

Speaker 1 ([00:03](#)):

Welcome to Be Evolved, a podcast for parents and educators who prioritize developing possibility and expansion within the total educational process for themselves and their children or students. We invite you to listen to the podcast with your child or student in mind and with yourself at the center of the learning experience. Ultimately, our goal is to bridge the gap between educational expertise and research, translating it into practical action. Gaining knowledge plus taking action is what it means to be evolved. Hi everyone. Welcome to the May edition of Be Evolved. I'm so excited for today's conversation. It's so timely. As in May, all of our students who are going to be going off to college have this settled and so we're all now able to think towards the future, think towards what is this experience going to be like? Let's try to make this the very best possible experience that we can for our students and to help you with all of this.

Speaker 1 ([01:08](#)):

We have a wonderful organization that I'm so excited to introduce you to Gap. Well, and we're going to talk today with Ali and Miles and Seth about their program. And I want to just say a little bit about how this all came to be actually, and this is something that if you're going off to college, just know that when you meet people in your life, it's always important to really talk with them about the work that they're doing and what you can maybe be a part of in terms of the work that they are doing. And what I mean by that is I went to a networking event at my college, NYU, and I met Miles and we started talking about the work at Evolved and he said, huh, my dad is doing a program that I feel like you guys should really talk. And I was so excited that we did because I learned about the work of Gap.

Speaker 1 ([02:03](#)):

Well, and I'm really excited to bring this to the Evolved community because we here at Evolved are all about helping families and students to make sure that their students learn and live well. And that requires resources and instruction and really meaningful engagement. And that's really what Gap Well is all about. So I'm going to let everyone introduce themselves to you and then we're going to get to some really important questions that we have prepared questions that I know are on your mind, that's for sure. So actually Miles, why don't we start with you since the conversation here today really became possible because you really made it possible for us to connect. So why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself, what you're up to right now, and then you can throw it right over to your dad and we'll get Lee involved right after that. Does that sound good? Alright, Miles, go ahead. Introduce yourself to us.

Speaker 2 ([02:57](#)):

Awesome. So yeah, I'm Miles. I am a current student athlete at NYU studying psychology. I'm looking to go into organizational psychology and help businesses with their employee management, their recruiting processes, and I really just have an interest in people in general. So that's where I kind of lend my hand to Gap. Well and help kids transition to college.

Speaker 1 ([03:20](#)):

That's amazing. And your dad, Seth, why don't you introduce yourself

Speaker 3 ([03:25](#)):

To us. Thank you. And thank you for inviting us to join you on your podcast. Thank you for letting me bring my son, Miles. Thanks for making this introduction. This is a great way to start the week. And Mary, you're not the first person that Miles has called me and said, you really need to meet this person. I'm telling you this is going to be a great conversation. And once again, Miles was right. I am one of the co-founders of Gap, well, which we launched about two years ago. And my background before this was I

went to Brandeis for my undergrad. My next door neighbor my freshman year was Lee, my co-founder in the business. So that's a fun origin story. I went to Warden for my MBA. I've been working in marketing supply chain globally for the last 20 plus years. And then during Covid, we and I were talking about ways that we could really make a difference.

Speaker 3 ([04:16](#)):

And this was a moment in time with an idea that was incredibly relevant to us as parents and as people that were on the front lines of young adults transitioning from high school to college and beyond. And so everything kind of fell into place really quickly. And then I've got a whole crew of people in my family who are experiencing this firsthand, either as students or parents. So it's been a really great way to see this both problem and opportunity and coming up with creative ways of how to solve that problem. So super excited to talk about this topic with you today, Lee.

Speaker 4 ([04:52](#)):

Well, it's great to meet you, Seth said, I am the co-founder of GPA with Seth. My name is Lee Soen. I spent most of my career in the media industry working for companies like Hearst, Yahoo Time Inc. Running huge content teams for them and said, COVID three kids either in college or about to be in college and seeing how difficult this transition is and how different it is. And I hope we're going to talk about that, but how different it is today than it was when we all went to college. So Seth and I started on this journey of helping young adults from high school to college and then college to career, and it's been incredibly rewarding.

Speaker 1 ([05:34](#)):

Really great. Well, I just love that first of all, all of you are really coming to this work with a genuine desire to help people. I want to start with our first question really, so on so many people's minds, which is if you're a parent listening and you have a student who's going off to college in the fall for the first time or maybe the second time, maybe even the third time, we of course think it's just something we do as our students are starting the college process as a freshman, but perhaps they're starting their sophomore year now, they're really quite a different student. Maybe they're starting their junior year or their senior year. And what are some of the pieces of advice that you're learning in your work at Gap well that parents can really know about to help their teens before they actually enter that college semester this August? Let's just say, what are some things, who wants to start?

Speaker 4 ([06:29](#)):

I'll be happy to jump in and I'm sure Seth will pick up where I leave off. I think there's a couple of really important things that parents need to know before their kids go off to college. And there's certainly several critical things that they have to do. So let's start with what they have to know. And as I mentioned in the intro, I think the most important thing for them to realize is how different colleges today from when we all went, it is different. It's fundamentally different. It is more difficult, and Miles can talk about this as well. It is more difficult for freshmen to make friends to get connected. It is more isolating. It is lonelier. The stats are through the roof at how much stress it is and how much pressure these kids feel. And so it's, I think the first step for parents who want to support their kids in a better way is to first of all recognize that them just thinking back and thinking that it's, oh, what was the best four years of my life and you're going to have the best time and it's the best, best, best.

Speaker 4 ([07:31](#)):

First of all, you have to reorient yourself with what is going on on college campuses and how difficult the journey is from high school to college in a way that it wasn't for us. And then the second thing, and that's

about what you have to know, and then I'll start the journey on what you have to do because a lot that you should be doing even in the summer before. And the first thing is to normalize the idea that not every day is going to be the best four years of your life. It's the most important thing you can do. You have to start those conversations early. You have to approach it with this openness of being able to say, listen, college is hard. There are going to be days when you're on top of the world and there's going to be days when you're struggling.

Speaker 4 ([08:18](#)):

There's going to be friends that don't work out. There's going to be lots of things that go your way and don't go your way. It's not all one thing, it's life and it's filled with twists and turns and you have to start because most kids have grown up in a household where their parents, their best friends or people they met in college and they're always talking about the great old days of college and we forget that we struggled as well. So you have to start normalizing that experience early on. I'll get over to Seth and I'm sure I'll fill in where he leaves off as well.

Speaker 3 ([08:46](#)):

So I think Lee having three of your kids off to college, you've been through this multiple times. I think as, and this has come up a lot in the last few weeks in particular, everyone's talking about college admissions. You talk about it at the start of high school, you talk about your junior year, you talk about it in the fall, most of the senior year, it's all about admissions. And right around April, right around now, people start realizing, okay, my son or daughter got into whatever college and the admissions anxiety is for the most part behind us. Maybe you haven't put the deposit down yet, maybe you're on a wait list, whatever. But the process is done and now the focus, as Lee mentioned, is on college preparedness. And as parents one level it's like I'm going to throw my son over the fence. He's at N nyu, he's now an adult.

Speaker 3 ([09:37](#)):

My work here is dumb, but it's really not that simple. And I think what you don't read about a lot, well you don't see it at all really on social media is the reality of it, which is when they get there, it's hard. And it doesn't matter what you watch on TikTok or Instagram or whatever the reality is, as Lee said, not every day is going to be perfect. Not everything is going to be easy. In fact, it's kind of the opposite. It's like, oh my gosh, I went from living under my parents' roof, let's say, and now I'm on my own. And now even the simplest tasks are things that I've never done before because in a lot of cases, and I'm sure Miles can speak to this, a lot of kids show up at college on a certain path and then all of a sudden the things that we all take for granted, doing our own laundry, managing our calendars, it doesn't magically happen that they can now figure it out just because they're in an expensive university.

Speaker 3 ([10:30](#)):

When we talk to students in particular who really struggle during that transition, we hear things like, wow, I didn't realize this or I hadn't thought about that. And I think as parents, because this is what Lee and I talk about a lot, and we talk about this with lots of different groups of people, is what can we do well right now from April until your son or daughter goes off to college, there's lots of things you can do to help prepare them and don't just assume that when they get to college they'll figure it out. And so a lot of what we've been focused on is doing it for our kids is not the formula. Telling them what to do is not the formula. Referencing what it was like in college 30 years ago is not the formula. And so it's really about how can you help set your kids up for success in a supportive way, but also help them realize, you know what, they're going to fall down, they're going to have to pick themselves up.

Speaker 3 ([11:21](#)):

They're going to fail more often than they succeed, and that's totally normal and that's okay. And so I'd love to hear Miles's point of view on this. He went from living down here in Bethesda, Maryland to going to his childhood home, which is Manhattan. And as an 18-year-old in college, it's very different than growing up in Manhattan. So Miles, what did you see when you first arrived on campus as a first year, August, September of your first year? What was that experience like and what did you see from the people that were on your floor in your classes, on your teams?

Speaker 2 ([11:54](#)):

Yeah, I mean the isolating point is 100% true, especially at NYU, but I'm certain that it's true for almost all universities. You get to your new environment, you're a little bit uncomfortable and it's easy to be in your bed. So when I see the original question, I think this is years in advance, the parenting, the stuff that you need to do, it's not just the months before, it's how do you train your kid to be autonomous? And so I'm not going to offer any parenting advice. I'm clearly not a parent, but what I will say is it's the small stuff not coddling your kid, just like letting the kid fail. The stuff I did growing up, my parents were never, they checked my grades occasionally, and if I did poorly, I'd have to take accountability for it because it was my grades and it wasn't my parents' grades.

Speaker 2 ([12:51](#)):

It was my transition and progression to college. And if I had one piece of advice for parents, this is not a parenting thing, it would be to set limits on screens because the biggest isolation factor is how much time you're spending on your phone alone or computer for that matter. And like I said, it's the easy way out. It's easy to scroll all day. It's easy to just socially compare yourself. It's easy to look at the vlogs of, oh, how great my life is at NYU Day in the life, all this stuff you see on social media, for the most part it's fake. So get off those screens, set limits, and that would be the best way, helping your kids socially engage as soon as they get to college.

Speaker 1 ([13:36](#)):

I love all of that. I hear a lot of things that you're saying and I just want to kind of help everyone to take a minute to process who's listening. So you're thinking about your child going off to college and what we're hearing from the experts that are really studying this time period and who are also living it is that it's very important for parents to spend some intentional time before the process begins in thinking about their child and thinking about how can I really help my child to meet the demands that they are going to be meeting in college, let's say anything and everything from doing your laundry to going to the store and buying what you need to. Also, what Miles is saying is really how you self-control your time to be going out there and putting yourself out there to socialize in person, to go to in-person activities, to be off of your social media where it's safe and things maybe feel very comfortable perhaps in your dorm room, things like this. Anything there to add in terms of what we want parents to be thinking about before the start of college?

Speaker 4 ([14:46](#)):

So I would add there's some very practical things, right? We've been talking at a high level about normalizing that it's difficult or understanding the struggles that your kids are going to have. And to Miles's point, it is making friends and we'll talk about what we do at Gap, well later on in the podcast, but most of what we do is we source advice from older students and you would not believe how many older students want to give advice to first years about making friends. It is the number one topic because if you are not actively working at it, it doesn't happen. And so that's a big thing, but just for the summer start now, right? Your kids need doctor's appointments, they have to get all their physicals and everything. Let them make the appointment, let them show up on time, let them feel the consequences.

Speaker 4 ([15:34](#)):

If they forget to show up to that doctor's appointment or the dentist appointment, they have to start after making friends. The second most popular topic is managing your time. And so you have to start your child on this journey of managing their own time, of being responsible because when they're there, nobody's going to be telling them to go to class and nobody's going to be telling them that they have a paper due, it's just not going to happen. So this is part of their, if you think about spring training, where obviously Miles is a baseball player, this is their spring training, they have to get the cobwebs out and start doing these very practical things, do their laundry. If you give your kid a weekly allowance, switch it to a monthly allowance or give them a lump sum at the beginning of the summer so they can learn how to budget. You can't until you're doing it and practicing just showing them how to turn on the laundry machine is not the same as teaching them how to separate and what a temperature does and what it's just, you have to really be intentional about some kind of learning curriculum for them for that summer. And a lot of it is just as Miles said, developing autonomy, right? Managing your time, managing your money, showing up on time, doing your appointments, taking care of business. That's the most important thing you can help them learn over the summer.

Speaker 1 ([16:51](#)):

Amazing. Well, I'm sure we could spend time on all of these really good questions, but I want to make sure we get now too, and I don't want to hurry it up. I know there's a lot to do before you get to college, but can we talk about the first year in particular and what are some things that parents can do that perhaps we haven't already mentioned? Because I'm sure that what you're talking about actually continues in the first year of college, but what are some things that parents can really do in addition during that first year of college?

Speaker 3 ([17:17](#)):

Well, I think speaking as a parent, the first thing I'll say is that it's important for us parents, particularly when your first kid goes off to college. So when Miles went off to college, it was my first time playing the role of parent geographically far away from where my son was studying and remembering that while I want to give him advice and I want to tell him, do this, do that, my wife, who's the parenting expert would tell me that's not a great way to teach our son to be successful for himself. I listened to her, but I can tell you that asking open-ended questions, trying not to problem solve when Miles calls up and says, oh, I didn't get into the class I wanted to, or I've got this challenge in my schedule. Or a lot of times when your son or daughter is reaching out to you, maybe they just want to vent.

Speaker 3 ([18:06](#)):

And so we're not there to solve it for them. We're not there to tell them that they're doing a great job or they can do better. Our job is just to listen and to let them, like we said, autonomy, let them solve for themselves, ask them questions about why they had that experience and what their plan is to address it or who they're going to advocate to on their behalf. So I think as parents, it's not our job to solve our kids' problems. And I think when Lee and I were in the early days of the Gap world guide product, which he referenced, which is built on the idea that it's older students giving advice to younger students, we did a large survey, a thousand plus college students and families of college students. And the overwhelming answer about where someone like Miles wants to get his advice, I think it was the tune of 93% of the respondents said, older students, 93% of the people going through their first year of college want the advice from people that are just a couple steps ahead of them.

Speaker 3 ([19:03](#)):

Juniors, seniors, recent grads who can talk about, Hey, I wish I knew this when I was in your shoes, or this is what it was like for me two years ago at NYU or at a different university. And so realizing that Miles may want to tell me what's going on in his life, I'm sure he cares to some degree what I think, but he doesn't want my advice. He wants the advice to someone that's in one of his classes or on his team or someone he knows through his own social circles. So it's important for us parents to realize that telling the kids what to do is probably the worst thing we can do because the minute you tell your kid to do something, their natural reaction is what? I'm going to do the opposite because dad told me to do this. And so I think as parents, we're here to listen, we're here to support, but it's not our job to solve problems for our kids if we do that, what's going to happen when they graduate from college? They're not going to be well suited for the next chapter. And so I think we and I talk about this a lot. We understand the challenges our kids are facing, but it's really important for miles to fail at something and pick themselves up.

Speaker 1 ([20:06](#)):

Sure. Yeah. Miles, what do you think about that? How does that feel when you hear what your dad has to say and what this work is really about?

Speaker 2 ([20:13](#)):

Yeah, I mean, I think it's spot on and I would add that I would let the kid determine the communication schedule. The reason I say that is because I am not a daily texter. I don't say, good morning mom and dad, how are you? But I know kids who are, I have my weekly calls with my parents, we talk 30 minutes to an hour. It's great. And they see me relatively frequently, and it is perfect, and it is very natural. We spend quality time together. But I'm not preoccupied in my parents' stress, and unfortunately, I've seen a lot my friends who have what I would qualify as helicopter parents have to deal with reciprocal stress. They have their class stress, they have their social anxiety and everything, and then they also have their parents ringing them at every waking hour. Oh, what do you do today? Oh, is everything okay? Oh, did you see these people? And trust me, that is the last thing your kids want. Advice is okay, in a relatively respectfully, timely manner, but constant bombardment of questions and checkups. We're trying to transition to adulthood, we're doing our best, and it's not helping when you're calling us every day.

Speaker 4 ([21:28](#)):

I'll just add, we have an advisor to GPA who's a renowned child psychiatrist and an adolescent psychiatrist and specialize in teens and families. And one of the things that she coaches is if you're the parent, and texting is actually the worst because we're also available. So our kids never have to actually make a decision on their own, and they never actually have to work their way through a problem on their own because the answer, the help is always literally a keyboard away and it's 24 7. And so what she recommended was, if you're the parent, you don't have to respond to a text right away. What should I do? Oh my God, this just happened. What should I do? Now, obviously if there's emergencies or emergencies, but generally speaking, you can wait and you can also say, wow, what do you think you should do? Ask the question back, let them think through an answer. They probably have one, but she said is the crutch that really inhibits the growth because it makes us feel so good to swoop in and solve the problem, but it's not what the kids need.

Speaker 1 ([22:28](#)):

Yeah, no, it makes really good sense. I mean, listen, all of this is just the work that I feel we all at evolved are doing all the time. And I think it just stems from this notion of we want to know what the research and what the way forward is for our parenting to help our kids learn and live well. And I know that it is very uncomfortable as a parent to watch our children struggle. It's one of the most important growth moments as a parent that you can really have, which is just to grin and bear it. And I'll tell you a story. I'm sure

every parent here has experienced witches that when your kid falls for the first time maybe or skins their knee or has to get stitches, and you're sitting there and your first reaction is to be like, you're fine.

Speaker 1 ([23:13](#)):

You're great. It's totally good. And I'm smiling if you can't see me and I'm smiling through my teeth, but inside I just want to throw up because it feels terrible to see my child hurting in this way. But I think that that's really the important thing. And then the other thing I want to say is something I've learned as a parent is that when I can actually with respect, trust that my child actually has the way forward, just honestly in my generation, that was something my parents gave me. Maybe it was a little bit of their neglect in that stage of parenting was really just about whatever they had to provide for the family, and that was what they did, and that was pretty much all they were thinking about. And in that way, guess what? I had a lot of responsibility and I'm so proud I got to accomplish a great deal as a young child.

Speaker 1 ([24:00](#)):

And I look at my kids and I know they have the answers within them, and the confidence comes with them trying on the solutions to different problems in ways I would never be able to conceptualize. And I think my job is very simply put to be in awe of them at most times. And so whenever I'm feeling like I have that itch to come in and save the day, I think to myself, don't do that because you'll never know what they're going to come up with. And that's part of the fun of this type of parenting. So I offer you all of those perspectives as you're listening, everyone, because I know that it's a transition for your kid, but it's going to be a transition for you too. And even if you're listening right now at the start of high school, you can start all of this like Miles and Seth said, and Lee said earlier in the podcast, start now.

Speaker 1 ([24:49](#)):

You don't have to wait until April before your kids are going off to college. So let's pivot a little bit, and I want to get into this next question and talk a little bit about young adults and this time period for our young adults, especially because college is really supposed to be the time in which they're preparing for their careers and really developing those skills to get there. So what's going on in this particular area? What I want to ask is what should young adults do who are trying to navigate an ever-changing early career landscape that is transforming dramatically due to ai, politics, global turmoil, nothing seems to be staying the same, but almost in a mega intense way. And so I imagine Miles, you're thinking about all of this right now. Let's start with you because I feel like you're really in it and I want to know what you have to say to kids who are thinking about going into a major, but now they're thinking, maybe I shouldn't do that. I don't know if it's going to be around in a couple of years, or how should I be thinking about all of this?

Speaker 2 ([25:53](#)):

Yeah, so I have a few talking points on this. This is probably my biggest area of expertise just because like you said, I'm in the midst of it. The first big tip is curating a story. Quite frankly, your major doesn't really matter. Most things, unless you're a pre-health pre-law, you can pivot to whatever you want. I'm psychology and I'm most likely going to go into the corporate world. I am not bounded by my undergraduate major. So let me reassure you there is, don't stress so much about your major, more worry about what is the story you're going to tell when you sit down for an interview. So when I sat down for my internship interview this summer, I was trying to tell the story of being someone who's very logistically on top of things because that's what my experiences led to and fit best for the role.

Speaker 2 ([26:40](#)):

So that's a basic overview, how that works. I would also say if you can master your soft skills, you are way ahead of the game. And the story I have for this is my buddy just started a tech consulting gig and it's a very prestigious firm, and it's one of those, you're killing it out of college. And what he told me was so appalling. He says, out of the 10 to 15 consultants they hired in his class, maybe two or three are consistently able to make it into the office every day of the week. And that's crazy. This is unbelievable to me. I ask him because I intend to potentially be consultant, and I'm like, of course I would go to the office every day if somebody is paying me a full-time salary, I'm in the office. But unfortunately that's not the case for most of the people in my generation, let's say 25 year olds. And if you can show that you're going to respond to emails on time, show up to work on time, get your tasks done, very basic skills, you would think you're going to be way ahead of the game.

Speaker 1 ([27:42](#)):

Interesting. What do you guys have to say to that

Speaker 4 ([27:46](#)):

Last? So Miles is obviously a spectacular young man and very insightful and a lot of what, and is also obviously very closely connected to the work that Seth and I are doing. So has a good perspective on this. Nobody knows what's going to happen with industries, with tech, how tech is going to transform and it's going to transform every aspect. So I agree with Miles completely that you need to learn how to adapt, you need to learn how to network, you need to learn how to keep reinventing your story and refining it so that you can navigate whatever industry you're going into. And anybody who says they know what the next five, six years is, nobody really knows because things are accelerating on a level that we can't predict. So what do you have to develop a toolkit that will allow you to thrive and pivot?

Speaker 4 ([28:40](#)):

And I think Miles said some of the things that are really important. Number one, you need to be able to have a real conversation. Now, Seth and I, in addition to the Gap O Guide, which as he mentioned is a subscription product and it's older students giving advice to younger students. And we will talk about that a little bit I think at the end. But we also do coaching. And so we're with a lot of college students who are both looking for their career, looking to be more successful in college, et cetera. And the skills that are missing are basically following through doing what you say you are going to do. I'm going to get that to you by Wednesday at 5:00 PM and then all of a sudden it's 5 36, 7, 8, it's Thursday, it's Friday. We got to send a follow-up note. Those basic skills that we all learn the hard way by maybe messing up on our first job and realizing that, oh wow, I can get fired. This isn't like little League T-Ball where everybody gets a ribbon. It's real. So taking responsibility, following up, doing what you say you're going to do, learning to have conversations, learning email etiquette, the basic skills. And we are working with kids who are going to Ivy League schools who still don't have those abilities.

Speaker 3 ([29:50](#)):

So Mary, I think Lee and Miles, everything they said is spot on. I think in addition to flexible and adaptable, both Miles and Lee were saying it's also about having balance. You need to be adaptable, all that, but you also need to find other ways, other outlets for balance in your life. It could be going for a walk, it could be doing yoga, it could be something else besides work, work, work or school. And I think there's a lot of anxiety out there. I mean, the kids walking around on campuses right now are really stressed out. Even the ones that don't look like they're stressed out and we've got lots of survey data to show what's really going on. Even the ones that say they show up for college feeling prepared, they're stressed out. So when I think about this, it's number one is take a deep breath, realize that not every day is going to be awesome and do the best you can, but give yourself a little bit of grace in the sense of like, okay, you know what?

Speaker 3 ([30:45](#)):

I tried my best, but I didn't get a great grade on this exam. I'm going to do better on the next one. Or I'm going to give myself an hour off so I'm not studying dawn till dusk because that's not healthy either. As Lee mentioned, we just don't see on the coaching side of our business, and this can be talking about gap years, summer internships for job out of college. We don't see a whole lot of what I would describe as fire in the belly, which is that determination to accomplish something. The putting yourself into a situation where you commit to a deadline and fall through on it or go to an event and actually go talk to Mary who's at the event going out there and pushing yourself. And it might be a little awkward and uncomfortable, but that's, as adults, that's what we're looking for.

Speaker 3 ([31:26](#)):

And the people that we are hiring is those people that aren't afraid to take calculated risks. And I think Miles mentioned before about that in-office story, I think this falls under the under promise, over deliver, right? If you say, okay, I ought be in the office three days a week. Well, you know what, if it's not crazy for your schedule, go five days a week. Why? Because you'll probably meet more people or there'll be some people there that you wouldn't spend as much time with or you send the message that you care about what you're doing. And the basics that we mentioned, the high schools aren't doing a great job preparing our kids. The colleges aren't doing a great job. You get your degree, you get your pedigree. But when Lee and I were teaching a class last fall to a room full of 41 first year college students who were three, four weeks into their college experience, and we asked them, who's using a calendar?

Speaker 3 ([32:20](#)):

Less than half the hands in the room went up. Who has a to-do list? A few more people said yes. We looked around the room as adults and said like, how do you keep track of your life, your schedule, these things that are really basic that I'm guessing if we didn't use our calendar, some of us wouldn't have shown up for today's podcast. This kind of stuff is really, really important and it's as important as the stuff that you see in the headlines and on social media and this and that. And I think really focusing on the basics and over-delivering is a huge differentiator right now, particularly in this generation.

Speaker 1 ([32:55](#)):

So something, I love everything that everyone just talked about. I mean, I think it's really important to know yourself and know what you are going to be showing up for and how you're going to be showing up. And all of those habits really feed into, of course, your overall confidence, but your satisfaction perhaps that even lessen your anxiety because the actions that you're taking are calendar, they're there, you know where you're supposed to be. There's not ambiguity to all of it. You have your to-do list written out, right? There's a lot of things you're talking about that tie into the learning work that we do here. So what I want to just make sure everyone listening now that we've kind gone through some really nice content, some areas where parents you can take and start doing some of the work, but I was really drawn to Gap well, and that it is doing the work for us to learn about what our kids are experiencing and asking for. Can you all talk to us a little bit about Gap? Well, and about the work that you do to understand the students' experiences and what they really are asking for and how you're then responding to what they're asking for.

Speaker 4 ([34:03](#)):

Seth, you want me to jump in? Please do.

Speaker 4 ([34:05](#)):

Okay. Well, Seth mentioned, I think we've mentioned a few times. We started off on this journey as parents, but we very quickly became researchers and not just speaking with experts, but doing our own primary research about the first year experience specifically, because that really is a pivotal moment in a young adult's life that first year away from home on college campuses. And if it works out well, they're set up for long-term success. And if they struggle, it's a struggle. It's a journey. And so we said, how can we help make that first year more successful for more kids? And for us, success means that your teen is showing up on college and having a first year where they feel more capable, more comfortable, and more confident. Those three things capable, comfortable, confident. And if we can help young adults feel that way, they will thrive in college and they'll go off and lead amazing lives.

Speaker 4 ([35:00](#)):

So as Seth mentioned, we did research and what the research told us is the number one place that kids want advice is older students, as Seth said, who have just been through that. So what we did was we built, essentially we have a coaching business, but really what this is is a media company. And every week it's a subscription, and every week it's called the Gap all guide. First years get an episode sent to directly to their phones where we know they're going to see it. They get a text message saying, Hey, the next issue of the Gap guide has dropped. And in it is half a dozen videos each week sourced from older students across the country. So we have contributors from Harvard to Virginia to Wisconsin, to Oregon to Miami, all over the country, representing all different kinds of students, and they're giving the advice that they wish they had their first year.

Speaker 4 ([35:51](#)):

And that could be advice about academic success, about making friends, about overcoming adversity and it's topics. What do you do when you don't get into the sorority you wanted? What do you do when you fail your first exam? How do you actually ask a professor for an extension? What do you do when your roommate is doing something that annoys you? Or it's literally across the entire spectrum of the college experience, and it's from people who said, this happened to me, and they're vulnerable and they're giving honest feedback and encouragement. Every video ends with that older student saying, you've got this. You can do this. I believe in you. It worked out for me. It's going to work out for you. And so what we found is the combination of those things delivered, not waiting for the student to ask for help, but it's just showing up on their phone because they subscribed is the magic combination. And it's been working really, really well. And we've now married that subscription with the College Crash course, which is sort of a on-demand video series of a few big episodes where it's the things that your students should know before they arrive on campus. So we took the it's here's what they can do before they get to campus, and then this is the weekly light touch every week in and out to give them the support they need to be successful.

Speaker 1 ([37:07](#)):

Amazing. I love that. And so is this something that every college has available to the students or the students need to purchase it on their own? Tell us a little bit more about if you're listening and people are saying, oh, this would be great, I really want to do this. How do they get that?

Speaker 3 ([37:22](#)):

We've been bringing the Gap Guide and now the College Crash course to market through multiple channels. So Lee and I are obviously very passionate about this business. We love talking about it. We love what we're doing. We love the impact that we're having. So we are working directly with College bound, high school seniors and their families. We are working with youth organizations, we are working with high schools, we're working with colleges. Anyone who has a vested interest in a young adult's success, whether it's the young adult, their family university, what we're finding is that there is a huge

opportunity here. But again, the goal is for someone to say, you know what? Who they want to listen to may not be the same as another kid. So Miles is a determined student athlete who likes to get stuff done, and that appeals to some of our subscribers.

Speaker 3 ([38:15](#)):

And then we have other subscribers who are like, Hey, I want someone to lose a little bit more nurturing, or I want someone who's actually an introvert. I can relate to that. And so when you look at our lineup of 25 different wiser older students, you end up seeing all different perspectives. And we've gotten feedback that, you know what? It's not a one size fits all approach. And some hear about it from their friends, some hear it from other parents in their high school community. Some saw it at a teen youth convention or their favorite teacher or principal recommended it. So our goal on the product side of our business is to help as many young adults as possible. And if you go into the university and you show up as a freshman and you expect someone to take care of this for you, you're not going to be pleased with the results because you might luck out and have the world's greatest resident advisor across the hall from you, and she's a junior and she takes you under her wing and she makes sure that you make all the best decisions or what typically happens, especially if you're a first generation college student, or maybe you're the oldest in your family to go to college, or you have no siblings to lean on.

Speaker 3 ([39:23](#)):

I mean, there's so many scenarios where it's the luck of the draw. I'm pretty confident Miles, because I remember you telling this when you first got to NYU, that you just kept looking for people for advice until you found it. And I think you're pretty good at judging who's giving you really good advice and who you're like, thank you very much for your time, but I'm going to go elsewhere for advice. That's not so easy. And especially not easy if you're introverted or if you're really nervous. And so when we ask people, we've done this a lot recently at these events we've been attending, is who's excited about going to college? A bunch of hands go up. Who's anxious about going to college? A bunch of hands go up. It's hard to go out there and ask those questions. And one quick story is one of our neighbors here in Bethesda is a subscriber to our product.

Speaker 3 ([40:07](#)):

She was home on spring break. I saw her in the park across the street. I went up to her, I said, Hey, just out of curiosity, has it been helpful? And she's a little quieter. And she said, well, I'm sorry, but I haven't actually watched every single episode. And I was like, well, no, no, no. You're not meant to watch every, because not every topic, I am guessing we, or let's say Miles, you didn't watch the episode on what happens if you're Russia sorority and you don't get your first choice? Probably doesn't speak to you. Maybe it does. She apologized to me that she hadn't watched every single of the 160 short form video episodes, but she said, the ones that I have watched have been really useful. And I said to her, that's exactly what we're going for, which is that once a week when that text comes in, you feel motivated to click on the button to be like, oh, that title appeals to me.

Speaker 3 ([40:51](#)):

And Lee, when we were on a recent podcast, they said, what are your favorite episodes? And I realized I have a really hard time picking out my favorite episodes because there's so much good content. And some of the topics, Lee, I talk about this a lot. Some of the topics I can't even believe are episodes, but we're not the target market. And so it's really great when Miles says, I've got a really important topic. I got to do an episode on this topic. He's right. And when someone says, how often should I change my sheets? I mean, that was literally an episode that one of our most prolific contributors who was doing her master's in mental health counseling, she's like, this is a really important topic. And she was right. And then Lee and I realized that everyone consumes the content differently. And so when we were standing in front of that

classroom, we didn't expect the episode about long distance relationships to resonate so much with the freshmen that were in the room with us.

Speaker 3 ([41:44](#)):

But think about it, they're three or four weeks out of living in their parents' home. A lot of them are still with their high school sweethearts. They're thinking, oh, I'm so far away. But all of a sudden, Alana tells 'em a story about what you can make this work. And here's, it's just the idea of getting advice from people they want to listen to. And it's a really powerful model. You'll never see Lee and I in our products, we look too much like adults. We look too much like parents. So the whole model is give the students what they want and who they want it from in a format they want it in. And I may not understand how short form video works because in my generation we actually read books, but the fact that we're able to get this great advice in the hands of these first year students who want and need this advice right now is really powerful.

Speaker 4 ([42:34](#)):

I'll end with the plug, which is, yes, we are speaking with colleges and high schools and partnering with them, but if you want to order it for a young adult in your life as a graduation gift to set them up for success, all you have to do is go to gap well guide.com. Gap well is G-A-P-W-E-L-L guide.com, and we have a pre-order special going on right now, and it ends up being less than a Netflix subscription, certainly less than textbooks, and certainly less than the amount of money you are putting into tuition. So it's a really good gift to give to your loved one or a family friend.

Speaker 1 ([43:13](#)):

Yeah, I was just going to say before you said that, which I'm so grateful for everyone to get that resource and we'll put of course in our show notes or anywhere that you received this podcast, the resources that are available to you. But I just was thinking back to my time in college, and I remember there were struggles that I had of course. And I remember there was Aspecific psychology class actually, that I was really struggling with because it was so large and I really couldn't understand the content and I was able to muddle through. But I was thinking, gosh, if I had someone a little older than me who had just been through a class like that to tell me some tips and tricks as to how to handle that particular class, I probably would've felt a lot better. I had to get through it anyway.

Speaker 1 ([43:56](#)):

And I think that's also just leading me into a conversation I had with a parent earlier this week. I guess it was now last week, but sometimes my dates run into each other here. But he was just saying, it seems like we have to do so much more as parents these days. It seems like there's just so much more on our plates to do. And I was thinking about that when you were talking about the resources that are available for our students in this way. And I was thinking, yes. And that's because we live in the information age. That's because we're living with the internet, we're living with social media, we're living with access to all kinds of content, which can be very, very, very overwhelming. And what this program really does is it distills it in a way that is meaningful to the student in their phones.

Speaker 1 ([44:40](#)):

Like you mentioned every week they can count on it coming and listen. If it helps them to do that which we even did many years ago, better, then they're going to be learning better than we were at that time. And that's really what we want for our kids. When we sign them up for school and we're sending them to these institutions, we want them to be able to learn as well as possible to make the most of that experience. And that's what this is really designed to do in a very impactful way. Miles, I'm curious just

about anything you want to say about G Well and your involvement. Is there anything else that your dad and Lee haven't said yet to let everyone know about it?

Speaker 2 ([45:18](#)):

I mean, I think they did a good job comprehensively describing their product. I have one thing. I was reading a book. This is just a piece of some wisdom, I guess. Like you said, we're in the information age, everything's accessible. We have likely, and my dad have talked about, we're pumping out short form media, and I was reading this book and it said, we're so conditioned for bipolar disorder, and here's a tip, this is a living tip. So we work all day, we go to class, we study super hard in college, and we go party. We have our days off. What I would say to students entering adulthood, you are one person the whole time. There is no work miles and party miles, there's just smiles. And what that looks like is being consistent with everything. So if I'm focused during my schoolwork, I'm also focused while I'm hanging out with my friends, I'm not going from super hard, super intense work to super chill because I'm trying to maintain consistency. And that is the best way to uphold your mental health throughout college. So that's my last

Speaker 1 ([46:27](#)):

Piece. Thank you. That

Speaker 2 ([46:28](#)):

Better be some good advice

Speaker 3 ([46:29](#)):

Because he's a psychology student at

Speaker 1 ([46:31](#)):

Nyu. I was about to say, that's so interesting. I love what you said. I think you started with something that could be, it made everyone pay attention. What do you mean? How could that be? But I think what your point is, it's really about having someone come into this college experience knowing themselves. And I think that's something that happens in young adulthood where in our development as humans, between our adolescence and adulthood is this period of time in which we can really get to know ourselves in a very deep way because we have the metacognition to do it, and we're able to take our experience of having more independence, hopefully with the assistance of our parents letting go of some of that. And also with the assistance of Gap, well, and guiding us as we go along, but also just really being secure and knowing that we can be ourselves in every way that we show up.

Speaker 1 ([47:24](#)):

And what a nice example it is for us to leave this conversation with that particular idea in mind. And I just want to say that I'm so interested in this work because I love listening to students. I love hearing what they have to say. And I think GAP has such an interesting model of really taking the time to listen to our students. And so all the content that you're really getting is coming from the kids, and they're of course going to have so many different perspectives. And that's actually good too, because even though you may have thought about having your long distance relationship happen in this one way, and there's one kid that gives you the exemplar of having in that one way, you might learn, oh wait, there's actually four other different ways to do this and all are actually okay. And I think that that's something that we really celebrate here, or something I know in learning work to be absolutely true is that every single brain is unique.

Speaker 1 ([48:20](#)):

So although there are commonalities, you're going to be your own person. You're going to go through this in your own way, and these are just resources that are really going to help you to make the most of that journey of being your one and only self in this college transition. So I don't want to of course stop the conversation because having so much fun with you all, but I know that there's so much work that we are doing here that you all are invited to continue this conversation. So I really do hope that you follow everybody in this podcast, listen to what they have to say as they go forward with the work. Go find out about Gap. Well get involved. Make sure your kids have the subscriptions so that they can start that work. Make sure your colleges know about it and let's amplify this important start to this very important conversation. So I want to thank you all for being here today. I want to thank you Miles for the introduction and for showing up as you did in that alumni event. It was just so cool to talk with you and all of the kids that were there, kids, all of the young adults who were there at the NYU session that we had. So thanks so much everybody, and I will end us there.

Speaker 4 ([49:28](#)):

Thank you. Thank you, Mary. Thank you, Mary, thank you.

Speaker 5 ([49:34](#)):

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