your life. You'll always have to put dishes in the dishwasher unless you hire someone to do that for you.

**Jennifer:** Right? The, I think another issue is that it's hard when you. You are your par, you are successful. And then you have kids and you, how do you, and I'm asking this to you, right? Like where, where, where is the line, right? Because you have all these like, luxuries, right? Like you're living on a huge farm with th you're saying 32 acres and you technically can pay for a lot of people to like do a lot of this, the grunt work.

Let's just so to say we didn't do that. So like, right, so you, they, you, it's, you have to be, you have to have the, you, you, you have to cut you, you have to think about those things more, right. And have the, you, you have to put those things in place even more so, so your kids don't just like, basically like live off of that situation.

**Dave:** I look at parenting now as like, how do I structure the right level of adversity for my children? So that they can struggle. They can sometimes win and they can sometimes fail and they can understand that it's okay to fail. And one of the things that I tried doing for that is when they were very little, especially we'd lay down for bedtime and tell 'em a story, say, all right.

Let's do our gratitude practice. What are three things you're grateful for? Okay. This is fantastic for kids, but then I would say, what is one fail you had today? And if failure is a very specific thing, it's something that you wanted and something that you attempted to do and you didn't get it. Right. And then they'd sit down and they'd think about it, and anytime they would have something, I'd say, oh my gosh, that's so good.

And I praise the failure to the end. So they're like, I'm so proud of you. You did something so hard, you didn't know how to do it. Wow, that's impressive. And they got way more than from that, than they did from gratitude.

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Dave:** I don't know if it worked or not. What's your take on on that? No, I love

**Jennifer:** that. I do this other thing, it's called the 10% target and what that is.

Is basically making 10 attempts at whatever you want most. And the reason why I do that is because either one of two things will happen. Either you'll get that thing or another opportunity will present itself that you never even knew existed by just going through. That whole path and what it does also, while doing that, it teaches you, number one, you're, you're, you're setting your, your mind to the idea of, okay, I'm gonna, I might fail nine times or 10 times, so you're ready, like positioned for that.

And so therefore you're getting comfortable with the failure. And the other thing it does is kind of, I, I think it gives, it gives you a structure to work within. And typically, more often than not, you may most likely don't get that goal, but the other opportunity will present itself. So it teaches you that you should keep on trying, that you should make attempts that you, there's nothing wrong with making many attempts.

Mm-hmm. And so that's what, how I do it. I used to do something similar to you, which was like. You know, the rows of the thorn, right? Tell me one thing, great, one thing bad, but then I kind of, I, I, I, I tweaked it to these 10 attempts because then also it makes you, it, it takes out the creative juices, right?

And it says, okay, what can, what are the 10 things I can do? I can try this, I can do that. And it makes you think about things that otherwise you would not think about. And so. That's why I also think it's really important to be bored. Yes. I think boredom is so important. Thank you.

**Dave:** Why?

**Jennifer:** I think it's really important because I think that's where creativity lies and lives, and we're so busy all the time, distracting ourselves from so many things that we don't give ourself a chance to actually sit and think and think of things in different ways and just be, and.

That to me is where real, like where kind of like childhood has really kind of missed a mark. We over schedule our kids a lot. We over schedule ourselves a lot. We use our phone as a distraction. Like if you go into an elevator these days, right? I. Everyone's so afraid of like eye contact, right? Because they go on their phone like, it's like it's a natural instinct now just to like busy yourself.

It's like it's uncomfortable to even be uncomfortable with a human.

**Dave:** Do you busy yourself? 'cause you're uncomfortable with humans in elevators.

**Jennifer:** I. I think we, I think I, I busy my, I think what happens is I think we've been conditioned to do these things, not because I'm actually uncomfortable. It's because I've now been my, I'm so conditioned now just to look at my phone if I'm not doing anything.

So what I really wanted to kind of instill in, in my kids and with myself, and by the way, it's because I'm not perfect. I'm part of what's happening in this cycle. So are you right? Like if we are so. Enamored with our phone. How are our children not gonna be enamored? So it's

**Dave:** what they see,

**Jennifer:** right? It's what they see.

Kids learn way they learn. I think it was like 75% more by what they are looking at than versus what you're saying to them, right? So you have to like show them and role model. And that's by the way, why I think even like. When you, when parents who are not exercising and working out, like what are you teaching your kid?

Like, I think it's really important. If you want your kid to be fit and active and take care of themselves, you should be fit, active, take care of themselves. If you want your kid to eat well, you need to eat well. So it's people mirror what they see and what their environment is.

**Dave:** It's a tall order and it does work.

One of my just proudest dad moments was my, my kids food shamed, our nanny because she took 'em to McDonald's. They'd never been to McDonald's. And my daughter's like, she was very young and I think I can talk about this 'cause she was so little and. The window rolls down and she goes, I want one poopy chemical latte, please.

'cause she knew that McDonald's put stuff in their food. And I'm like, look, kids, people go to fast food because it tastes good and it's affordable and it's convenient and that's okay. I like, everyone has their own, their own reasons. And so I said, let's go to McDonald's and you can play on this slide. I, we buy french fries and we'll eat all this stuff.

And I'm just thinking I'm gonna be like crap for a week from this. And both kids there were very little. They got these angry little kid faces. You know the cute ones, they puff up. Yeah. And they said, daddy, you can take us to McDonald's, but you can't make us eat. I'm like, what are you talking about? It's gonna taste good.

And they said, we know what our tummies feel like if we eat that way and we don't want to because they never saw me eat that way one time. 'cause I don't eat that.

**Jennifer:** So, you know what's interesting? I was gonna ask you actually when you're on my show, right? Like the, like do, because you're so extreme for most people, right?

Like, right, like people like me love it, right? Like. All this stuff, the biohack and the longevity, but for two little kids, right? And they're seeing their dad at like next, next level, eating a certain way and doing all these, like these, these habits and you know, wearing the yellow glasses and. Eating this and not eating spinach and raspberries because of what's in it.

Like, do your kids even do, do they mimic that even, do they think it's crazy? Do they think it's weird or do they actually partake in it with you?

**Dave:** They don't think it's weird 'cause it's what they've always known. They also have an opportunity to eat school food. They do well, I mean, they go to a boarding school and they, they stay at our house, but they go to school and boarding school.

It's a pretty good one, but they cook in seed oils and all this, and they're like, we are so tired of chicken. The food is not good. We just need, we need, we need food. And so they know the difference. And I mean, I was, both kids have independently come to me and said, you know. On days when the field are really not that good and I need to do well on my studies, what could I bring with me to school so that I have something that I want to eat that's gonna keep my brain working?

'cause I've noticed a difference in how I feel. So the lesson for for my kids was, you get to choose how you feel. I. And a large part of that is how you eat and how you sleep. If you just do that, it's all about control for kids. So I want you to have control over this. And look, I can't tell you what to eat.

You're a teenager. You can have all the junk food all day long. I'm not gonna know, and I support your right to do that. You have to pay the the price for it. And they are used to feeling good and they can feel the difference. But if you eat Cheetos at home and when you're stressed, you have a box of mac and cheese, and the kids understand that's what you do.

I don't think it works

**Jennifer:** well. Yeah. I mean, your habits though are, are, do they adopt some of those habits like your sleep? Are they wearing the sleep stuff that you're doing? Are they doing those things?

**Dave:** I bought both my kids aura rings when they were like eight or nine or something. Really? Okay. Yeah. And one of them uses it regularly and is working on it still.

Yeah. And the other one is like, Hmm, you know, that, that was interesting for a month. And the idea here is I'm offering you ways to have control over yourself. 'cause what kids really want is power and control.

**Jennifer:** Yeah. Power control for sure. Yeah.

**Dave:** These are ways you can, you can have that. One of my kids tried mouth taping after seeing me do it, and for the last three years, every night the mouth is taped except on sleepovers really?

Because like, oh, look, when I wake up in the morning, I don't have bad breath and my mouth isn't dry. I like that. So I didn't force it.

**Jennifer:** I think it's the second you start to force something on the kids, that's the, that's like the kiss of death. You have to just. Role model it and hope for the best.

**Dave:** My hope as a dad is that the kids will see how I did it and they'll know this behavior leads to this outcome and they'll choose whatever behaviors they want, but they'll know why they got the outcomes they got. And after that, one of my kids doesn't seem to pay much attention to light at night and it affects that kid.

The other one is actually pretty disciplined about using a red light and. There's a difference in sleep scores, but I'm not gonna yell and shame I will say if I walk in a room, like I'm not coming in there 'cause those bright lights are gonna screw up my sleep. Right, right, right, right. So again, opportunity to fail.

You wake up, you feel like crap and you fail your test. That's up to you, right? The, the one other idea, I wanna run past you 'cause we're kind of like co figuring out how to solve this problem without being able to make other parents or teachers change. Have you ever heard of rejection therapy? No. What is that?

I wrote about this in Game Changers. I did an interview a long time ago. This was a guy, as a young man. He figured out as a young man that he was terrified of being rejected. It was affecting him at work. It was affecting his dating life. And he was like, I'm not taking risks. I know I wanna take risks, but then when the the time comes, I choke up and I don't like it.

So he invented this idea of rejection therapy, which is every day you ask for things that you think are unreasonable until you get a no. He tells these beautiful stories, like he went to Burger King and asked for a burger refill and they gave him one. He's like, I didn't get my no today, dammit. And so it turns the rejection into the, when you're seeking.

And then he went to the the Krispy Kreme place and said, can I have an Olympic ring donuts? And he said, okay. And he's like, ah. By the end of the 30 days of this, the internal fear response, which is entirely automatic before you can think, it just went away. And he's a really successful guy 10 years later.

**Jennifer:** So, you know, it's really funny that you just said that, right? 'cause you call it rejection therapy. In my last book called Bigger, better, bolder I talk all about that. So my, I did a different TED Talk called The Secret to Getting Anything You Want in Life. And that was about how, how to be bold, how to be bold in life.

And then it did so well that it wrote a book about it and. My entire thesis is based around this. I principle that being bold is more, it is way more important than being intelligent because when you're intelligent, you overthink everything to death and you become, you know, you can get like the the whole analysis paralysis, but when you're bold, you just like.

You, you aim first. You know, you kind of, you shoot the name, you know,

**Dave:** you figure it out on the way. You

**Jennifer:** figure it out on the way. And I'm, I'm a big believer that being bold is way more important than being intelligent. And I use this example that you were just saying. It's like you go everywhere and ask if they.

They can get a discount, go to the court of, you know, coffee shop and say, do you have a discount for people who live in the area? Like what's the worst that people say no? Right. So my, I call that in my book, I call it like rejection is always better than regret. So it's always better to be rejected from something then to regret that you never did it.

And that's a whole other principle that I really try to instill in my kids is that you always want to. Give it your all or try because you never wanna think what if And like rejection, we all get over, right? Like, yeah, it sucks for a minute or two. Like you have a bad feeling in your stomach, people don't get over it.

**Dave:** Sometimes I, I know grown adults who come to 40 Years of Zen or they come to my girlfriend, Christina's we deepen relationship mastermind. They're still absolutely heartbroken over a high school breakup and it's affecting their relationship 20 years later till they get over it. So sometimes rejection actually.

It, it hurts 'cause they don't have the, the coping skills.

**Jennifer:** Only when, but what, I guess what the rejection regret that I'm talking about is when you don't try for something, it's a like the thinking of like, what if I did ask that girl out? What if I did ask that guy out? And, you know, we ended up like being the, maybe that would've been the love of my life.

What if I, you know, did try for this thing? Like not, not. Basically counting yourself out before you give yourself a shot. You know, like there was a lot, I I, I really love Mark Wahlberg, right? 'cause he's all about these habits. Like he's, except at two in the morning, he does all these crazy things and I really wanted him on the podcast.

And he was like, one of these people that was like, at the beginning of my show I was like, kind of like, this is the one person I would love to talk to. And, I was sitting beside him at a dinner party, or not dinner party, like at a restaurant, like a, he was one table away from me and we were looking at each other and my friends and my husband were like, there he is.

There's Mark Wahlberg. Just go up and ask him to be on your podcast. And I was like, no, no, I can't. I can't. And I was so, I was so scared. And they're like, why not? He's like right there. He is looking right at you. He's like literally three and a half feet away from you. Just do it. What's the wor using my own lines on me, like what's the worst that can happen?

Right? Like. Be bold, Jennifer. Be bold. Like my entire, my word in life is be bold. And I, and I was like trying to get up enough courage. And then I'm like, okay, okay, okay. And I was waiting in 10 minutes and 50 minutes and 20 minutes to go by and I'm like, okay, I'm gonna go to the bathroom. Now I'm, when I come back from the bathroom, I'm gonna ask him and I come back from the bathroom and guess what happened?

He's gone. He's gone. And so the. What happens? I'm like, damn, why didn't I just do it like I was right there. I da da da. I made all these excuses. I waited too long and then my opportunity passed by me. And so what if I did? What if he did come on? What if that, you know, what happens if I did ask him? So. My reason why I'm bringing that up is like, even as an adult, right?

Like you can go through all of these things and still have that what if regret, right?

**Dave:** Did you tell your kids about it?

**Jennifer:** Of course I did. It's in my book. I, because, because I still think about it to this day. It was like three or four years ago. It was like so long ago, but I'm still like, you know what?

Like here I am preaching this idea of asking for what you want in life. Being bold, like taking the shot, you know, all of these things and you know, it still happens to all of us. So we need to all practice the idea of being bold. We all have to practice. It's a muscle like anything else, right? The second you stop using it, it atrophies and.

And so I'm a really big believer in this whole rejection versus regret thing. Like always try, always go after something, never like, never count yourself out. And I also think what happens is we are self, we, we don't have the confidence we have. We have so much self-doubt because we think someone else is better than us or can do it better, but.

Honest to God, and I'm sure you've, you've account, you've probably had this situation too. The more people you meet, you realize how many people are just a bunch of nis and you can't believe how they got to where they are. Like the only difference between that person and someone else is that like they believed in themselves a little bit more to go after that thing.

**Dave:** Oh, right. That's so crazy. I also think you said something critical. Studies show that if you praise kids for being smart, they stop taking risk. 'cause then they'll look dumb. Mm-hmm. But if you praise 'em for working hard That's right. So I've done my very best as a dad to just say, you worked so hard, you did a good job.

You earned it. Instead of praising intelligence. Yeah. And I think my kids are pretty smart. If they, I wrote a book or not have smarter babies, but I like to

**Jennifer:** think it worked.

**Dave:** But.

**Jennifer:** You wrote a book on everything, but, well,

**Dave:** it was my first book ever. It took five years to read it. 'cause the, their mom was infertile when I met her, so I had to restore her fertility.

Yeah. Like there's thousands of babies who wouldn't have been born without that book. That's called The Better Baby Book. I. Yeah, that was before the bullet bear diet. And um, so I, I'm, my kids don't have all the neurological crap that I had as, as kids. 'cause I, I was like really concerned. I don't want to give the Asperger's syndrome the way I had in a DH, ADHD and all the crap.

**Jennifer:** Oh wow. That's part

**Dave:** of the reason that I put all this energy and time and people say you had the money to dude, living on a farm on an island is an incredible amount of work. And I did it because I do not want them to go through the hell I went through. That's why I write all my books. Like, don't do all, don't feel as bad as I did.

Wow.

**Jennifer:** But

**Dave:** well, it, it matters. And even then it, it's like, okay guys, you did a good job. You worked hard, you earned it. And just, that's the mantra I. And I just wonder how that aligns with, with your philosophy on, on Kids. Do you praise them for being smart failure? I totally failure with you. You do. Okay.

**Jennifer:** I do.

I totally agree with you. I think that's the problem. I did a, I did a talk at MITA couple years ago because they were the smartest kids in the world. Smartest people in the world. And the, the, the. The form that we, what I talked on, what they were doing was, it was called Fail because they weren't comfortable with fa.

They, there was a higher suicide rate at MIT. And it was, and it was, it was kind of increasing year to after year because. They, when they would fail or they, when they wouldn't do as well as they wanted to, they could not handle it. The they, the rejection or the feeling of being less than was so excruciating that it was beyond anything else.

So they, CR MIT created this program, like I said, called Fail, and when they had people like myself go up there and talk about how to be comfortable with failing. And what I find is because these kids. They were praised all the time. They were known to be the smartest when they were younger, where they had no experience of what it would be like to be average or mediocre.

And so if you're constantly praising someone, like even the most beau, the most beautiful girl in the room, right? They're, you're telling them how beautiful they are, how beautiful they are. They're always usually the most insecure because then they're focusing only on the one thing that they're known for and everything else becomes you.

They think that they're not good enough in every other way.

**Dave:** I have to ask you this, it's not so much about parenting.

**Jennifer:** No,

**Dave:** go ahead. So, my girlfriend's super hot and has always been praised for being beautiful. Mm-hmm. And I can say this, so Christina, hopefully you hear this. I get boyfriend points for that.

And she said, you know, and she's a relationship person, so she deals with lots of women. She said some of the loneliest women out there are the most attractive ones. Mm-hmm. Because no guy will approach him. So you're attractive. Was this an issue for you?

**Jennifer:** Well, thank you for saying that. I thi that's really an interesting thing.

I never, that's an interesting, I do believe, like I'm a, I might be attractive, but I would say that. I've noticed that myself in life, not because, not with me, but I think I was pretty average and I grew into myself. I kind of like made the best, I made myself the best version and I think everybody should do this of, of what I had to work with, right?

Like I think not everyone's gonna be Giselle or Cindy Crawford, but everyone has like certain nice character traits that they can like then enhance, you know, double down on, like they can double down on. And you know what, going in the gym and getting a really. Fit Body helps a lot too.

**Dave:** So you don't get, you don't experience being treated differently.

**Jennifer:** Well, I I, what I was, what I will say is that when you are attractive people underestimate you in every other way. Yeah. They underestimate your intelligence, they underestimate your ability to kind of be function in any other way. And they only see you in one dimension. So. I think that's why I think it's really important.

I, I think what I've seen in my life and with people I know who only double down on their looks, that becomes a real problem, which is why I think it's really important for people to really focus on other aspects. And also, by the way, if you are smart and you're attractive, like now you're really winning because then you have the ability to.

To like, to to know that other pe what people think, and then work it and manipulate it to your advantage. That's what I would say.

**Dave:** Because they're gonna think you're dumb. 'cause you're cute.

**Jennifer:** Yeah. They're gonna think you're dumb or they're gonna, and, or you know that because you're cute. You can pretty much get a leg up on this person and get an opportunity there.

And then you should be able to, if you're smart, use it to your advantage. Like again, work what you have. Right? Yeah. If, if you are attractive and smart. Use it to your advantage. The what I'm, what I'm talking about. If some are, are these people who were only always praised for being pretty and they never worked on anything else and they believed the, they believed the hype that that's all they were.

I.

**Dave:** One valuable skill for the younger guys, uh, watching the show. If you're around a woman who is smart and intelligent, compliment her intelligence and see what happens.

**Jennifer:** I, I was also gonna say the other thing, but you were all, the problem also was women who are. Smart and at and attractive. Men a lot of times are so intimidated.

That's why they're not getting approached, right? Or they're not getting da, they, they're not dating and that's why they're lonely. And the problem also is if they're successful, then they have this masculinity sometimes that kind of. You know, kind of rears its ugly head, and then guys are not attracted to that masculine energy.

So then the woman has to know how to dial that back, that masculinity mm-hmm. To be more feminine. It becomes like a real, it becomes like a whole dance of.

**Dave:** Yeah. Of all

**Jennifer:** sorts of things.

**Dave:** I Christina and I work with people at the Masterminds, like every quarter, you know, two, three days where couples are sitting down talking about this.

It, it's a big deal to be able to shift your polarity to match the situation you're in, especially if you're, you're working hard during the day, and these are skills that if you're raised well. And you're okay with failure and you're comfortable in your own skin, they become easier. And if you've never been rejected, you don't know, like you, you don't know what to do.

**Jennifer:** What I would say to that is I think it's important for you to be raised with a h how to instill self-esteem. Mm-hmm. Especially, of course, on both women and men. Right. Especially in young girls. And the best way to do that is through letting them. Do things on their own and following through, because then they'll feel a sense of accomplishment.

And like I said earlier, competence is what breeds confidence. And if you don't feel competent in doing something, you'll never feel confident. Therefore have a lower self-esteem, and that becomes a really bad vicious cycle later on in life.

**Dave:** Well, Jen or Jennifer Cohen, which is jennifer cohen.com, is your UR L.

Thanks for giving a massively successful Ted Talk on something that's hard to talk about. It's hard to put. It, it's hard to put exact things to do about this, but I think we came up with a few very actionable things that parents can do that might be uncomfortable for parents. And if it's uncomfortable for a parent, then the parent has to do their work because if you're not comfortable with your kids being uncomfortable, you are the problem.

Right?

**Jennifer:** Mm-hmm. I think that's, that's a good way of putting it, just, yeah, exactly. Just go watch my Ted talk for all the. All the salient points.

**Dave:** Yeah, we will I'll link that in the show notes for you guys and we'll put it on social and all that. And thank you so much for having me on your show and thank you so much for, you know, writing your books and for talking about this, which isn't all the health stuff that's your normal thing.

You know, the hustle in the habits and the entrepreneurship. This is just something that matters greatly. So I appreciate you putting some energy behind it.

**Jennifer:** Thank you Dave. Thank you for having me on your show and, and sharing this message with your audience. It really means a lot.

**Dave:** See you next time on the Human Upgrade Podcast.

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