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Jessica Lahey

Educator & Best-Selling Author of The Gift of Failure & The Addiction Inoculation, Recovery & Prevention Coach

Jessica Lahey speaks to parents, educators, school administrators, coaches, pastors, and community leaders about the science of learning, motivation, engagement, and substance abuse prevention, all in service to the belief that adults have the power to help kids become more autonomous, competent, connected, and fulfilled. Her first book, *The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed* was a *New York Times* bestseller and has empowered so many to strengthen home-school partnerships, support kids as they learn from their mistakes, and forge stronger, more trusting relationships with children. Her second book, *The Addiction Inoculation: Raising Healthy Kids in a Culture of Dependence* is the culmination of Lahey's experience as an alcoholic with a decade of recovery, the parent of two kids, and twenty years in the classroom teaching English, Latin, and writing in every grade from six to twelve and five of those years were spent teaching in an inpatient drug and alcohol rehab for adolescents. Jess was awarded the Research Society on Alcohol's Media Award for "outstanding journalistic efforts of writers who cover empirical research on alcohol" [...] "for her book *The Addiction Inoculation* and advocacy for the recovery community."

Over twenty years, Jess has taught every grade from sixth to twelfth in both public and private schools, and spent five years teaching in a drug and alcohol rehab for adolescents in Vermont. Jess has spent her adult life in conversation with adolescents and the adults in their lives as a teacher, mentor, mother, and education journalist. Jess trusts, loves, and supports teens and their parents, and in return, they tend to trust her back. Whether she's talking to audiences about *The Gift of Failure* topics - why kids need more autonomy, competence and deeper connections with adults in order to stay motivated, learn more deeply, and become the best versions of themselves - or preventing substance use in kids, her focus is always on adolescent mental health and facilitating difficult conversations around these challenging topics.

When it comes to substance use prevention, Jess is all about evidence-based approaches. Research shows teens do not respond to scared straight and just say no, messaging and worse, these programs have been proven ineffective - counterproductive, even - in preventing substance use.

She has written about education, parenting, and child welfare for *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, and her biweekly column "The Parent Teacher Conference" ran for three years at the *New York Times*. She designed and wrote the educational curriculum for Amazon



Kids' award-winning animated series *The Stinky and Dirty Show*, and was a 2019 Pushcart Prize nominee. Jess holds the dubious honor of having written an article that was later adapted as a writing prompt for the 2018 SAT. She co-hosts the #AmWriting podcast from her empty nest in Vermont.

Jess offers evidence-based, effective learning and prevention resources that work. She helps teens understand how their brains work, how they learn, and why substance use in adolescence is far more dangerous than substance use in adulthood, after their brains are fully developed. She offers information about the negative short- and long-term impact of addictive substances on the adolescent brain. She explains why we tend to overestimate who uses drugs and alcohol, how much, and why our misperception drives reality when it comes to substance use. She offers concrete, practical scripts kids can use to refuse substances while saving face in social situations and adults can use to open up discussions about substance use with the kids in their lives. She helps kids and adults communicate more effectively by giving both groups language to prime the pump for conversations. Most importantly, she helps kids find the strength to believe that they are good enough, that they deserve take up space in this world and be loved for who they are and not just who the adults in their lives wish they were.

Her goal, when speaking to adolescents, is to give them a path forward without having to self-medicate their pain, uncertainty, and angst with addictive substances. She knows. She's been sober since 2013 and she's been to the dark, scary places both as an alcoholic and as a mother of two kids with a heightened genetic risk for substance use disorder.

Topics:

- The Gift of Failure
- The Addiction Inoculation: Raising Healthy Kids in a Culture of Dependence
- Learning from Failures at Work: Earning Competence, Self-Efficacy & Resilience While Facing Mistakes Head-On
- Building a Better Team: How Coaches, Team Captains & Other Sports Leaders Shape Team Culture, Resilience & Substance Use
- College is More Than a Campus: Helping College Students Gain Competence Through Resilience, Self-Efficacy & Self-Advocacy