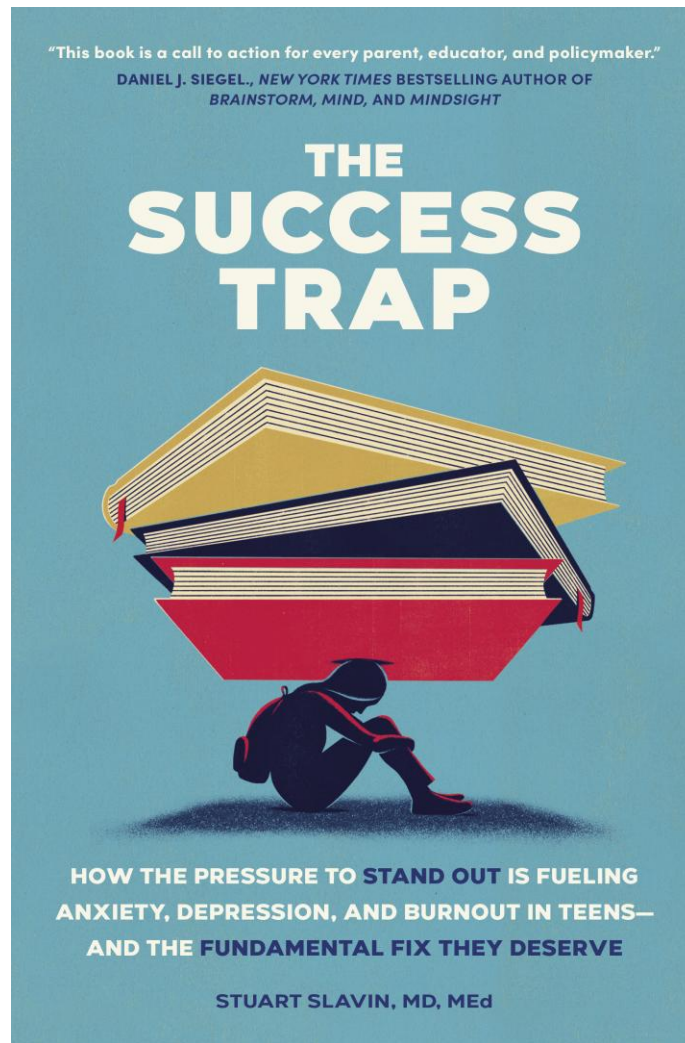


# THE SUCCESS TRAP

*How the Pressure to Stand Out Is Fueling Anxiety, Depression, and Burnout in Teens—and the Fundamental Fix They Deserve*



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## MEDIA KIT

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## About the Book

**The Success Trap: How the Pressure to Stand Out Is Fueling Anxiety, Depression, and Burnout in Teens—and the Fundamental Fix They Deserve** challenges one of the most common assumptions about today's youth mental health crisis. While smartphones and social media deserve attention, Dr. Stuart Slavin argues that in many communities another powerful force has been hiding in plain sight: the escalating academic and extracurricular demands and pressure placed on young people.

Drawing on more than four decades as a pediatrician, medical educator, researcher, and nationally recognized leader in well-being, Dr. Slavin explains why rising rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout began long before smartphones became ubiquitous and why lasting solutions require us to rethink the environments we create for young people. He shows how the environments adults create—in schools, families, sports, and communities—can either fuel chronic stress and burnout or help young people flourish.

Combining compelling research with practical, evidence-based strategies, **The Success Trap** reframes one of the most important conversations facing families today and offers a hopeful roadmap for helping young people flourish—without sacrificing excellence, ambition, or opportunity.

## About Dr. Stuart Slavin

**Stuart Slavin, MD, MEd, is a pediatrician, medical educator, nationally recognized leader in well-being, and author of *The Success Trap: How the Pressure to Stand Out Is Fueling Anxiety, Depression, and Burnout in Teens—and the Fundamental Fix They Deserve*.**

For more than four decades, he has devoted his career to creating healthier environments in which children, students, and physicians can learn, grow, and thrive.

A graduate of Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Dr. Slavin completed his pediatric residency at UCLA, where he then practiced pediatrics and served on the faculty for 17 years. While at UCLA, he earned a Master of Education from the University of Southern California. In 2004, he returned to Saint Louis University where he led educational reforms that dramatically reduced depression and anxiety among medical students while maintaining academic excellence. His pioneering work established him as one of the nation's leading voices on learner well-being in medicine.

In 2018, he joined the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) where he served first as Senior Scholar and later as Vice President for Well-Being, helping lead national efforts to improve physician well-being and clinical learning environments.

Throughout his career as a medical educator, one question continued to surface: Why were so many young people arriving at college and professional school already overwhelmed, anxious, and burned out?

In *The Success Trap*, Dr. Slavin draws on decades of research and leadership to challenge prevailing assumptions about the youth mental health crisis and offer practical, evidence-based strategies that help young people—and their families—flourish, not simply achieve.

## **Interview Topics**

### **Understanding the Crisis**

- **We've been overlooking one of the major causes of the teen mental health crisis.** Smartphones and social media matter, but in many communities, another powerful force has been hiding in plain sight: the intense and escalating pressure for kids to achieve.
- The long-term rise in anxiety and depression—and what the data really show.
- How parents can distinguish normal stress and anxiety from anxiety disorders.

### **Helping Kids Flourish**

- Helping children manage negative thoughts and self-criticism.
- Maladaptive perfectionism: Why striving for excellence is healthy—but striving to be perfect is not.
- Why kids need multiple sources of identity and purpose.
- What decades of research on motivation reveal about helping kids flourish.

### **Rethinking School and Achievement**

- Can schools improve student mental health without lowering academic standards? The evidence says yes.
- The hidden costs of today's achievement culture—and how schools can promote both learning and well-being.
- When extracurricular activities become too much: helping kids pursue excellence without sacrificing well-being.

- How parents can help create healthier, more balanced definitions of success—and become catalysts for change in their schools.

## **Sample Interview Questions**

### **Understanding the Crisis**

- Everyone talks about smartphones and social media being the main cause of the youth mental health crises. You disagree. Tell us why.
- Why do you believe we have overlooked this other powerful driver of this crisis?
- What does the research tell us about the role of excessive academic and extracurricular demands and pressure in today's youth mental health crisis?
- Anxiety seems to be everywhere today. How can parents tell the difference between normal stress and an anxiety disorder?

### **Helping Kids Flourish**

- What are the most common self-critical thinking patterns you see in young people?
- What is maladaptive perfectionism, and how is it different from simply having high standards?
- Many parents think perfectionism is simply part of being a high achiever. Why do you believe maladaptive perfectionism is one of the biggest threats to young people's mental health?
- What are some of the most effective ways parents can help children break free from perfectionistic thinking?
- Why is it so important for children to have multiple sources of identity and purpose?

### **Rethinking School, Extracurriculars, and Achievement**

- Can schools really improve student mental health without lowering standards?
- Have extracurricular activities become too demanding for many children and teens?
- What aspects of today's achievement culture concern you most?
- You helped lead changes at Saint Louis University School of Medicine that dramatically reduced depression and anxiety without lowering academic performance. What can K–12 schools learn from that experience?
- What can parents do—starting today—to help create healthier definitions of success for their children?

## **Praise for *The Success Trap***

"Stuart Slavin has done something rare and necessary: he has given us the science and the story behind a crisis hiding in plain sight—for students from middle school to medical school. As both a pediatrician and a father, Stuart brings profound insight into how our culture's obsession with achievement is stealing childhood, adolescence, and even young adulthood away from us and harming the developing brain—creating unnecessary toxic stress and mental suffering. This book, based on careful applied research in higher education, is a call to action for every parent, educator, and policymaker. Read it, share it, and let it change the way we support our youth on the challenging journey of staying grounded, connected, and inspired in their lives."

— **Daniel J. Siegel, New York Times bestselling author, *Brainstorm*, *Mind and Mindsight***

"Dr. Slavin provides both a compelling account of the causes of distress among today's youth and practical pathways for fostering their well-being. Backed by solid research, he illuminates the pressures of our achievement-focused culture and offers realistic, evidence-based solutions. This is an essential guide for parents and educators who want to create environments in which young people can truly learn, thrive, and find meaning."

— **Richard M. Ryan, McKillop distinguished professor, Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University, co-developer of self-determination theory**

"Young people today face relentless pressure to succeed in school, at home, and in every aspect of their lives. In *The Success Trap*, Stuart Slavin explains how a culture of constant performance—not just phones—undermines our kids' mental health. He provides a practical, evidence-based way to break the cycle by building resilience and giving kids more control, choice, and purpose, without sacrificing ambition."

— **Jennifer Wallace, New York Times bestselling author of *Never Enough* and *Mattering***

"The *Success Trap* is a must-read for our time. As a suicide prevention expert, psychiatrist, teacher and mother, *The Success Trap* rings true. And the solutions Stuart Slavin presents are on target and actionable. We must push back on the culture of achievement that has sacrificed psychological and social development for risky results at best. Let's band together to show there is a real way to achieve the outcomes we all want for our kids—because only when youth are thriving, can they grow into their most healthy authentic selves, which in turn goes hand in hand with pursuing and reaching their goals. *The Success Trap* provides the case and a roadmap

for helping kids to thrive and ultimately experience deeper success.”

— **Christine Moutier, Chief Medical Officer, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

“Achievement pressure is stressing young people out at epidemic levels. Dr. Stuart Slavin provides us here with a compelling, highly readable mix of research evidence, case stories, and potential solutions. I recommend the book to all parents, educators, and anyone else concerned with the mental wellbeing of young people, kindergarten through graduate or medical school.”

— **Peter Gray, Expert in child development and author of Free to Learn**

“Stuart Slavin brings a powerful combination of clinical expertise and humane wisdom to bear on one of the deepest problems of our time. The Success Trap is a remarkable combination of social criticism and self-help—at once profound and useful.”

— **Daniel Markovits, Guido Calabresi Professor of Law, Yale Law School, and author of The Meritocracy Trap**

## **Media Resources Available**

- High-resolution author headshots
- High-resolution book cover
- Full, medium, and short author bios

## **Media Inquiries**

**Dr. Slavin is available for podcast interviews, keynote presentations, television and radio interviews, print and online media, webinars, and virtual events.**

For interview requests, review copies, or other media inquiries regarding The Success Trap, please contact:

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