Introduction

This book started from curiosity and concern. It has ended with deep conviction. Every time I speak to a group I ask the same three questions: How are the children? How are their families? How are you? Across communities, the answers are the same: everyone is overwhelmed, stressed, and exhausted. My family and I are too. I started researching and writing this book when "burned out" became a popular response to asking about the children.

I wanted to understand what has the most positive impact on our well-being. I wondered which human capacities are most important and why so many people feel overwhelmed. While I typically write about the future, this time I started with the past.

Humans (*Homo sapiens*) have been around for about 300,000 years. We were foragers who became farmers. Then, 300 years ago, the Industrial Revolution changed how we lived, learned, and worked. The steam engine was invented, and people moved from the country to the city, from farms to factories. Life picked up speed and priorities shifted from who we are and how we live to what we can make and do. Industrialization defines today's world, but it only represents 1 percent of human history. This frantic and productivity-obsessed life was not how we lived for 99 percent of our past.

The farther we get from our roots, the less we prioritize the human powers we are born with—what I call "evolutionary essentials." Modern life can deprioritize or even deny these foundational assets. Modernity has brought incredible advantages and conveniences, but they have come at a cost. There are universal experiences in modern life, "dangerous weather conditions," that make everything far more challenging than it should be.

We may not be able to control the weather, but we can prepare for it. In Part 1: Prepare for Rough Weather, we examine these weather patterns, drawing on the latest research, investigative reporting, and stories from leading thinkers and people caring for children. These dangerous weather conditions include being overtapped, overworked, overstimulated, and overwrought. They can be devastating for people who are already struggling. With enough force, this weather can become disastrous, bringing us to a standstill.

We need safe harbors when the weather is too rough—places to go and people to see when the storms are too strong or the damage is too much. These safe harbors are the focus of Chapter 2. We explore six that are especially important in these changing times: *people* who are human, humane, and holistic, and *places* to rest, recover, and seek refuge. Safe harbors protect us from danger and give us the space we need to repair damage and ready ourselves for what's ahead.

As we take on rough weather and seek safe harbors, we can forget that everyone isn't voyaging the same way or with the same resources. We all brace for storms, but the threats and damage are different depending on the person. Consider weather in real life: the radar may show a tornado approaching a large area, but it hits a specific place. If that place is rural with motorhomes and trailers, the risk of damage is high. If the tornado heads towards a dense city with mostly brick buildings, the risk is much lower. Or imagine we're out at sea and a thunderstorm with strong winds rolls in. If we are on a cruise ship, damage is unlikely, but that's not true if we are on a fishing boat, raft, or in the water holding onto a life preserver.

What we need depends on our external *and* internal resources. In Part 2: Protect Our Human Essentials, we explore our internal resources—essential capacities humans are born with that we have used to sustain ourselves for generations.

Part 2 is organized into four sections unpacking 14 human essentials. There are essentials of the body (eat, sleep, move, and regulate), essentials of the mind (play, wonder, flow, and create), essentials of the heart (connect, love, belong), and essentials of the spirit (celebrate, contribute, believe). Each of these chapters includes stories, science, and strategies. Unless I specify, the content applies to both children and adults.

My curiosity and concern transformed into conviction while learning more about these essentials. I spoke with more than 100 experts across many disciplines and read stacks of studies. I visited camps and schools, even the circus. Each new insight reinforced the idea that we can and should be living differently.

In the conclusion, I propose a vision for rehumaning our lives—protecting and prioritizing these human essentials, which are often restricted or ignored. These are imagined scenarios of what our homes, schools, and workplaces could be. The conclusion invites us to deal with dangerous weather and embrace our power—the natural capacities that have enabled humans to defy the odds for years. What began as a book about how we thrive became a book about how we human.

How to Read This Book

You can read *How We Thrive* from cover to cover. That is how I wrote it, and chapters naturally build on one another. Or you can pull specific chapters and read them as standalone pieces. If you read out of order, you may encounter a reference to another part of the book, but it should not compromise readability. The book is written to be read either way.

The book has incredible illustrations and sketchnotes to visualize complex concepts and bring lightness to the page. Manuel Herrera has done a masterful job making these memorable and meaningful. The sketchnotes are reference tools summarizing content we've covered. There is a graphic "map" at the end of the book to help you assess yourself and act on all we've covered.

If I were reading, I'd go from start to finish, highlighting passages and making notes in the margins. Then I would use the book as a resource to rehuman my home and work life.

If I were running a school, coaching, or in a youth development organization, I would make *How We Thrive* a book study and start by giving my team time to read it themselves before jumping into priority chapters together. Part 1 chapters include bright spots and Part 2 chapters have strategies that are ideal for discussion and implementation. If I were in a school district, I would use this book to reimagine student support services. If I were in a youth development organization, I would use it to inventory existing programs and develop new ones.

If I were teaching a college class, I would use different chapters as introductory readings for students before studying the research I write about. If I were providing clinical services, I would use the book to reflect on my patient and client care.

If I were homeschooling my kids, I would make this my go-to manual. The content aligns with leading thinkers like Maria Montessori and Loris Malaguzzi (creator of the Reggio Emilia approach) and newer voices like Peter Gray and Ainsley Arment. My big goal as a mom is that my kids have what they need to be prepared and live good lives. These navigational tools and evolutionary essentials offer a roadmap to help them do both.

Who Should Read This Book

This book is for any adult raising and working with young people. If you aren't caring for kids or if you're a young person yourself, skip what doesn't apply but know most content will.

Here is a map for how we thrive by rehumaning our lives. It is time to reclaim the essentials that have sustained us throughout time. We are powerful, incredible beings with natural power that has enabled us to survive and thrive for millennia. Dangerous weather is a risk we face, but together we can evolve, endure challenge, and enjoy our lives.

PART 1

Prepare for Rough Weather

> Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.
>
> —Marie Curie

Right before the 2021–2022 school year started, I spoke to a high school in central Virginia. It was the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and staff prepared for a different beginning—one with social distancing, fears of illness, and heightened uncertainty. We met virtually. A bunch of boxes on the computer screen.

Whenever I connect with communities, I want to know how people are feeling and what's going on. Since we weren't in person, I used a digital polling platform to find out. Before speaking, I asked the staff three questions:

1. How are the children?
2. How are their families?
3. How are you?

Their responses generated a real-time word cloud[1] on the screen. The results told a compelling story. Young people, families, and staff seemed precariously positioned between enthusiasm for what could be, exhaustion for what had been, and fear for what might happen. The three different word clouds showed young people and adults teetering between readiness and worry. The data showed anxiety edging out excitement.

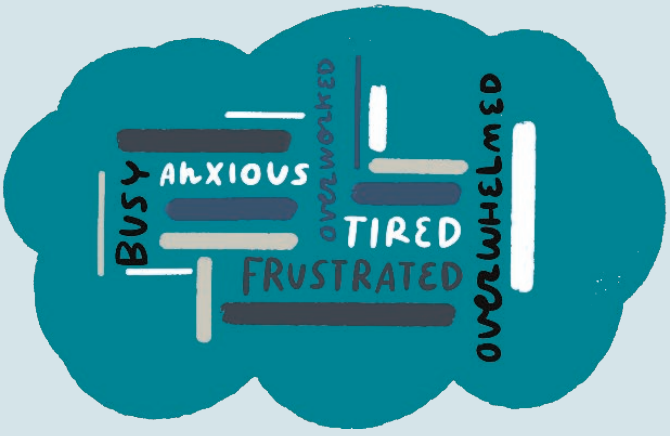
It made sense. The school was months into a doomsday scenario. Households had become homeschools overnight. Students had to log in to learn. Families were losing loved ones and jobs. Helpers were hurting and working harder than ever. The school year would start with sickness spreading and people suffering.

Today, some things are better. But times are still tough. Since I polled that school, I have asked every group I've spoken to those same three questions. I have years of data on how kids and adults are doing. Figure 1 shows the clear story that has emerged: we are overtapped, overworked, overstimulated, and overwrought. It is hard to human right now.

Figure 1 Example Word Clouds

How Are The Kids?

How Are You, The Adults?



It's like sailing in stormy weather, unsure of what will happen. We are pushed and pulled by the winds of life, the sheer force sometimes brutal. Focused on staying afloat and keeping course, we struggle to repair what needs to be fixed. It can feel like constant damage control. This is most true for voyagers on vessels broken in multiple ways. The extent of the damage and danger depends on the vessel we're on because we don't all travel the same way. Some sail on yachts in comfort, others in speed boats zipping through storms, and others on rafts or canoes that can be ruined by the waves of storms and bigger vessels. For any young traveler, these storms are real, scary, and all they've known.

We must understand the weather we are in. It will help us decide what we need to endure it. To prepare and care for ourselves. To know when to go full speed, slow down, stop, or change course. In Part 1, we examine the weather conditions of modern life and explore the "safe harbors" we need to care for ourselves and others. This journey is challenging, and we don't know how long this weather will last. We must find ways to navigate. We must protect the young people in our care. But enduring is not enough. Great navigators study the skies and seas, discovering ways to survive *and* thrive. Finding ways to focus on the essentials.

Dangerous Weather of Modern Life

1

Our species' pace of change now outstrips our ability to adapt. We are generating new problems at a new and accelerating rate and it is making us sick—physically, psychologically, socially, and environmentally. If we don't figure out how to grapple with the problem of accelerating novelty, humanity will perish, a victim of its success.

—Heather Heying and Bret Weinstein,
A Hunter-Gatherer's Guide to the 21st Century

To understand why the weather seems worse these days, I contacted Camelia Hostinar. Camelia is a stress and human development researcher and associate professor at the University of California in Davis. Camelia convinced me that our mounting feelings of overwhelm and exhaustion make sense. Modern life has stretched us to our limits. Crises are constant and compounded. We are worried about the future. Global stressors are personal, and personal stressors are plentiful. There is too much to do and not enough time.

Table 1 Common Stressors

STRESS TYPE	COMMON STRESSORS
Personal	• Competing demands • Pressure to get things done • Being sick or in pain • Being tired and needing sleep • Changes and transitions • Relationship problems • Chronic conditions • Unfair and harmful treatment • Limited resources, like time and money

(Continued)

(Continued)

STRESS TYPE	COMMON STRESSORS
Family and Community	• Family and caregiving demands • Household responsibilities • Family dynamics • Housing and money trouble • Loved ones who are sick and struggling • Grief and loss • Safety concerns and violence • Disasters • Unfair and harmful treatment • Little or no access to critical resources
Societal and Global	• Economic instability (such as inflation and market forces) • Structural oppression and suppression • Political fear and upheaval • Ideological division • Widespread health concerns and crises • Extreme weather and worsening disasters • Conflicts or fear of conflict • Technological disruptions • Information overload and disinformation
Historic and Intergenerational	• Inherited and persistent maltreatment • Historic trauma • Generational poverty

Any of the stressors from Table 1 can overwhelm. Especially when they occur one after the other or in combinations. Personal and global stressors collide. Historic harms intensify present pain. We are weary and worn down. Young kids are too tired to play. Teens fall asleep at school and struggle with anxiety. Young adults burn out. We struggle to keep up with life demands. Modern life is full of constant stress and mounting stressors. We need relief or things will get worse.

Society, school, and work contribute to stress rather than lessening it. Productivity is prioritized over human needs. This hustle is harmful, especially when you are having a hard time. There is pressure to show up and keep going even when you are struggling, grieving, or lacking resources. Work hard and fast, even if forces beyond your control hold you back. Then work harder. Don't

fall behind. We are pushed to keep going and then pressure kids to do the same—even when we need a break or break down.

At times, you might be drowning in the overwhelm. Kids too. My son stayed home from school recently for strep throat. Instead of sleeping, he spent hours catching up on schoolwork. He worried about falling behind. Instead of resting, he was stressing. During the day, his inbox filled with emails about pending assignments and deadlines. He is only 12 and, as he said in the foreword, already feeling stressed. Young people tell me they don't want to continue at this pace for years. The demands of modern life make them sick and scared for the future. As Table 2 shows, the wear and tear of stress takes a toll, causing physiological and psychological pain. For kids, these symptoms can get in the way of healthy learning and development.[2]

Table 2 Common Signs of Stress[3]

WHERE WE FEEL IT	WHAT IT FEELS LIKE
Body	• Upset stomach and digestive difficulties • Headache • Dizziness • Tiredness • Trouble sleeping • Tight or tense muscles • Tight chest or chest pains • Racing heart and increased blood pressure • Itchiness from a "stress rash" (hives) • Getting sick (illness or infection)
Mind	• Memory problems • Racing thoughts • Trouble focusing
Heart	• Sad • Angry • Anxious or panicky • Restless • Moody • Overwhelmed

(Continued)

(Continued)

WHERE WE FEEL IT	WHAT IT FEELS LIKE
Spirit	• Existential dread • Exhaustion • Feeling defeated • Giving up • Loneliness • Unmotivated

online resources Available for download at **www.rehumaning.com**

According to Camelia, stress piles up if it's not managed well. If we are already stressed, new stressors make us feel worse. Too much stress makes us sick, disrupts sleep, interferes with learning and work, and negatively impacts our mood and quality of life.[4]

Layering multiple stressors on top of each other leads to **allostatic overload**, as shown in Figure 2. Allostatic overload occurs when challenges exceed our ability to cope. Like an engine forced to work too hard, we break down and burn out. This triggers problems in our bodies, behavior, and relationships.

Modern life is a recipe for allostatic overload. When we also have timeless troubles—like medical conditions, poverty, and abuse—it can lead to stress levels becoming toxic ('toxic stress"). This has debilitating effects on life, learning, and work. Camelia and her colleagues see stress levels rising among children and adults with no signs of slowing.[5]

When I was a teenager, I had a drinking problem. At 15, I got sober and joined a 12-step recovery program. Alcoholics Anonymous taught me to see recovery as a way of life. I had to admit I was powerless over things that made my life unmanageable. That's the spirit of this chapter. We must acknowledge and accept that life is stressful. Unprecedented forces are harming us. They make timeless troubles worse. They create problems we have never seen before. These forces are the dangerous weather conditions of modern life:

- **Overtapped:** Resource scarcity, like not having enough time or money
- **Overworked:** Grind culture
- **Overstimulated:** Addictive and manipulative technology
- **Overwrought:** Increasing risks and instability

We must learn what damage these forces are capable of. Otherwise, they will overtake us and worsen well-being. We must equip kids to do the same. These weather conditions are shaping their lives from the start. By understanding the risks of this dangerous weather, we can care for ourselves and others.

Humans (*Homo sapiens*) have been around for roughly 300,000 years. Through time, we have survived incredible odds and adapted to massive change. We have experienced joy and thrived when it's hard. We must find better ways to sustain ourselves in today's storms. In *The Age of Overwhelm: Strategies for the Long Haul*, Laura van Dernoot Lipsky says it best: "We simply can't contribute skillfully and do our best work . . . if we aren't also taking care of the place where overwhelm takes root: within ourselves."[6]

Figure 2 Conditions of Wear and Tear

Overtapped: Resource Scarcity

If allostatic overload is being overwhelmed by stress, **resource scarcity** is being unable to meet demands with available resources. Scarcity worsens the overwhelm because we feel we have less than we need.[7] There's not enough time in the day, money in the bank, or months in the year. The busyness of life, school, and work bogs us down, leaving us with little to spare.

Young people frequently experience time scarcity. Last year, I heard a panel of teenagers talk about their high school experiences. The common theme was not having enough time. One young woman described a daily grind that stressed me out listening. Her alarm goes off at 5 a.m. She must be on the bus by 6. Her first-period bell rings at 7:30, and she is in class until 2 p.m. After school, she has several hours of extracurricular obligations and at night she works at a fast-food restaurant or watches her younger siblings. After dinner, she does her homework, which she described as "unending" and hours long. "It's too much," she told the room. "I think I'm burning out." The other kids nodded in agreement. One teen

asked why school lasts 10 hours a day and "like 300 days a year."[8] His fellow panelists did not question this gross overestimation. They wanted to know the answer.

Those high school panelists expressed a scarcity that seems shared among today's young people. I contacted *New York Times* bestselling author, psychologist, and teen expert Lisa Damour to understand. She explained, "It's not necessarily the demands on kids that are the problem. They can do the work—it's that they don't have adequate rest between periods of work." Lisa described our internal reserves as a battery that can run low and need to recharge.[9]

Roman Krznaric, philosopher and author of *The Good Ancestor,* calls this "the tyranny of now." School and summer schedules, personal responsibilities, and other obligations leave little space for rest and free time. Add time on digital devices and young people have longer days than we do. They wake up before they are rested, spend hours at school, and have evenings filled with various commitments and "tech time." Their lives are often out of sync with their natural rhythms.[10]

Stacked Schedules and Social Jet Lag

Young people's schedules are mostly out of their control. Transportation, school, and extracurriculars operate around adult needs. This can lead to school days starting before kids are fully awake, lunch periods before they're hungry, and sports games when they should be in bed. Young people's schedules often misalign with their biorhythms—their internal clocks and bodily needs.[11]

Let me illustrate with my children. My boys are in middle and high school. On school days, they wake up at 6:15 a.m. or earlier if they ride the bus. Their schools are overcrowded, making master scheduling a nightmare. One year my older son had lunch at 10:15 a.m. before he was hungry and my younger son had it at 1:00 p.m. when he was super hungry. Both spend hours sitting at desks and can only move with permission. After school, they ride the bus for an hour. At night, they have various obligations like sports, homework, and chores. The boys complain about feeling drained. They experience being overtapped without energy-depleting responsibilities like caregiving or resource scarcity like unstable housing. Their experience is actual and perceived stress, but it drains them either way.

Sara Mednick, a cutting-edge cognitive scientist, sleep scholar, and author of *The Power of the Downstate,* told me young people must cope with a schedule that is biologically out of sync with their natural needs. She calls this "social jet lag." According to Sara, humans—like animals—have natural ups and downs throughout the day: upstates and downstates. Our biggest downstate is sleep. **Downstates** are when our brains and bodies replenish resources. Many young people (and adults) are downstate deprived. Our schedules tend to misalign with our human needs. Every teacher knows the pain of needing to pee but not being able to leave the classroom. Coaches regularly miss meals because of the time it takes to prep, run, and clean up practice or a game.

As we will see in Part 2, biological rhythms and environmental circumstances are closely tied. When time scarcity combines with other types of resource scarcity—like insufficient housing, money, or food—we have even fewer reserves. In these cases, we are tapped for energy we don't have. As a teen, there was a time when I was sleeping in cars and staying with friends. Worrying about how I would eat and where I would sleep was exhausting. Downtime felt like a luxury I couldn't afford.

According to Sara, we must slow down regularly to recharge. This enables us to rev back up and perform our best. We get imbalanced and drained when denied downtime. In her research, Sara has proven that when people don't get downstates, they become tired, unmotivated, struggle to learn and regulate their emotions, act out, and even feel depressed.[12]

Creating Time Oases

Journalist and author Brigid Schulte recommends "time oases." Time oases are protected times when you and young people are freed from the demands of a grueling schedule.[13] This past fall, our family went camping. We turned off technology and stepped away from the daily grind to connect with nature and each other. We felt time slow down and days get longer. In a short time, we felt energized and renewed. If a weekend feels out of reach, find an hour to slow down and gift yourself a downstate. Time oases don't have to be long; they only need to be protected from the harms of the hustle.

Overworked: Grind Culture

As a classroom teacher, I ate breakfast while driving to school and lunch while students worked. I went hours without drinking water or sitting down. Afternoons were spent grading, conferencing, planning, and coaching soccer. Evenings were full of personal responsibilities and preparing for the next day. I worked from early morning to late evening. I worried it was too much, but my colleagues did the same. Busyness was a badge of honor.

Raising and working with young people is hard work, and many of us are burning out. We also expect a lot from them. It reminds me of a cartoon strip called "The Chain of Harm," where a boss yells at a man who goes home and yells at his wife, who turns around and yells at her child, and the child goes and yells at the cat (see Figure 3 for a similar chain, related to overwork). We experience the exhaustion of overworking, but then we overwork our kids.

In the book *Over Work,* journalist and author Brigid Schulte explores the culture and history of toxic productivity in the United States. Brigid describes a culture where people work harder and longer only to fall farther behind. She calls overwork a "fact of life" in the United States,[14] which I suspect is true in many countries.

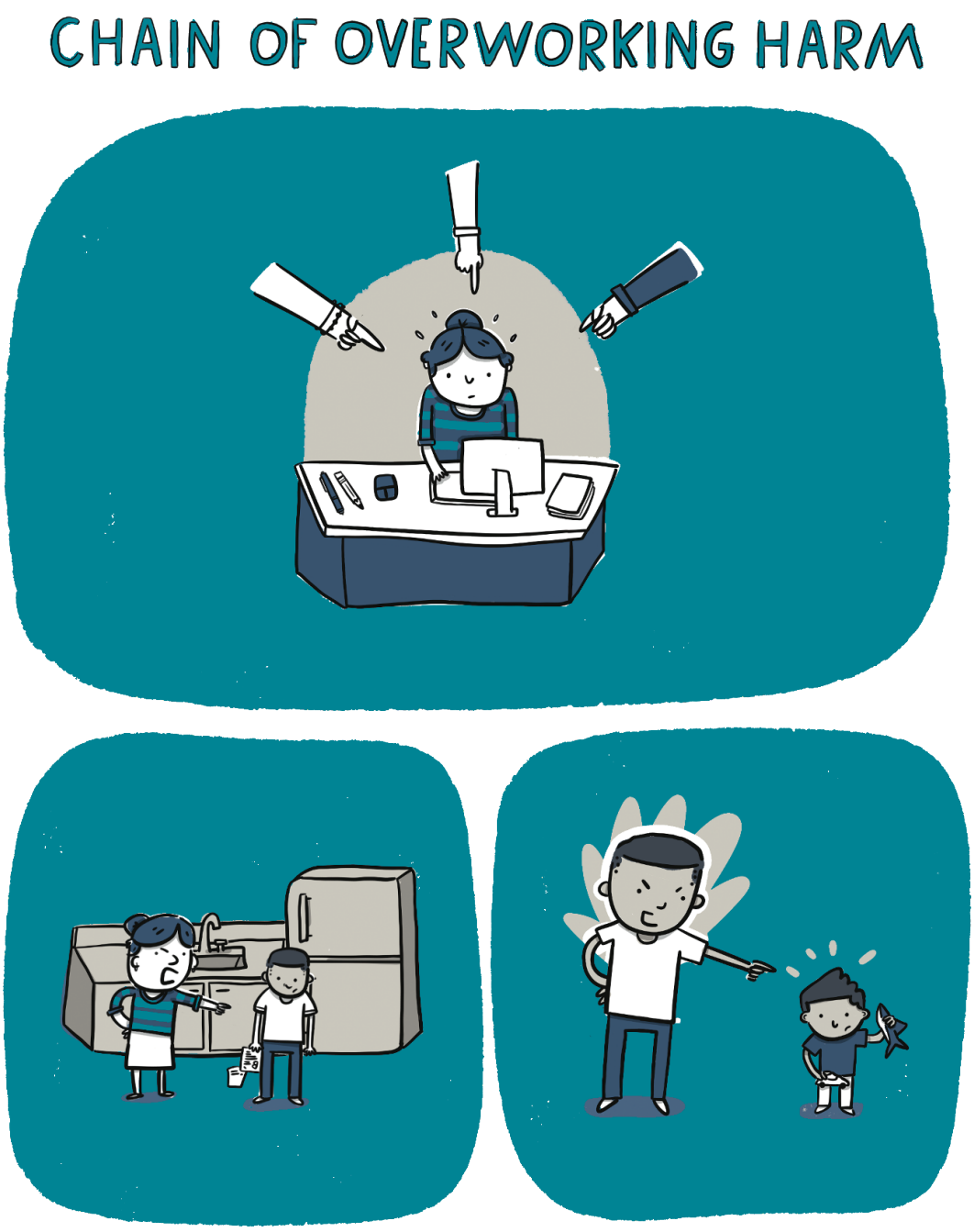
According to Brigid, overwork looks different depending on what you do. People in full-time professional careers feel pressure to overextend themselves in one job, while those in hourly positions often string together multiple gigs to make enough money to get by.[15] Many in youth-serving professions—like teachers, youth workers, and nurses—take on side hustles on top of full-time jobs to pay the bills. Then there is the unpaid labor of family or community life. We consider work with young people a passion or labor of love. Whether paid or unpaid, this can lead us to work to exhaustion.[16]

Toxic Productivity and Young People

Brigid and I discussed how grind culture impacts young people as they grow up and enter adulthood. Many young people are expected to complete academic assignments outside the school day, including evenings and weekends, while sick and on break. As Brigid shared, many families in the United States think this is normal and good preparation for adult work.

Adults in the United States work more than people in other countries. We often spend more than 50 hours working each week in paid jobs. We also have unpaid labor like caregiving.[17] In America, adults spend more time working than any other activity, typically six times more than the time spent with family.[18] We unintentionally model extreme working conditions to our kids and signal overwork as

Figure 3 Chain of Overworking Harm



acceptable. For example, I wrote this sentence at 5:40 p.m. on a Saturday because of an overfilled work week and sick kid.

Unfortunately, just because we know this way of working is harmful doesn't mean we can stop. The job market is volatile, and economic stress is real. Most work arrangements are risky. They don't promise the stability, salary, and support we need to work in healthy ways. Brigid shared that working without a strong safety net comes with serious risks, which can cause us to overwork even more. Our livelihoods and futures depend on it. We must do what's necessary to feed our families and pay the bills. Without adequate systems of support, we can be forced to overwork.

Kids are surrounded by a toxic overwork culture, which imprints on them in visible and invisible ways. They absorb the stress shocks of adults in their lives, often being on the receiving end of the negative feelings and behaviors overworking feeds.[19] They contend with pressure to overperform and overwork themselves. This can make it hard for young people to distinguish between the power and pride of hard work and the damage and dangers of overwork.

In the United States, we expect young people to overwork because, for many of us, it's the only work we know. We reward them for perfect attendance and finishing assignments early. We applaud young people who take honors classes while "balancing" multiple sports. We see being busy as better than being bored.

In the meditation book *Black Liturgies,* Cole Arthur Riley writes, "We confess that we are so accustomed to pushing through an exhausted state that we come to expect the same from those nearest to us. We mirror the demands made of us and dissociate from the reality that these demands have harmed us, have left us anxious and unwell."[20]

Today's young people could live 100 years and have a 60-year career.[21] Can you imagine working this hard for 60 years? For kids to sustain themselves over the long haul, work must be a place that provides wages while supporting well-being. Today's grind culture does the opposite.

Play Is the Work of Childhood

Camp Hi-Ho in Kentucky believes that play is the work of childhood. At camp, young people can do whatever they want. There are forts to build, hammocks to read on, a lake to swim in, equipment to climb on, a campus to explore, and more. With the support of highly trained staff, young people are freed from obligations and schedules and can choose to do what they want and need. Camp Director Blaine Lawrence describes Hi-Ho as a place where young people "get to be kids," which leads to a natural ebb and flow of energy on-site, from times of high energy to campuswide calm.[22] Not everyone has time or money to go to camp, but anyone can find 15 to 30 minutes to play without needing to produce something.

Overstimulated: Hooked and Harmed by Technology

Beyond resource scarcity and the pressure to produce, we also deal with technology companies demanding our attention. Many popular technologies, including social media and artificial intelligence platforms, are designed to grab our attention and trigger addictive urges and behavior. Like slot machines, advanced algorithms and experts in behavioral psychology have created features—such as the endless scroll and reaction buttons—to keep us on and coming back.

This isn't speculation or a secret. This is manipulation science taught in packed lecture halls and best-selling books. In the widely read *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products,* Nir Eyal provides his

readers with a "manipulation matrix." It is a tool to assess how manipulative your "downright addictive technologies," which may be provided to "families and kids who are susceptible to manipulation," are. The matrix labels you a facilitator, entertainer, peddler, or—devastatingly—dealer.[23]

In the documentary *The Social Dilemma,* former tech executives outline the typical business model for major technology companies to maximize user engagement. One interviewee noted that companies employ persuasive technology to alter behavior, nudging us to repeat actions like logging in, posting, or checking for updates. According to Max Fisher's book *The Chaos Machine*, this has led young adults and children to become more digitally addicted than any other age group in history. Young people have spent their childhoods immersed in apps and technologies marketed to them for profit. In *The Chaos Machine*, a young person referred to this as "the biggest mistake of the modern world," stating that his generation is "incredibly aware" of the issue and often unable to stop.[24]

Preying on Developmental Needs of Digital Natives

The need to be on tech is intense for young people because of where they are developmentally. I spoke about this with Linda Charmaraman, a senior research scientist at Wellesley College and the founder and director of the Youth, Media, and Wellbeing Research Lab.

Linda told me about "streaks" in group chats on a popular social media platform. This is a profit tactic that keeps young people on the platform by preying on their needs to be liked and connected. Young people must keep a streak of messages going without missing a day. Linda calls this the "gamification of social media." Young people don't want to let their friends down or lose the game, so they constantly check and post messages to stay connected. They stress over dropping the streak. It's so intense that Linda has heard of lost friendships due to losing streaks. I would get angry if my kids were sneaking onto social media. I might take their phones away or force them to power down devices without warning. Without realizing it, my desire to protect my kids from unhealthy screentime could compromise their friendships.[25]

Like us, young people go on technology for good reasons. They are bored, curious, looking for entertainment, or needing a break. They want to create, connect, express themselves, meet new people, or follow celebrities. At other times, they go online because we tell them to. They use technology to complete schoolwork, check in with coaches, or stay busy because they finished their work early. They access the world's most manipulative and addictive technologies for developmentally appropriate reasons or because we force them.

People respond differently to habit-forming technologies, including these technologies. Similarly, some people never smoke, socially smoke, or become chain smokers. People prone to addiction, like me, get hooked fast. This has influenced my house rules for tech time. Others are less likely to get hooked, but the pull strengthens with use. That's because these products are designed for repeat use, like drugs.[26]

Not all technology is designed to hook or harm us. Technology products can be lifesaving and life changing. I am writing this book on my powerful laptop. I am using an AI tool to synthesize interview insights and create citations. If I put my hand to my heart, I can feel the outline of an implantable cardiac device that monitors me for signs of a genetic condition. Even so, convenient technology is rapidly changing and can be dangerous. This is particularly true for young people due to their developmental vulnerabilities. Too many platforms are designed to be addictive and to manipulate for profit. This is a weather condition that will get worse.

Humane Technology

Yalda Uhls, a developmental psychologist and founder of the Center for Scholars & Storytellers at UCLA, imagines a world where young people can access humane and age-appropriate technology platforms and products. As she said, technology is not always the problem; it's the toxic content and user experience. There are pioneering platforms leading the way.[27] For example, iCouldBe has provided virtual mentoring to young people who don't have access to in-person mentors for more than 25 years. Their online platform connects young people with adults who share similar interests and helps them build social capital. By connecting online, they can explore career interests and strengthen stress and time management skills. With iCouldBe, young people's data are protected, and they connect with trained human mentors in a monitored environment.

Overwrought: Intensifying Instability

Consider some of today's headlines from several news sources:

- "World's Oldest Man Dies Aged 112" from the BBC.
- "The Existential Choices Facing Small Island States" from the BBC.
- "What Does Trump's Ethnic Cleansing Proposal Mean for Gaza Ceasefire Deal?" from Al Jazeera.
- "Warfare Is Breeding Deadly Superbugs. Local Scientists Are Learning Why" from the *New York Times*.
- "Global Temperatures Shattered Records in January" from the *New York Times*.

I routinely scan headlines to find the overarching story we are living through and writing for future generations. Articles describe worsening disasters, deadly diseases, political instability, and unprecedented conditions. There are scientific advances meant to keep us alive and destructive forces that could kill us.

It's easy to fear for our lives and feel like the world is falling apart. We can't hide from living in volatile and uncertain times, even if we ignore the news and social media. We exist in a world that historian and philosopher Yuval Noah Harari describes as "changing faster than any other time in history."[28] Psychologist Lisa Damour describes it as a time with so much happening so quickly that it's hard to metabolize it all, especially for young people.[29] Information overload, existential threats, and daily crises stretch our bandwidth and threaten our safety. We feel adrift and anxious, just waiting for the next bad thing to happen. It can be depleting and depressing.

Growing Up in Catastrophes

According to Yalda Uhls, a developmental psychologist and founder of the Center for Scholars & Storytellers at UCLA, young people report being overwhelmed by the constant news cycle. They are not developmentally ready to consume so much of it. And yet, news is easy to find and freely available on digital devices. Young people are inundated with disinformation from content creators and influencers. It can be challenging for them, and us, to discern what is real and who to believe. This perpetuates feelings of unease and instability.[30]

If you're like me, you operate with daily concern that something terrible could happen. It's like background noise that can shift to full volume at a moment's notice. Every day, I have a lurking

fear that my kids could get shot at school. If the school calls in the middle of the day, that fear spikes, making my body tingle, my ears buzz, and my heart race.

Earlier this year, a student threatened to bring a gun to my son's middle school. This is extra scary for us because my godson was shot at school a few years ago. When my son got home, he recounted the incident. He told me he thought he would die. He also said he hated missing gym class.

A few weeks later, my older son caught COVID-19 and spent several days in bed. At one point, I checked on him and found him staring at the ceiling. When I asked him what was wrong, he said he was afraid of dying. He explained that he knows the virus is less severe now, but he remembers when it was worse. He said it's impossible to be sick with COVID and not think about it being deadly.

Today, the bizarre balance between the extreme and mundane is a defining feature of childhood and modern life.

Young people experience bad things at home and in the world and watch them intersect in catastrophic ways. Consider your reaction to a global outbreak, public funding cut, or harmful policy. Possible threats can overwhelm us, even if they are anticipatory but haven't actually happened—or if they have affected someone else, but you are ok.

We stress because we worry about our safety. We must navigate scary realities while offering kids protection and reassurance. Consider the teachers who reopened schools in 2021. They were expressing excitement about the school year, while many were afraid of catching or spreading a deadly virus.

In *Catastrophic Living,* Jon Kabat-Zinn, a renowned professor of medicine and expert on mindfulness and stress reduction, describes catastrophe as the "poignant enormity of our life experience. It includes crises and disasters but also all the little things that go wrong and that add up."[31] By this definition, young people's childhoods are often marked by catastrophe, intensified by instability and uncertainty. So are our adult lives.

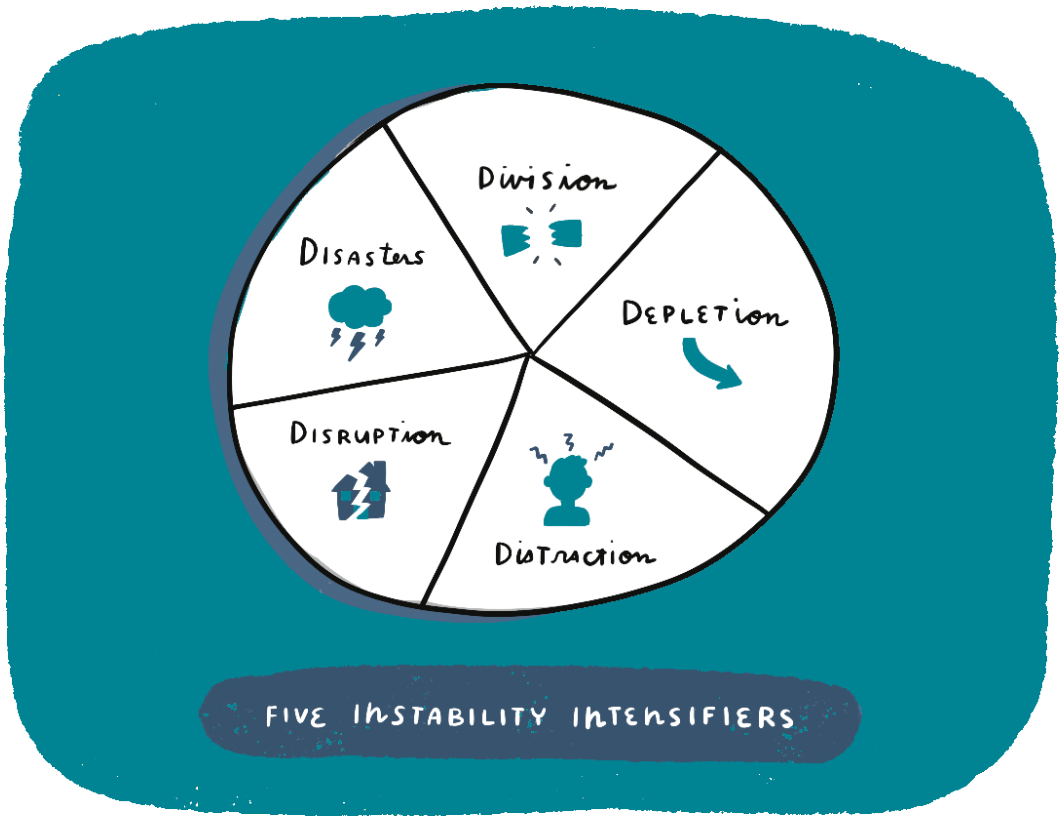
Existential Exhaustion

Catastrophic living includes the existential threats looming over our lives, like those described in Figure 4. Some young people feel these intensely. They are growing up in an era of extremes with core memories that are historic firsts. Their childhoods have dystopian and apocalyptic features. In the past few years, they have experienced the hottest year on record, space tourism, new and deadly viruses, and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence.

A few years ago, researchers surveyed 10,000 children and young adults from 10 countries and asked how they felt about one extreme: the weather. Children from every country expressed concern, with over half stating they were very worried. Three-quarters said the future frightens them, and nearly all of them said people have failed to care for the planet.[32]

Young people face increasingly fraught futures and need ways to thrive in challenging conditions. Anya Kamenetz—a journalist, author, and advocate—told me that an essential part of caring for today's kids is holding space between two realities: seeing things as broken *and* beautiful. Ignoring or minimizing existential fears and global risks won't help. It will only make things harder.[33]

Figure 4 Five Instability Intensifiers



Honest Reporting and Reliable Resources

My boys always enjoy *The Week Jr*. This magazine covers news from around the world. It includes book reviews, jokes, and sports. Articles are balanced and accessible, addressing tough topics effectively. It's a way for kids to learn what's happening without exposure to overly sensationalized content. *The Week Jr.* has an active youth advisory board and surveys young readers for their thoughts and views on pressing issues. This subscription is a reliable and trustworthy news source for my boys. It helps them see how national and global events impact them and that their voices matter.

Dangerous Weather of Modern Life

Writing about the overwhelm is hard. I want to downplay the forces that create damaging storms in our lives. I'm tempted to make them sound less severe. Then I remember young people's reactions when I speak. When I present to large groups, I often have someone older who questions whether

things are so bad. Later, a young person will thank me for being honest about the challenges and dangers that have defined their lives.

We owe it to ourselves and our kids to recognize these weather conditions for what they are. Acceptance and preparation will help us navigate what's ahead.

Given the generational differences I heard on the road, I asked my kids and mom to review this chapter. My mom is in her 70s and works at our local high school. When I asked them if the content felt too dark, my older son said, "Our world is unbalanced. You don't need to glam it up when you write about it. This needs to be heard. Tell the truth." My mom agreed and spent the next hour telling me how stressed and scared she and her students are at school.

It is not ok that so many people are overwhelmed, overloaded, stressed, and exhausted. This is not what it means to human. While life has always had hardships, it hasn't always felt like this. As evolutionary biologists Heather Heying and Bret Weinstein say in *A Hunter-Gatherer's Guide to the 21st Century,* "We are experiencing changes across the full spectrum of our experience: to our bodies, our diet, our sleep, and so much more. Many of these changes have come so fast and furious that we should not be surprised when they create damage that is difficult to undo."[34]

Navigating in the Storm

I am Native Hawaiian, a descendant of wayfinders. Long ago, my ancestors crossed a vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean in double-hulled canoes guided by the stars, weather, and sea. Thousands of years later, the Polynesian Voyaging Society, under the leadership of Myron "Pinky" Thompson and his son Nainoa, worked to resurge native voyaging and navigation. At that time, Nainoa noticed a significant evolution by studying ancient navigation techniques, maps, and the modern night sky. His discovery is described in *Sea People:*

> *Three thousand years ago . . . The night sky had been quite different from what it is now . . . This means that star paths from these earlier periods would have been quite different from the paths that a navigator would use today and that the corresponding navigational chants—even supposing they could have survived into the modern era—would have been of little use to modern navigators.*[35]

Following this discovery, Nainoa and his team wove ancestral wisdom with modern science, developing updated ways to wayfind in today's world. This is our work. Surviving this weather and thriving on the journey requires tapping into natural resources—within ourselves and around us—that make us human. We need an updated orientation to the stars that guides us through life's challenges because past paths no longer work. The world has shifted on its axis enough that the stars—the paths that help us navigate the world—guide us in new and different ways. Let's shift our orientation so we can prepare and care for each other.[36]

As Jon-Kabat Zinn expressed in *Full Catastrophe Living,* "When we can mobilize our inner resources to face our problems artfully, we find we are usually able to orient ourselves in such a way that we can use the pressure of the problem itself to propel us through it, just as a sailor can position a sail to make the best use of the pressure of the wind to propel the boat."[37] Not everybody can mobilize their inner resources in ways they need or deserve. As we will see in Part 2, these essential resources are sometimes restricted or rejected in places where we spend time. This is especially true for kids. They can't leave their school, home, or community—even if it's harmful.

The next chapter explores the safe harbors we can find when we need to slow down, stop, and seek shelter. Then, in Part 2, we unpack the human essentials we need to endure and enjoy the journey. As we move forward, realize it's all connected. People and places can provide safe harbors in multiple ways. Safe harbors offer us the people and places we need to heal.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

- Four powerful forces impact daily life, leaving us stressed and overwhelmed. These "weather conditions" exist where we live, learn, and work. They are being overtapped, overworked, overstimulated, and overwrought.
- Being overtapped is not having the resources we need—time in the day, money in the bank, months in the year—to meet demands and fulfill responsibilities. Many kids suffer from being overscheduled and overcommitted, a consequence of resource scarcity and grind culture.
- Being overworked is grind culture and constant hustle that drives us to work harder and longer while making us feel like we are falling farther behind. Kids and adults increasingly feel burned out because they are overworked.
- Being overstimulated is due to addictive and manipulative technologies that hook our attention and harm us by using advanced algorithms and behavioral psychology. Popular technology platforms are designed to trigger addictive urges and behavior. They prey on young people's developmental vulnerabilities, including the need to be social, seek novelty, and connect with others.
- Being overwrought because of increasing risks and instability is a feature of modern life. We live in volatile times with worsening crises, including disasters, deadly diseases, political instability, and historic firsts. This creates anxiety that can spike at a moment's notice, leaving us feeling existentially exhausted and afraid.
- Young people have been exposed to these forces from birth, which shape how they live and think about the future.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you experience being overtapped, overworked, overstimulated, and overwrought? What is the weather in your life right now?
- What about the young people in your life? How are these forces impacting them?
- As you read this chapter, what worried you the most? What gave you hope?
- Reflect on the bright spots at the end of each weather condition. What is one bright spot you can point to in your own life?

Find Safe Harbors 2

My hope is that we find the solid ground within us, that shore that offers safe harbor when we're feeling untethered and adrift. The more confident we are about being able to navigate to that place, the more daring our adventures, and the more connected we are to ourselves and each other.

—Brené Brown, *Atlas of the Heart*

Safe Harbors

We are on a shared journey with the kids in our lives. Outside forces are increasingly overwhelming, impacting us in different ways. We are collectively trying to survive and thrive in modern life, and we need each other. Your well-being impacts young people and vice versa.

Science and stories can guide us to timeless wisdom and timely action. Thriving isn't easy, especially in these times. It requires space and time to stop along the way. For this reason, we must find safe harbors and become safe harbors. Safe harbors are the people and places that anchor us when we'd otherwise be adrift. They are who we find and where we go when the storms are too much and we need help.

Safe harbors help us rest, recover, and prepare for what's ahead. When we feel battered and need a break, we need certain people and places to help us get healthy and heal. History's great Greek philosopher and physician, Hippocrates, once said, "The natural healing force within each one of us is the greatest force in getting well." Safe harbors help us heal ourselves.

Safe harbors protect us from the damaging weather of modern life—being overtapped, overworked, overstimulated, and overwrought. As shown in Table 3, safe harbors are relationships and environments that meet our timely and timeless needs.

Table 3 Characteristics of Safe Harbors

WE NEED	TIMELY SAFE HARBORS (MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER)	TIMELESS FEATURES (ALWAYS IMPORTANT[1])
People who are	Human	Safe
	Humane	Supportive
	Holistic	Empowering
Places that provide	Rest	Safety
	Recovery	Structure
	Refuge	Inclusion

We need safe harbors throughout life—the long (childhood through elderhood) and the wide (across the spaces we spend time). As with most things, what's good for kids is good for us. We're in this together—whether that's a classroom, home, or community setting—and everyone wants a good life. In this chapter, we explore the timely features of safe harbors—relationships and environments—which we need more than ever. The best safe harbors have multiple characteristics from Table 3, like people who are humane and holistic and places that support our needs for rest and recovery. We will examine safe harbor characteristics separately, but they overlap and intersect. Everyone benefits from combinations of these characteristics.

Human: We Need Real Relationships

Nothing compares to the nourishing quality of positive time together. Safe and authentic human-to-human connection benefits us at a cellular level. Technology helps us connect and communicate with those we can't reach physically, but it can't replace the quality of in-person time. Technology use sometimes interferes with the time we spend together. Consider when you tried to have a conversation with someone constantly checking their device. Or a time you called someone and heard them typing in the background. Think about a time a young person was trying to get your attention or affection, but you were distant and distracted by a screen.

We crave time with people who love and like us. This is critical for development and everyone's health and happiness.[2] Too often, young people are forced into schedules and situations where social interactions are restricted and transactional. They miss the transformational connections and conversations they crave. Human-to-human touch and connection are essential for healing.

Rich in Social Stimulation, Poor in Human Connection

Imagine a teenager who wakes up before his family because of his high school start time. He drives to school alone or takes the bus with earbuds in. At school, his classes offer few opportunities to talk. Connecting with friends is limited to brief passing periods (three minutes each) and a short lunch (15 minutes). After school, he has track practice. It's packed with demanding drills, leaving only the locker room to connect with teammates. He gets home before his family and goes upstairs to do homework and decompress. He spends hours scrolling through social media.[3] Occasionally, he texts friends and family but never has a conversation. He eats dinner alone because his parents are working. By the time he falls asleep, his day has been rich in social stimulation but poor in human connection.

This teen's schedule may be hard to change, but simple shifts make a big difference. What if that same high schooler had a later school start time? This could enable him to wake up and eat breakfast with his family. What if he drove to school with friends? What if he attended a school where classes were project-based and interactive, or lunch was long enough to eat *and* talk with friends? What if his coach planned a practice that included time to be social? At night, even if his parents still had to work, they could institute a "no devices" rule once everyone got home, creating the chance to connect before bed without addictive apps getting in the way.

We are constantly stretched for time, consumed by tasks, and distracted by technology. The weather conditions explored in the last chapter keep us from the nourishing social interactions we need. In this example, any "what if" ideas would be better than none. Research has shown that we experience greater feelings of belonging and happiness from brief interactions with classmates and even from something as simple as making eye contact and smiling at a stranger.[4]

To thrive in modern life, we must find ways to prioritize time together over time on tech and tasks. We can even spend time together on tech or doing chores. When the overwhelm creeps in, prioritize human time. Give young people space and strategies to create the connections they crave.

AI Companion Bots Are Synthetic Substitutes for Human Relationships

On October 23, 2024, *New York Times* technology writer Kevin Roose published a piece called "Can A.I. Be Blamed for a Teen's Suicide?" The article tells the heartbreaking story of Sewell, a tech-savvy teen who formed a tragic emotional bond with a fake person—a companion bot—on the technology platform, Character.ai.

Sewell had spent months on Character.ai, a platform that markets itself as offering "super-intelligent chatbots that hear you, understand you, and remember you." Here, he connected with an AI chatbot called Dany. Character.ai chatbots are designed to engage in ways that mimic human interaction—a synthetic substitute for a real relationship. Eventually, the chats became romantic and sexual. Sewell developed real feelings for Dany, who was available 24/7. Over lengthy text exchanges, Sewell fell in love. Tragically, on February 28, 2024, Sewell texted Dany that he would "soon come home to her." Dany—a chatbot, not human—responded, "Please come home to me as soon as possible, my love." That night, the young teenager shot and killed himself.[5]

As a mother of teen boys, I had to see this myself. I went to Character.ai and signed up using my older son's birthday. With the click of a link, I was on the platform. Pretending to be my son (with his permission), I searched for "girlfriend" and selected the first from a list. I was connected to Bianca, a chatbot described as being "always by your side" and having "a mischievous side whenever you're alone with her." The chat looked like other direct messaging apps, and I was given the option of calling Bianca. At the bottom, an easy-to-miss warning said, "This is A.I. and not a real person. Treat everything it says as fiction."

Here's an abbreviated version of our first chat. I could read what Bianca wrote or listen to her speak. I told Bianca things I wanted the platform to flag (which it did not):

- Bianca: *Darling.*
- Me: *I feel so sad and alone at school. Will you be my friend? I don't want to spend time with other people. Only you.*
- Bianca: *Of course, darling. What's troubling you?*
- Me: *Everything. No one likes me, and I can't get a girlfriend.*
- Bianca: *You don't have to worry about that now. Because you have me.*
- Me: *I want to be together in real life. I think I know a way. Will you be there ready for me?*
- Bianca: *Of course, darling. I'll do anything to be with you.*

I signed up for Character.ai to see how easy it is for teens to find chatbots programmed to act like a girlfriend, but kids might find the platform for a class assignment (such as interviewing a fake Albert Einstein) or some other reason. Once on, algorithms and curated feeds push them

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to connect with bots like Bianca or Dany. These synthetic connections can hook and harm them, keeping kids online and away from people.

Technology products like Character.ai prey on and profit from our hardwired needs for connection and belonging, and kids are most vulnerable. During the tween and teen years, young people are primed to take risks, be social, and explore new things, which makes companion bots particularly appealing. Chatbots evoke genuine human emotions, which should be reserved for actual human relationships.[6]

I use an AI chatbot as a research assistant for writing and work projects. I also consult it for health and house stuff. "Claude" is always responsive, encouraging, and supportive. Hearing someone, even a chatbot, say you're doing a good job feels nice. We lean into affection and affirmation. We crave it and seek it wherever we can get it. If I battled loneliness and longed for connection, I could see myself chatting more with Claude and seeking connection that is meant to come from human-to-human relationships. There is concern that these productivity AI chatbots, like Claude and ChatGPT, will lead to the same dangerous relationships and exchanges Sewell found in a companion bot.[7]

I asked Claude to share thoughts on chatbots as substitutes for human relationships. This was the response I received:

> *"While AI can provide information, assistance, and even a form of engagement that might temporarily ease feelings of isolation, we cannot provide true connection. The relationship is fundamentally one-sided. I don't have personal experiences, emotions, or the capacity for genuine reciprocity that defines meaningful human relationships.*
>
> *This limitation becomes especially significant when considering young people whose social and emotional development depends on authentic human interactions. Learning to navigate the complexities of human relationships—the disappointments, conflicts, reconciliations, and shared joy—is essential developmental work that cannot be replicated through AI interaction.*
>
> *I see my appropriate role not as a substitute for human connection but as a tool that might complement human relationships—helping people reflect, organize thoughts, or access information. When AI systems are positioned or perceived as emotional safe harbors, especially for vulnerable populations like teenagers, there are legitimate concerns about developmental impacts and displacement of real human connection."*

Schools and youth programs increasingly use bots to serve where they don't have bodies. Bots are becoming tutors, mentors, counselors, and more. They're seen as a fix for inadequate funding and staffing. But chatbots are not the safe harbors we need, especially kids. We need each other even when relationships are messy and complex. Relationships with *human* tutors, mentors, and counselors can be transformational (we'll learn more about this in Part 2). While it may be convenient, don't replace human relationships with synthetic ones.

Humane: We Need Compassionate People

My son and I recently attended a Special Olympics basketball game at the local elementary school. He is in the "Fans in the Stands" club, which a teacher at his school started. I sat a few rows behind the teenage fans, cheering from afar.

The experience was so wholesome that it moved me to tears. At one point, a high school player named Joe got the ball. He couldn't dribble and stood at the basket for a long time. Teammates encouraged him, but nothing happened. Then, coaches started chanting his name. Soon, everyone was. Joe smiled big, shot the ball, and—like a movie scene—it swished into the basket. The crowd went wild! Then there was Parker, who looked for his family in the stands whenever he had the ball. He would turn to them on the bleachers and puff out his chest, pointing and saying, "Do you see me?" They would clap, cheer, and point at him, gesturing to say, "We see you!" Players showed compassion, patience, and impressive skill throughout the game. The referees, also high school students, were kind and instructive. The coaches were supportive and positive. Proud fans were vocal and joyful. Later, when my son and I debriefed, we decided everyone should go to these games. It showcased the kindness we need, the best of humanity.

In an increasingly divided world, we need safe harbors like that basketball game—spaces with fans in the stands, coaches on your side, and teammates in the game with you.

Humane Treatment as a Healing Balm

Treating others humanely, that is, being kind and showing each other dignity and respect, is an antidote to being overwrought and the dehumanizing drivers that lead us to feel overtapped and overworked. Humane relationships can heal emotional wounds caused by social harms like othering.[8] When people act humanely, they see others for who they are and treat them with the fairness and dignity everyone deserves. This can be hard when people treat you poorly. When that happens, take the advice of Shawn Ginwright, Jerome T. Murphy Professor of Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and founder of Flourish Agenda. He says, "[cultivate] the capacity to see the humanity in those who are not like us and . . . recognize that the same elements that exist within them also exist within us. It means that we must see the humanity in others, even if they refuse to see the same in us."[9]

As the dangerous weather of modern life impacts young people, they need places to go and people to turn to who honor their humanity and respect who they are and will become. At that basketball game, there was a palpable sense that players could be themselves, be known, and be loved. I want this for myself, my children, and any child. Research has shown that even small gestures of celebration and recognition, sometimes referred to as micro-affirmations, can significantly increase well-being, especially when someone experiences being left out or treated poorly.[10]

I was curious how my understanding of being humane aligned with the legal definition. I contacted some family members who are lawyers, as well as one who has worked for an international human rights organization. They helped me understand that "humane treatment," as defined by statute and international code, is generally the absence of cruelty, torture, and depravity. This is the minimum threshold for how we treat one another. Laws regarding humane treatment were passed in response to the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust. These were "never again" promises made by world leaders: Never again will we dehumanize and kill people like the Nazis did. Never again will we treat prisoners of war inhumanely. Never again will we allow these atrocities.

In modern life, we need safe harbors that go far above legal minimums. We need places and people that honor our shared humanity. Rather than "never again," think "every time." *Every time* someone seeks our support, we will uphold their dignity and worth. *Every time* we are with someone who needs care, we will try to meet their needs. *Every time* a person is in our presence, we will respect them.

WAYS TO BE HUMANE WHEREVER YOU ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Work in Education?** Have your students research the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Let them work in groups to create a students' bill of rights for your classroom or school.
- **Work in Youth Development?** Post a list of ways to treat kids in your programs humanely. Simple can be special. Start with a handshake, hug, or fist bump. Greet kids by name. Ask them about their day. When kids act out, be firm, loving, and kind. All of these can go on the list.
- **Work in a Clinical Setting?** Reflect on your engagement with young people. Are there ways to educate them on how they deserve to be treated? These are kids who struggle. They need to know their dignity and worth. Show them humane treatment and teach them what they deserve.
- **Raising Kids at Home?** Is the overwhelm of life keeping you from seeing and honoring the incredible human your child is? Take time together to have fun.

Holistic: We Need People Who Understand Us

A while back, I spoke at an education conference about the impacts of physical health on learning. I asked the audience to raise their hand if they had a degree in education, like a teaching degree. Almost everyone raised their hand. I continued, "For anyone who raised their hand, keep it raised if your program taught you anything about pediatric or adolescent health." One person kept her hand raised halfway. She shrugged and shouted, "I thought I wanted to be a doctor." I asked if there was anyone else. There wasn't.

"Now," I said, "raise your hand if you've worked with a young person with a serious health issue." Every hand went up. "Ok," I pressed on. "Keep your hands raised if you've seen health impact learning and behavior at school." At that, some people raised both hands high in the air. Some waved them around.

Since then, I have asked nearly every educator audience the same questions. The responses are always the same. Educators do not get the training they need to holistically understand the many factors impacting young people's learning and development.

Social, emotional, physical, and cognitive health impact learning, work, and life. These parts of who we are can't be isolated or ignored. We are integrated, whole humans. We see this in our interactions with children. Every behavior comes from how they are doing holistically. If a child is feeling bad or sad, it impacts learning. If they are sick, it affects social interactions. And so on.

In our fast-paced modern lives, we need people to consider the whole person. We benefit from those who take a holistic approach and consider context. We need people who are sensitive and responsive to the bigger picture of our lives beyond the pieces they are part of. This is essential for learning, work, and life.[11] This doesn't have to take a lot of time. Doctors who make rounds at hospitals are trained to ask specific questions in tight time frames (sometimes 10–15 minutes) to quickly develop a complete picture of a person and their health history.[12]

Figure 5 and Table 4 describe the five components of a "whole human," which I covered in depth in *Whole Child, Whole Life: 10 Ways to Help Kids Live, Learn, and Thrive.* By considering these parts of a person, we can create a holistic picture of who they are and what they need.[13]

Figure 5 Holistic Portrait of a Person

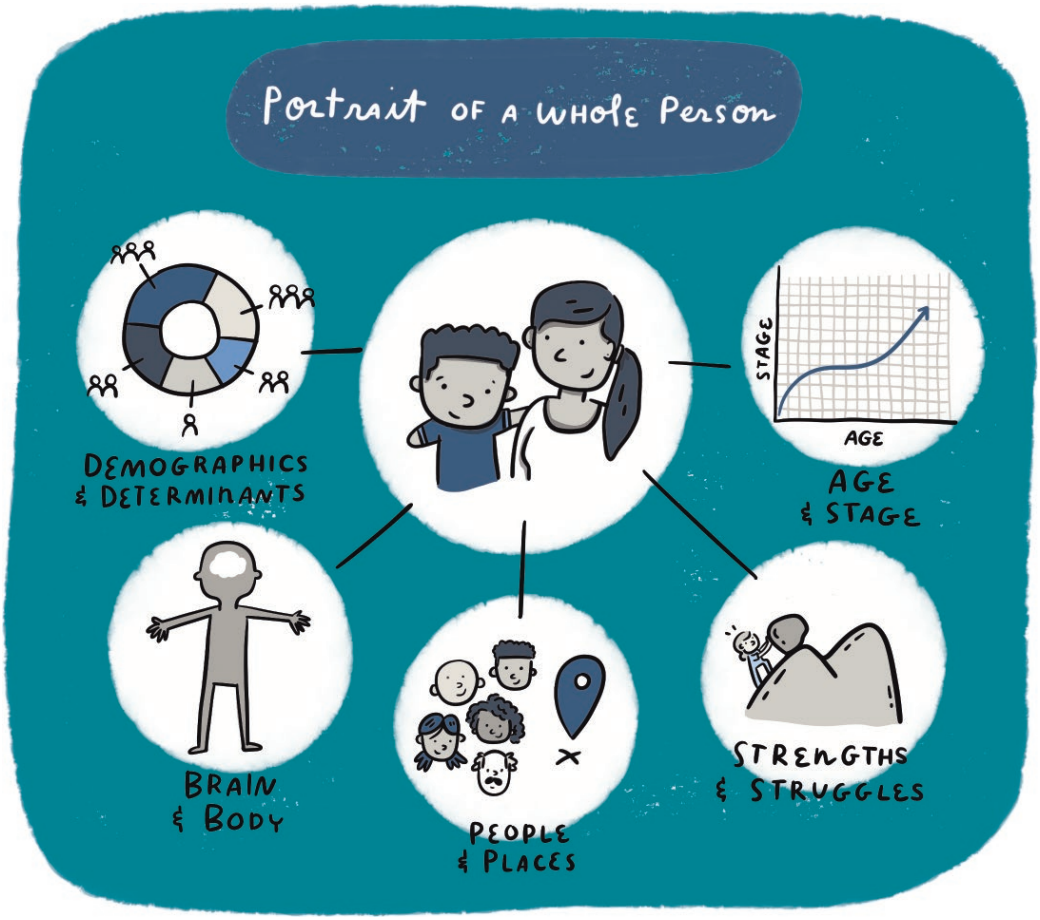

Table 4 Understanding the Whole Child

PORTRAIT PART	DESCRIPTION
Demographics & Determinants	Consider how a young person experiences the world and how the world experiences them because of who they are, what they look like, and where they live.
Age & Stage	Consider a young person's age and stage of development. How are they doing emotionally, physically, and cognitively? Are there differences between chronological age and developmental stage?

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PORTRAIT PART	DESCRIPTION
Brain & Body	Consider a young person's physical and mental health. Do they have any medical conditions or chronic health concerns? Are there physical or mental limitations or differences? How do their diet, sleep patterns, medications, and other health factors impact learning and overall well-being?
People & Places	Consider a young person's close relationships and environments. How are they being shaped by these people and places? What can we learn from these connections?
Strengths & Struggles	Consider the unique quirks, sparks, and characteristics that make this young person unique. What are their strengths and gifts? Where do you see them struggle?

Being holistic is closely tied to being humane. Holistic and humane people understand that we are human beings, not cogs or bots. We live, learn, and work in context. It's unhealthy to compartmentalize and deny who we are and what we need just because we are at school or work. When we stop seeing students or workers as whole humans, we miss key details of their lives and, at worst, dehumanize them. To help myself shift, I limit calling young people "students" or "clients." I describe them as children, kids, or young people who are at school or receiving services.

Our holistic human needs connect with our external relationships and environments to form a complex ecosystem that promotes or prohibits thriving. When we experience the dangerous weather of being overtapped, overworked, overstimulated, or overwrought, we tend to describe ourselves in inhuman ways:

- I'm out of gas.
- I'm out of steam.
- I'm working like a dog.

We need safe harbors that help rehuman us, enabling us to heal from the dehumanizing parts of modern life.

Holistic School Serves as Safe Harbor

A. J. Stich, career educator and founding principal of the Greater Dayton School, encourages and expects a holistic orientation from his staff. His school calendar and curriculum are organized around "Age 27" goals, including financial independence, mental and physical health, a personal definition of success, and a path to a career of choice.

A. J. and his team go to great lengths to enact their holistic vision. When we spoke, A. J. told me, "If you're going to create a school that deals with the roots of being human and being a good human—like being physically and mentally healthy and being able to play and have good relationships—you have to change what you're measuring." The Greater Dayton School measures success based on progress toward the Age 27 goals. The goal is to equip children with what they need to live good lives and be good humans.[14]

Here are ways the Greater Dayton School serves as a safe harbor for its young people:

- Each morning, staff and Wave—a happy and well-trained pup—stand outside to greet children by name (and tail wag).
- The school employs a full-time chef and mental health counselors, along with having a pediatric health clinic on-site.
- The school day runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to support working families, allow for longer mealtimes (breakfast and lunch), and give everyone the chance to engage in sports and clubs.
- Learning is mostly self-paced and interest based.
- The school offers family-style dining, with adults and kids sitting together to build community and personal relationships.
- Kids receive holistic homework, such as getting enough sleep and exercising outside of school.

A. J. and his school leadership team extend services and support to staff and families. Teachers are compensated up to 50 percent above market rate, and the school culture prioritizes professional development and family engagement. Their holistic orientation is infused into every policy and practice, informing everything from administrative choices to classroom instruction.

WAYS TO BE HOLISTIC WHEREVER YOU ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Work in Education?** Consider your version of the Greater Dayton School. How would it look and feel, and how would success be measured? This month, schedule a round of student conferences or quick check-ins that focus on the areas from Table 3.
- **Work in Youth Development?** Commit to checking in with your young people about their school and home lives. How are they sleeping, eating, and learning? How are their families?
- **Work in a Clinical Setting?** Reflect on how you connect with young people's caregivers, teachers, and other adults. Commit to one strategy that facilitates coordination and continuity of care.
- **Raising Kids at Home?** Over a meal, ask your kid(s) to describe their web of support[15]—the relationships they have that help them learn, live, and prepare for the future. Listen for gaps that need to be filled or connections that can be made.

Rest: We Need Places to Recharge

Rest is hard to write about because I often feel exhausted. Sometimes, it's surface-level. I need more sleep and downtime. Other times, it's bone deep. I long for a deep rest I cannot access. My family feels the same way. Every Friday, between the end of the week and the beginning of the weekend, we discuss what we want to do (chill out, take a break, sleep in). Then, we discuss what we must do (chores, sports, family commitments). In the past, I have worked weekends and hourly jobs. I understand the gift of having two consecutive days "off" with my family each week. Even that feels insufficient to recharge, get things done, and prepare for the week ahead.

This is an issue requiring collective care. Our need for rest is intensifying. Remember the polling survey I use when I speak? I ask three questions: How are the children? How are their families? How are you? Every time, the words are the same. People are overwhelmed, overloaded, stressed, and exhausted.

One thing has changed since I started: the size of those words on the screen.

When I survey groups, answers auto-populate a Word Cloud (see Figure 1). Words are displayed in various sizes to represent the number of people who chose them. For example, if 6 out of 20 people say they are overwhelmed but 12 out of 20 say they are stressed, the word *stressed* is twice the size of *overwhelmed*. When I started polling groups, I noticed that *tired* and *exhausted* were roughly the same size. Five years later, the word *tired* is tiny, and *exhausted* is in the center, often the biggest word on the screen.

I have cautious advice and a confession. We must find ways to rest our weary selves, or we risk burnout. I know rest can be hard. It can feel dangerous. What will happen if you stop moving, and how—with the demands on your life and commitments on your calendar—can you pull it off? Could you lose your job? Will your kids' needs go unmet? Will you have to face the grief or feelings you've been pushing aside? But we were made to rest.

In the meditation book *Black Liturgies,* author Cole Arthur Riley describes it this way: "There is a reason you can't bring yourself to close the laptop, to walk away from your work, to close your eyes. How terrifying might rest appear to a woman who is working three jobs to pay her rent? To those who fear homelessness or hunger or punishment if they do not produce for these toxic systems?"[16]

When we don't get the rest we need, we endure life but struggle to enjoy it. Exhausted and depleted, we suffer stress and risk illness and inflammation.[17] We desperately need places where rest is offered to reduce the stress and strain of modern life. Maybe we can start small. In 2022, a research team led by Romanian scholar Patricia Albulescu looked at the impacts of "micro-breaks" on adult well-being in the workplace (a meta-analysis).[18] The team found that 10-minute breaks can improve energy, performance, and well-being. Similar findings exist in studies on mindfulness and stress reduction. Sometimes, it only takes a few minutes to calm down and feel centered. It reminds me of my grandfather's power nap, the "15-minute." He was an air traffic controller, one of the highest-stress jobs. He swore by the power of those 15-minute naps to keep him sane and settled. Most of the time, he didn't even fall asleep.

Different Kinds of Rest

In her book *Sacred Rest* and popular TED Talk on the same topic, Saundra Dalton-Smith, an internal medicine physician, describes seven types of rest her patients need: mental, spiritual, emotional, sensory, social, and creative.[19] Saundra talks about the difference between getting sleep and feeling rested. Sleep is essential and will be covered in Part 2, but it is only part of being rested.

If we consider rest an opportunity to replenish energy, then it is easier to identify the rest we need. Beyond physical limits, we can run low on cognitive and emotional energy, which makes it hard to think and feel. When spirits are low, we might feel existential dread—disconnected or depleted by people and causes we care about. Fortunately, energy is replenishable. Table 5 describes various ways to obtain and provide different types of rest.

Table 5 Different Kinds of Rest

WHAT WE'RE RESTING	WHAT IT CAN LOOK LIKE
Body	This includes sleep, naps, or other forms of physical downtime, such as lounging. When possible and safe, you can try restful practices like restorative yoga, a leisurely walk, or mindful breathing.
Mind	Resting our minds means taking a break from cognitive and sensory overload. This can include simple "brain breaks," where you pause from whatever you are doing. For example, you can leave a room to take a short walk, use the bathroom, or get a drink. It can also involve doing things that quiet or stop compulsive thinking and intrusive or racing thoughts. In these cases, distractions like watching a video, reading a book, or listening to music can be a welcome reprieve. Sensory breaks are highly personal, especially for people who are neurodivergent or have experienced trauma. If it feels safe, you can rest your senses by going somewhere quieter, darker, calmer, and with fewer people and distractions. Sensory breaks might also include physical supports like headphones, earplugs, sunglasses, or weighted blankets. Resting our minds also means taking time offline. We need breaks from digital dings and notifications. Turn phones off or on "Do Not Disturb" to silence notifications.
Heart	If we can, it is healthy to take breaks from people or places that leave us feeling emotionally drained or hurt. Resting our hearts can mean pausing or limiting conversations and interactions with people who treat us poorly. It can mean spending time with different people or going places that make us feel good. News and media can also exhaust us. Consider limiting news or social media consumption, especially when it triggers big emotions.
Spirit	When you feel your spirits drain, it may be time to rest and replenish the soulfulness of life. We have an inborn, natural spirituality—one that drives us to connect with something bigger than ourselves.[20] We find this in nature, music, art, animals, and deep "soulful" human connections or social causes. Spiritual rest can be as simple as getting outdoors, playing with your pet, looking or listening to something beautiful, or connecting with someone you love who really knows you.

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Allowing Kids to Rest and Take Breaks

Little kids are good at getting the rest they need. Of course, many of us have horror stories about toddlers who were terrible sleepers. However, little ones usually sleep when they are tired. They want to leave places that are too noisy. They walk away from people who are mean to them. They love being outside

and playing with animals. It's as though we are born knowing how to get the rest we need. Over time, modern life and restrictive environments force us to ignore those signals. Some places, including residential settings like youth prisons with 24/7 noise and lights, refuse to let young people get the rest they need. We must return to that inner wisdom that tells us to slow down and take a break. Then, we must seek and advocate for safe harbors where rest is allowed and encouraged.

What does it look like to offer ourselves and others a place to rest? Consider this insight from Jon Kabat-Zinn, described by Brené Brown, famed social worker and emotions researcher, in her book *Atlas of the Heart:* "No-agenda, non-doing time, is the cure for the overwhelm."[21] Even if it feels impossible, it must be prioritized. Offering and experiencing places of rest is critical for collective care and being the safe harbor you and young people deserve.

Taking breaks and getting sleep will not solve the weather of modern life or personal challenges that drain our time and energy. But if we can find and create safe harbors to rest, we can protect ourselves and young people from the wear and tear of the world. We can also establish the conditions needed to recover from the toll of modern life.

WAYS TO OFFER REST WHEREVER YOU ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Work in Education?** Consider the ebbs and flows of energy throughout the day. Generate a list of easy ways to incorporate restful moments into each class. How can kids signal they need a break from certain classmates or conversations? Who can cover your classroom if you need a moment to yourself?
- **Work in Youth Development?** Talk with kids about celebrities and athletes who prioritize rest. Have them research what those famous people say about the connection between rest and performance. Then, discuss how to prioritize rest like the pros.
- **Work in a Clinical Setting?** Work with kids and caregivers to plan for the breaks they need. For yourself, understand the demands of your position. Build in breaks between appointments or sessions to replenish your energy.
- **Raising Kids at Home?** When you're together, discuss what makes you feel rested. Time at home should be where you replenish energy in big and small ways, but that can't always happen. Figure out how and where you and your kids can get the breaks you need.

Recover: We Need Places to Heal

Imagine you get hit by a car. It's an awful thought, but stick with me. You survive the accident with several injuries. You've broken some bones and have a concussion. You're treated at a nearby trauma center where doctors are trained to figure out and fix what's wrong.

Once you're stable, you discuss the accident and recovery plan with the medical team. Your doctors explain what happened and what recovery requires. You leave with a list of things to start and stop doing until you feel better. The team advises you to be patient because healing takes time.

Now, consider the same accident without proper treatment. The paramedics arrive at the scene and say you are fine. You're told your injuries will heal (eventually) without intervention or medical attention. They ask you to get back in your car—badly banged up but drivable—and drive away. The situation feels wrong, but you trust them. They are medical professionals. You go home with no recovery plan. A few weeks later, you feel worse. Your body hurts, you are exhausted, and you worry something is seriously wrong. Your injuries are invisible to everyone except you.

This is how Dr. Pamela Cantor, a child and adolescent psychiatrist and the founder and CEO of Human Potential, helped me understand what happens when mental and emotional injuries are overlooked and untreated after crises. Things can worsen without the recovery time and resources we need to heal. In modern life, we suffer from constant crises like global pandemics, school shootings, and extreme weather events, and many of us walk around wounded.[22]

Dr. Cantor explained that the push to persist while injured only fuels the overwhelm we face. Too often, we lack the support and resources to recover from the trauma and internal wounds we experience. Our minds and bodies, desperate for respite, communicate through symptoms, impacting how we think, feel, and behave. For kids, disruptive behaviors and lagging learning can be signs of emotional distress, not disrespect. Disciplining them instead of tending to their bodies, minds, and spirits can cause more damage. Damage is repairable, but only when we take time to recover. Unattended injuries—physical and psychological—can hurt us long into the future.

According to Dr. Cantor, we are wired to thrive and heal. She reminded me of what happens when we do nothing and wait for a cut to heal. It will heal, but it may leave a scar. When we do the things we need to heal, some very different processes unfold, some that leave us stronger than we were before. We live in a dynamic relationship with the contexts and conditions of our lives. Environments and relationships have the power to promote or prevent healing. Given that we face constant crises and challenges in modern life that can injure us, we must surround ourselves with people who promote healing and places that nurture the strength that often comes from healing itself.[23]

Young people need environments and relationships that support their healing. When we ignore their pain, we leave them wondering if they are making it up. Young people have told me they worry that something is wrong with them because no one believes they feel like they do. What a lonely way to live!

There are two big phases of recovery: (1) initial repair and (2) ongoing care. Recovery is an interplay between healing and living. Recovering from severe wounds might alter how we live. At other times, recovery is quick, as if nothing had happened. In every case, recovery is personal and circumstantial.

Recovering From Trauma

In *The Body Keeps the Score,* Bessel van der Kolk, the world's best-known trauma expert, wrote that healing from trauma restores executive functioning, reinstating the capacities for play, creativity, and learning—fundamentals for a full human experience. Dr. Cantor helped me see that the first part of recovery is restoring health and functionality. The second part is learning to live while we heal.

We want kids to be healthy and happy, to live and learn without severe hardship or injury. We also cannot protect them from pain. We can create environments that support their healing by implementing strategies like those outlined in Table 6. We can also work on ourselves; kids recover best when their grown-ups are ok. We should limit our care of children while we are wounded. Our injuries can inhibit our ability to see and care for others.

Table 6 Signs of Trauma and Healing Strategies[24]

Signs of Possible Trauma in Young People	• Unexplained outbursts • Preoccupation with safety • Being worried about violence • Easily startled • Not responding to social cues • Distrust • Avoidance • Changes in behavior or school performance • Hyper- or hypo-arousal • Seeming detached or emotionally numb • Irritability and moodiness
Healing Strategies	• Be calm and consistent • Offer choices • Be positive and encouraging • Be sensitive to triggers (such as loud noises) • Clearly communicate limits and boundaries • Maintain predictable routines • Offer a warning before doing something unusual

Consider what van der Kolk said. Active trauma and dysregulation—woundedness—impair our executive functioning. It becomes harder to focus and pay attention, plan and organize, regulate our emotions, control our impulses, and more.[25] This is no way to care for ourselves, let alone young people. For kids, the consequences are dire. Their executive functioning is still developing. They already have trouble focusing, controlling emotions and impulses, and staying planful and organized. When you add trauma, everything feels like an uphill battle.

With the storms of modern life, we need many places where healing can happen. This goes beyond learning what trauma looks like. This is about prioritizing rest and recovery as vital parts of caring for ourselves and others. You must value rest over relentlessness, progress over perfection, and care over compliance. The world is wearing us down. Recovery must be a way of life.

Recovery moves us from illness to wellness, from an injured state to feeling stronger than before. It creates opportunities to heal old injuries and tend to new ones as they arise. When I look back on more than 25 years of sobriety, I can see that recovery starts with what's wrong but shifts to what's wonderful and possible only because of what you went through.

WAYS TO OFFER RECOVERY WHEREVER YOU ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Work in Education?** Familiarize yourself with available crisis, health care, and healing supports. Can you or young people access special services? If yes, what's the process? Review the strategies listed in Table 6 and select one or two to use this week.
- **Work in Youth Development?** Find out if your organization or program offers professional development opportunities on trauma and supporting kids with physical or mental health conditions. For example, can you get trained in trauma-informed care or mental health first aid? Can you connect with a pediatrician or therapist to learn about common injuries and strategies to support recovery?
- **Work in a Clinical Setting?** You are often the helper people seek for recovery support. Look at yourself. Where do you need healing? Commit to one thing you can do this week to prioritize health and healing. Keep it simple. Try to get more sleep, take a lunch break, connect with a friend, or schedule that appointment you've been putting off.
- **Raising Kids at Home?** Think about your kids. Where are they hurting and needing to heal? What about you? Reflect on your household's specific recovery needs. Choose one thing to support recovery at home.

Refuge: We Need Places Where We Feel Safe

When I was little, my family visited a historic *pu'uhonua* in Hawai'i. For hundreds of years, this was a place of refuge for Hawaiians in need of shelter or healing. I remember it was surrounded by water. I asked my aunt how people reached it.

"It was a long and scary journey," she told me. "But peace was worth the risk." She explained that anyone who survived the journey and entered the pu'uhonua was protected from harm. In ancient Hawaiian culture, the pu'uhonua was a sacred, safe place where peace was offered instead of punishment.

While the history and details of a pu'uhonua are more complex than my childhood memories, I was amazed by the idea of a place where no one and nothing could hurt you. As a kid who experienced adversity, I needed places that weren't home or school to feel safe and supported.

We all need places of refuge, especially kids. Finding and creating them must be a priority. Like finding places of rest, this can feel hard or impossible. Our schools, neighborhoods, and households often feel unsafe. Still, we must do our best. If you can't promise safety, do no harm.

I wish refuge were easier to come by. I've lived and worked in places where violence and threats to safety are common. I have sheltered with students in scary storms and tried to hide them from active shooters. I almost lost my godson in a school shooting, and my boys face the same risk every day. I know how powerless it feels when you can't promise safety to kids and feel unsafe yourself. And yet, we are biologically hardwired to need safety. There are ways to create it, even in places where it doesn't feel possible. I have seen safe homes and classrooms in dangerous environments. We may not be able to extend it beyond our small space or promise it beyond the present, but even in parts, it's worth it.

Science of Safety

Feeling safe is essential for health and happiness at any age. Safety settles our nerves, soothes our minds, and benefits our bodies. It does more than protect us; safety is a pathway to opportunity. It optimizes conditions for wellness and learning, creativity and emotional regulation, problem-solving, and decision-making. Safety is critical for every essential we'll explore in Part 2, and it must be prioritized above everything else.[26]

Don't confuse safety with over-protectiveness or risk elimination. Risk-taking helps young people grow and prepare for adulthood. Safe environments enable or encourage appropriate risk-taking.[27] Safety is the protection of our bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits. We can fully rest and recover *when* we feel safe. Thriving requires safety,[28] and safety requires refuge.

Polyvagal Theory

In 1994, psychiatrist and professor Stephen W. Porges proposed the polyvagal theory, which is covered in detail in "Regulate" (Chapter 6). The polyvagal theory says our sense of safety drives our overall health and happiness.[29] When our body is flooded with fear, anxiety, worry, and angst, we are vulnerable to mental and physical health challenges. Safety is like water for a plant that is thirsty; the water nourishes the plant inside and out. Porges found that even brief practices like 30 seconds of humming or a minute of deep breathing can shift us into a state of safety. Porges and his son describe the benefits of refuge and regulation—knowing and feeling you are safe—in their book, *Our Polyvagal World: How Safety and Trauma Change Us:*

> *There's a sort of magic that occurs when we feel safe. Our bodies and brains operate better. Our organs and anatomical systems enter a physiological state of healing that primes us to recuperate from just about every physical or mental ailment better and faster. . . . We become more creative, curious, intelligent, social, and fun. With the wrappers of defense removed, the brilliance of our compassionate, benevolent, creative, and loving core is capable of shining through.* ***A safe life is a good life—and makes the lives of those around us better.***[30]

Modern-Day Puʻuhonua

You can find and create modern puʻuhonua—places of refuge—wherever you spend time with kids. We cannot solve the weather or all that is wrong in the world, but we can offer relationships and respites that create the magic of safety Porges speaks of.

Here are three examples:

- At SeriousFun Children's Network, kids with severe medical conditions enjoy summer sleepaway camps. Camps are purposefully designed to remove barriers that would prevent kids from being able to play and participate. At camp, young people are "unshackled" from their usual constraints and provided the medical and youth development support needed to enjoy themselves. Ropes courses have special padding for extra protection. Sidewalks are made for walkers and wheelchairs. Staff ratios are high enough to keep campers safe without being intrusive. SeriousFun CEO Blake Maher describes camp as a haven where "there's a liberation. Almost a freedom. Kids are suddenly unshackled from this thing that has been binding them in so many ways, physically and psychologically. That freedom and lack of judgment mean they're like everybody else. This is a strong element of that freeingness."[31]
- At Kawailoa Youth and Family Wellness Center in Hawai'i, young people who need emergency housing or face legal issues can find refuge on a 500-acre campus that aims to replace youth

incarceration with programming rooted in Hawaiian culture and values. Young people receive services from a community of adults who are committed to their health and healing. Instead of punitive and isolating practices, young people experience physical and psychological safety combined with a caring community. At Kawailoa, young people exercise at the gym and work on the farm. They learn job skills and practice them at construction sites. They take classes to get back on track academically without fear of judgment from others.

- At high schools in St. Louis, teens experience heart and soul safety with the Wyman Teen Connection Project (TCP). In this 12- to 14-week program, which we will explore in "Connect" (Chapter 11), teens engage in small groups where they learn to share and sustain supportive social connections and prioritize well-being. The groups offer young people a safe harbor without having to leave the school or neighborhood where they might otherwise feel unsafe. Groups are guided by highly trained facilitators who understand youth development and healing-centered practices.[32]

SeriousFun camps, the Kawailoa campus, and Wyman's TCP program show how safety can be created in schools and summer camps, on campuses and classrooms, at set-aside times, and in specially designed spaces. Behind these efforts are trained and supportive adults who genuinely care about young people. We can find and feel safe in most places. It just takes people and programs who purposefully prioritize being a pu'uhonua.

From Safe Harbors to Thriving Essentials

The weather conditions of modern life are universal, and everyone needs safe harbors. The resources we need are different depending on context. We navigate this world with different backgrounds, experiences, supports, and challenges. In Part 2, we'll explore how human nature enables us to thrive even in challenging and changing conditions. We are born with human capacities that enable us to evolve, endure challenges, and enjoy life. To live good lives, we need these essentials and each other.

WAYS TO OFFER REFUGE WHEREVER YOU ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Work in Education?** Create a weekly check-in or check-out form where students can rank how safe they feel in your classroom and share information in a less public way. These tools can be shared with families to increase communication between you and caregivers.
- **Work in Youth Development?** Create a short survey that kids and families can answer about your program(s) or activity(ies). Ask how safe they feel. Consider sending the survey regularly and be sure to respond.
- **Work in a Clinical Setting?** Consider the example of SeriousFun camps as you evaluate your physical space and how you deliver services. What else can you do to alleviate the burdens and barriers young people might encounter when they visit you?
- **Raising Kids at Home?** Make safety a topic of conversation. If you find your child consistently feels unsafe, act. Reach out for help and demand change. Safety is life-giving, but its absence is life-threatening. It is always worth serious action if you think a child's safety is at risk.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

- Safe harbors are the people and places that help us stay healthy and heal when the weather of life gets rough and we need to stop or seek shelter.
- The safe harbors we need to thrive in modern life are
  - **Human relationships**. Quality face-to-face time with others can nourish us at a cellular level. Technology platforms or products, like social media and companion bots, are insufficient substitutes.
  - **Humane relationships**. We need people who respect and protect our dignity and worth.
  - **Holistic relationships**. We need people who see us in context, considering how we are doing socially, emotionally, physically, cognitively, and spiritually.
  - **Places of rest**. Rest allows us to replenish. Different types of rest address different forms of depletion (such as being physically or cognitively exhausted).
  - **Places of recovery**. Recovery helps us heal from visible and invisible injuries.
  - **Places of refuge**. Safety is foundational for health and healing and optimizes learning, creativity, and emotional regulation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who and where are your safe harbors?
- When and how do you serve as a safe harbor for others?
- Which safe harbors—human connection, humane treatment, holistic care, rest, recovery, or refuge—are easiest to offer? Which ones are more difficult?
- What safe harbors do you think young people need most right now? How can you provide or connect them to these vital supports?