

Ned Johnson (00:00):

A lot of times when we're not behaving well or you know, our kids aren't behaving well, it's easy to judge ourselves, to judge them and think this is an issue of character. We're so often it's an issue of chemistry and if we can support the things that have as be tripped when in this homeostasis we're most of the time we're pretty resilient and you know, we can take a few knocks and keep on going. Didn't need to do it with a smile on her face boy and makes everything's all the systems feel better.

Jon Vroman (00:25):

Gentlemen, welcome to the front row dad podcast. I'm your host Jon Vroman. This is the show for family men with businesses, not businessmen who happen to have families on the side. Two guys that are joining me today, I'm super fired up about this conversation because I have listened to and enjoyed tremendously. A book called the self driven child showed it with my wife, shared it with friends, shared it with the guys in the brotherhood and today as I'm so lucky to host a podcast, I get to talk with the authors about the book itself. And to, first of all, thank you both. And for everybody who doesn't know who the heck I'm referring to, let me tee this up a little bit. I've got with me a Ned Johnson coauthor of the book, married or with his wife, I should say for 28 years and two kids, 18 and 16 founder of prep matters, focusing on tutoring, educational planning and test prep. And then also we have Dr. William Stixrud who we'll call Bill today with his permission. And uh, he's been with his wife for 43 years. That's incredible. I just love hearing that. And uh, also has two kids, 38 and 34 along with three grandkids. So a lot of wisdom that, that we were going to chat about today. From all your experience, you're a clinical neuropsychologist and bill is also the founder of the Stixrud group, a lifespan neuro psychology practice. Can we start with what is that?

Jon Vroman (01:49):

They're all psychology. Mainly what it is is neuropsychologist. We noticed a fair amount about the brain. I'm a clinical psychologist so I make a living testing kids who have learning problems or attention problems or emotional problems or social problems. I just try to figure out what's right, what's wrong. Yeah. Very cool guys, why did you write the book? Let's start there. Why not? You were bored. You mastered your craft. You had nothing else to do, so we became friends several years ago and we started lecturing together and we lectured. We lectured about stress effects being chronically stressed and tired and kids' brains. Yeah. Probably four years ago we decided to call. We had a lot of useful stuff. Let's write a book about this and we deciding what should be the organizing and then at one point said everything that we think is helpful. Parents educated is related to a sense of control. [inaudible] yeah. We were

Dr. William Stixrud (03:00):

concerned about motivation because some of the kids that we see either have obsessive driven, fear-based motivation to achieve. It's all, if you think about the sacrifice, their hell. Brains are family friendships, the friendships that their, their free time to, to for achievement. And a lot of kids that I see you are doing well in school figure if I'm not a good student, what's the point of trying and they'd rather have board working hard, didn't actually work hard at something. They are very, yeah. And so we looked at understand how do kids develop that really healthy motivation to develop themselves so they have something useful and all the arrows are sensor. And also with, with the stress part, we have this epidemic, a stress related mental health problem with the unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, suicide in addition to lonely in young people, usually after puberty. And we're thinking that the most stressful thing you can experience is a low sense of control. And then we figured that if autonomy or a

sense of control, it's usually related to healthy motivation and it's usually related to mental health, it must be a big deal. So we decided, look, let's write a book about this that tells parents and educators how we can increase this sense of autonomy and control. Did you guys feel that you had a sense of control when you were kids? I did [inaudible].

Jon Vroman ([04:28](#)):

I had a family that was a little bit of benign neglect, I suppose. Hardly is that parents who struggled a lot. My father was not the Hollick. My mother had some really severe mental health issues and so I was in, it was kind of left to my own devices. I grew up in a place that was pretty rural and tiny little school and I was sharp enough, you know, I wasn't stressed all the time. And so as kind of left to do my own stuff, which sometimes was kind of hard, but

Dr. William Stixrud ([04:50](#)):

it was sort of a whole lot better than they micromanage. So, yeah. Yeah, yeah. There's research to suggest since the 1960s young people's sense of control has gotten lower and lower. I was a generation where I get to go with my friends on Saturday mornings. We come back at dinner time and we just gotta figure out our whole day. And our parents had no idea where we were. And there's so much of young people's lives from time that they're three or four years old now. It's structured sports and screen time. And so I think that that, which is certainly part of what young people today have a lower sense of controllers, some generations and it turns out the kid's sense of control of their own lives decreases every year they're in school. Interesting. Why do you think that's happened over the generations? One of the hypothesis is that that our culture is becoming increasingly materialists. The 1960s is popular for young people to say, but my highest value is contributing to society and making the world a better place. Consistent philosophy of life. And now that there's more

Jon Vroman ([05:58](#)):

emphasis on material stuff, physical money on prestige. Oh yeah, certainly when we received this obsession with elite college is so far out of proportion session and both of those get out in psychologists talk about an internal versus an external locus of control. So so does it reside within me or resides outside? And so how are prestige, what other people think about me? When, when, what other people think about me matters more than what I think about myself. It's very stressful. So all of us are parents. So often, particularly with my perspective, particularly with little girls, we tend to say things like, Oh my gosh, you're so pretty. Or Oh my gosh, you're so clever. You're so smart. And those, those roll off the tongue and they feel like wonderful, easy compliments to give, but they're really not such a hot idea because it trains, there's this little goes to constantly looking like, you know, was that good enough?

Jon Vroman ([07:00](#)):

Am I, am I smart enough? I'm not pretty enough. Right. You know, did you do your bet? You know, so kids looking up to see, did I do my best? Like someone else can tell them whether they did their best or not. Yeah. You know, this, this issue of control is really interesting and autonomy. And I thought about you guys when I was playing volleyball with some of our local front row dads and one of the guys in our group, his name is David Osborne, great guy, wonderful dad. His daughter was kind of going off with the friends to just explore around where we were playing volleyball and I really paid attention when he was, he was shouted to her, she's like, can I go over there? And he said, I trust you. He goes, you just go explore like I trust you. And he said, he probably said it three times just to reassure her that I really trust you.

Jon Vroman ([07:46](#)):

You're good. I trust you to make the right decision. And he was really intentional with those words. And I remember hearing about that in your book, the voice of the parent trusting the child even maybe in choice, right? Do you prefer this or this? Yeah. What can you learn from this experience? But allowing the child to trust their own feelings. My wife and I just had this discussion the other day about really honoring our son's feelings that whatever he's feeling, if he could express it now, even when he tells us that like we're wrong or that it almost comes across as a little bit rude, right? Like how dare you talk to me that way. Like I'm the parent. You're the child, but in some ways, you know we're honoring or trying to honor that because when he's expressing himself, he's really being honest about his feelings.

Jon Vroman ([08:37](#)):

We don't always like the way it sounds, but he's being honest. Right, and certainly tantrums are yelling and screaming. Ideally what we do is we help them understand we, we, we show up to see fruit for their frustration. We may say it's not okay to did to hit your, that we want to set limits, but certainly one of the most important, we worked on a second book. The first chapter is all about what, what you're just saying, it's about listening carefully. Is this about developing a close relationship and a key part of that is the practice of empathy was listening carefully, kind of feeding back to kids. I heard this is really frustrating for you because that just helps tremendously with kids. Emotional regulation, their feelings into words. Absolute tremendous as as they grew up with being well-regulated adults who can handle frustration. We're going to fly off the handle who don't get good overleaf now and so yeah, we don't want to increase cause to be disrespectful. I would certainly taking their feelings seriously though. We understand is one the most important things we do.

Speaker 4 ([09:45](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I wrote in my notes that kids are great observers but not interpreters. When you're mad around them they think you're mad at them. Yep. And uh, that was a big one for me because one thing, and I've openly talked about this on the podcast quite often as my, my coming to the conclusion that I was not carrying the best vibe around my kids all the time. I would be nicer to the person at target than I would be to my own kids. And if somebody were filming me in my home, I would be embarrassed by the tone in which I would talk at times. And how I would show up. And I just shared with a, a guy you might know, I just had him on the show. His show just came out, Jim death murder. He wrote the 15 commitments of conscious leadership. It's such a good book. And we had this conversation, I was telling him about how tiger, my 10 year old had said to me at one point, I wish I had a dad that didn't get triggered so often. I was like, that's one of those moments where you think, Oh, that hurts and thank you. Jim said you should, you know, thinking your kids for seeing you and for being courageous enough to say that to dad that he's not so afraid of you

Jon Vroman ([10:56](#)):

and your sister. It's such a good point because I think, you know, it's so often we may hold ourselves together in workout in the place, you know, kind of this persona almost comes in persona that we want it, we want to convey and then we both, we can come home with that. Oftentimes if we're not at our best, we come home and everything is pouring out and we're not as nice to our spouses. We should be. We're kind of rough on our kids, you know, and we sort of justify it. But we expect the kids after a hard day of work and navigate a new social situations and for in kids aren't always nice to each other, that they're gonna come home and be on perfect attendance with us. Did we expect a little people of

behavior that we can not allow ourselves, even though we're the ones that allegedly have the more mature brains? I know what you speak.

Speaker 4 ([11:44](#)):

Yeah.

Jon Vroman ([11:44](#)):

Let me see like kids to say, my dad got mad at me last night cause they got mad at my brother.

Speaker 4 ([11:48](#)):

Yeah, yeah,

Jon Vroman ([11:50](#)):

yeah, exactly. There's a chapter, our book called a non-anxious [inaudible]. Yeah. Yeah. We didn't make this term up, but we'd love this idea. Yeah. Ideally [inaudible] we moved in the direction his parents being a nonanxious presence in our family. We got this idea from [inaudible] who was a rabbi therapist and it's systems thinker and business consultant is this idea was that systems, whether they're organizations or churches or schools or synagogues, they work better if the people in charge are not highly anxious and emotionally and just think about it as a pure, it is so much easier to Sue that [inaudible] if you can stay calm and it's so much easier if you've got a three year old melting down to the store, it's so much easier to really handle it skillfully. If he can stay calm. It's got a 15 year old who comes home. It just got cut from the baseball team or his girlfriend just so much, much more. Oh, we can stay calm, but I think so we have a chapter about how do you move from this direction a big and non-anxious, not overly reactive theater important because ideally work and school are stressful, not come home. Ideally home is a safe is a relative with low charge space where we all kind of nurture each other.

Speaker 4 ([13:12](#)):

Yeah. That's so important. I want the guys to get the book. Of course. I'll say that a bunch of times. It's, it's totally worth the read and it's a great listen, by the way, the audio is wonderful. The audio books. Great. Talk to us a little bit about what is one small step that a guy could walk away with today to implement when it comes to staying calm, being a nonanxious presence, right. What can they do to move in that direction?

Jon Vroman ([13:37](#)):

There are a lot of things, but sometimes I think, I'll speak for myself. I know that sometimes I rushed home and I'm so eager to get home, but I've come from a lot going on and then and then think it's going to be all. So bill and I both do transcendental meditation. Yeah. And so in a perfect world, I don't go home until I meditate or if I go home I say, can you give me 20 minutes? Because when I meditate, I'm going to be a much better person over the break, over the holidays, my daughter who's a sophomore, is a complicated bird. She's at clinically anxious, clinically depressed, incredibly bright. So winning arguments with her, it just doesn't happen. And I was, for some reason, I felt that what she needed to do was, was exercise, you know, and it's important for everyone's health and mental health.

Jon Vroman ([14:17](#)):

And she just kind of wasn't having that that day. And the more she didn't want to do it, the more amped up I got felt like this was the most important thing to do. Right. And at some point I just, I, I was about to say things are really, really good mean and dark and like don't say it. And so my wife's like, yeah, maybe you need to go for a run. So I went off on a run, I got lost in the woods. I thought it was going to run for three miles for 13 miles. I come home, my energy is completely change, completely change. Hey sweetheart, how are you? Right. Here's the great part because I left while I left and got lost

Dr. William Stixrud ([14:52](#)):

in the woods. My daughter of her own accord had gotten that stationary bike we have. And John, her exercise probably when dad was not there, but arguably because dad was not there. And so, so much of this, I mean, so much of the book he talks about, did we do this work on ourselves first, right? We work on ourselves first. You mean for me, I, cause I know the fitness is a big part of that for a few guys, bigger exercise blows off cortisol, which is the principal stress hormone. So don't go home and see your family and go for a run and go for a run and then go home and see your family. You'll be a much easier person to get along with. Yeah, right. Well a lot of kids say overreact. Did you meditate today? Did you forget to exercise? You know, and so certainly then what were the other things?

Dr. William Stixrud ([15:37](#)):

I think that is really helpful [inaudible] taking a long view. But for that I mean that all of our fear, all of our anxiety, a lot of the anger that we experiences, parents frustration, it's about the future. It's kids are in a place we get worried. Then if they're not doing well now, you're going to be in this negative cycle the rest of your life. And I think that my daughter started to stutter, which she was two and what's about probably eight or nine days, got worse, worse a couple of days, didn't want to talk. And I've never been more panic in my life. Put pressure on her and she won't talk up with this. Every gets better. All this catastrophic thinking. And then a couple days later she started talking, I'm thinking of time faster than her speech. And what I realized was it all my panic, it wasn't about her going through this thing. It was about her to be teased the rest of her life. And for the most part he'll kick kids turn out fine and kids go through stuff. And I think once we realized, yeah, it gives it a hard place, it doesn't mean you're going to be a hard place for the rest of their life that can help us to keep things in perspective and not go to that catastrophic. Thank you.

Speaker 4 ([16:50](#)):

That's great. So really guys want to just zoom out for a quick second. I love where this is all heading and I could keep traveling down this road for know as long as we can keep you on the video chat here. But I want to zoom out and think about there's a guy out there, and let me use myself. I mean we've often asked this between my wife and I of just is the level of, whether you call it apathy or laziness or just being super chill and not really worried about getting stuff done, not really worried about getting, and we're talking about my kids. Okay, right? Getting to school on time, not really worried about getting the homework done. Is all of that normal age appropriate? How do I assess? Is my child self-driven? Is my child in a good space? And so maybe, you know, when I zoom out, I just think

Dr. William Stixrud ([17:38](#)):

first of all,

Speaker 4 ([17:39](#)):

do I have a self-driven child? We almost want to like measure it to know, I mean you hear about the marshmallow experiment and kids that can, you know, not eat the marshmallow and chances

Jon Vroman ([17:50](#)):

are that they might be a little bit better off because they've got this willpower or they're making tough decisions now to be better off later, however we want to dissect that. I guess the question is how do parents, first of all assess, do they need this book? Are they in a situation where they need to help their child or do they already have a self driven child? My feeling is that if you lose look, yeah, how miserable. There's such a high percentage of kids are particularly after puberty, typically teenager, you look at the degree of mental health problems in college campuses, 60% of those students are seeking mental health services. So many of the kids that we see have the idea that if I get into elite elite college, I'll be set and if you look, the reality is completely untrue and so are our feelings.

Jon Vroman ([18:39](#)):

It just almost all the kids we know or moving the direction if they don't have them already having anxiety. So you said 30 38% of girls in high school are diagnosed at some point with an anxieties. They were in 26% of boys. And you look at all the mood disorders, my feeling, and we really do feel, yeah, by promoting the sense of control. This is your life. I trust you encouraging kids to be responsible for stuff they're responsible for letting them solve their own problems as much as possible, which is how you become resilient is really important for everybody. So yeah, we think that most people have really easy kids and or in very low pressure situations, but most people after puberty across the country across it, and it doesn't, it's not just these really high intensity, it's not just New York and Washington, D C it's all over where the young people would make, partly related to it. But I think that most people need to be reminded that you don't have to worry about your Cheetos. You don't have to micromanage your kids. You can trust your chip.

Jon Vroman ([19:46](#)):

The other thing is there's a guy in the, in the book whose research reluctant named Reed Larson. We're back in the 90s it was looking at how did shades become, how do children and adolescents become intrinsically motivated? Not just working hard but wanting to work hard. You can get people work hard by carrots and sticks, you know, big threats, big, big bribes. But it's very different from having inner drive. And when he found was kids don't become intrinsically, you know, honestly motivated by dutifully doing their health. They do it by what he described as the passionate pursuit of past times. And because I know your femoral dads are all of these family men with businesses, I bet this rings true for a lot of them. Maybe even ring true for you John, that you are spirit. I mean 50 talks, you voice someone, you had something to say there, whether you had, whether you were straight a student in valedictorian of class, I have no idea.

Jon Vroman ([20:40](#)):

But you're clearly good and more importantly passionate in what you do. And I suspect that's true, but a lot of your dads, and so if they back on it, you know they were great athletes, they were student government, they were [inaudible], they ran their own paper routes and then businesses in high school, blah blah blah blah blah. And so this is the point that yeah, if you're into sports or music or coding or robotics or small engine repair or you've got three part time jobs, whatever it is, music, you know, you're doing things where you're working hard, super focused determination. But it isn't feeling threatened. But it's low threat. And the problem with grades, grades, grades, grades, grades is, it's

completely externalized. Was that good enough? Did I get an egg? Did I get an eight that I can connect? And this idea that to be successful in life, you have to be top 10% of your high school class.

Jon Vroman ([21:29](#)):

Well boy, that's a heck of a nice message for the other 90% of people. Like you might as well give up because you're going to have a seamless life. And of course we know that is just not true. It's just not, not, not, not true. And so we, I want, look, I help kids get into college. I want your kids to be as educated as they can be in my kids and everyone's kids to be as educated as they can be, as they want it to be because it's good for them and it's good for the families. It's good for the schools is good for me. It's good for the whole darn country to develop talent as much as we can. But the idea of this very narrow thing, and this has to go through being valedictorian, your class and to these tiny colleges, it's just, it's crazy making.

Jon Vroman ([22:09](#)):

And so if you have a kid who just doesn't care that much about school right now, as long as he's, if he's doing nothing but sit in his bed and play video games, then I'd worry about whether it is depression. But if he's like school, who cares about that? But he plays three hours a day trying to figure out how to shoot with the offhand on the cross. I don't worry about that. He's just waiting for a teacher, professor who lights a fire and who says, now this, this class, this is something we're studying. Right? So if you've got, I'm going to talk about another dad and his kid for a minute. I once heard a story about a guy who had a kid who has really found an excitement for football and basketball and wants to play all day, which is great, right? I love to see that, but isn't necessarily into reading and doesn't really love to do his homework or do it well or doesn't really care what the teacher's going to say about his homework.

Jon Vroman ([23:01](#)):

You know, for the most part, deep down inside probably does, but says outwardly that he doesn't. But that's probably just right. This is what I've heard from a friend. And so I guess my question is for me personally assessing that situation, I'm just wondering like I'm hearing the answer is no, but is there a cause at a point where a parent would say, yeah, you have a child that really is lazy and that's a problem and we need to work on that? Or is that like just let your kids be kids, help them find their passions, help them figure out what their strengths are and ride those waves. So as somebody who tests kids for a living, I'm frequently asked, my kid doesn't want to do his homework. He avoids

Dr. William Stixrud ([23:46](#)):

is, is this stuff harder than it appears? Is it, or is it just the motivational? And I think kids who persistently don't like to read, they really avoid writing and they can't focus on their work. They can't complete stuff. They're late with everything. I think it does make sense to, to make sure they don't have some kind of learning disability or paying attention is certainly cause identifying those things and treating that makes an enormous difference. And I think one of the points that we make regarding the motivation, the degree to which kids care about or they want to do their homework, you can't make somebody want what they don't want. You can't make, not want. And so I think that we often times try to use scare tactics to get them to work harder. And it never, it never works. And one of the principles that we advocate, this is not working harder to help.

Dr. William Stixrud ([24:40](#)):

She had get stopped daughter. They're solving problems with the chip does. Because what happens if adults spend eight years of energy, tried to get kids, get through better, it'll go spend 20 if adults get more anxious and go up to 90 units, a kid will spend, you know, and it doesn't change the, so the energy changes. So your kids, it's kept wanting to do better. Your kids, kids are struggling. We want to offer help. Well we don't want to be the position of constantly being on them, putting more energy into their do well did they do [inaudible] one of the ways they manage her anxiety. You said they probably want to do better in school than they are, but one of the ways to manage anxiety, just letting you worry about it. [inaudible] and so I can avoid my homework cause I know my additionally my dad's gonna land on you. You make me do it so I don't have to think about it and I didn't want to change that energy. The way kids become response is for taking care of stuff. That's actually their responsibility and if we take responsibility for something that's there, okay, I'll be responsible for making do your homework. That doesn't develop that kind of internal self motivation. We want to see [inaudible].

Speaker 5 ([25:40](#)):

Yeah. Wow. So good. All right guys. I want to take just a quick second to talk about something really important now and know you're listening to the show because you want to level up your game at home, but if you want to take the next step within front row dads, I want you to do something today which is text the words front row dads to three one four six six five one seven six, seven three separate words. Front row dads. It's not case sensitive. I want to send you a few things right away. First, I want to send you a recording from a masterclass that I recorded with my good friend and author of the miracle morning, Howe L rod. He's a father of two amazing human beings and we recorded a show called the five habits of a front row dad. I want to send that to you because I think it is well worth listening to.

Speaker 5 ([26:22](#)):

Second, I want to give you 45 minutes of a mind blowing conversation that I had with a woman named Kim and NAMI and the show is titled have better sex, hugely popular. This will rock your world and likely your spouses as well. But I want you to have access to this information. Number three, I want to give you access to 1300 other front row dads inside of our Facebook group where you can ask any question, share any win and give any resource that you think would be valuable to the community. And lastly, I want to include you in one email I send out each week. It's short, it's to the point and I pull from my life experiences along with the insights for more than 135 members of our brotherhood. I want to give you the best of the best in each email. So all you have to do is just text the words front road ads to three one four, six, six five one seven, six, seven and we will get you started today.

Speaker 5 ([27:15](#)):

Let's talk about testing for a quick second because I was thinking about this, we've brought it up a little bit, but as two guys, I know you get asked this question a lot, right? As two guys who have spent a lot of time in testing, right? We're helping people with tests or doing the testing. What is your take on tests and the impact that that has on a self-driven child today? Right? Is there a problem in our schools where we're doing too much of it, we're putting too much weight on it? Do you see that as a challenge? Are you advocates against that

Jon Vroman ([27:46](#)):

or are you, you know, where do you stand on that? Complicated and it depends what tests are talking about. If you're my history teacher, right? And you're giving me a test and score math test as opposed to Harger, you know, turnovers are standardized test. They're used in school. And so there's a wonderful,

wonderful, wonderful called naked stick. And there there's, you can find, there's a six points event in psychology today, a guy named Henry Roediger and, and some other folks. And he talks about what's called the testing effect. And the idea that is this, the tests used well being forced learning because if I have to sit there and have a quiz or test and try to pull that cash with the guy's name or you know, work really hard, it's like lifting weights for the brain, right? And it makes those neuro-pathways those memories stronger.

Jon Vroman ([28:28](#)):

So there's a real place for that. So long as the threat isn't too high, the stress isn't too high. And this end there is sleep deprivation is. And so one of the challenges with, if we could use tests and explain to kids, this is the purpose of this test, this is how I'm good at this. It contributes to your learning as opposed to, I'm using this test to judge you all the time. And boy, if you come up short, Oh boy, your future is toast, which is how it can steal. For a lot of kids that's, we just want, it's like anything, the right doses of medicine, you know, improves lives, saves lives too much. Right? And it's poison. Most standardized tests that are used in school give no feedback to the kid at all. So how does a kid possibly chair about that? But if I'm the teacher, Tony, you've got to do really well on this in order for me to look good as a teacher or for the school to look good.

Jon Vroman ([29:18](#)):

Well where's the relatedness? What related the kid feel there? And so, so often we're using the average score to evaluate schools, which is just, it's foolish because it never gets down to what's going on with this kid or that kid. How do we use the learning tool and you know, sort of like the amount effective then encourages all of these adults to act like they care about something that they know doesn't provide any pedagogical value and encourage them to take shortcuts. So, I mean I, I think it is a testing industrial complex and I just, I think by and large it's a very poor idea. I think you should trust teachers to teach well and cause this whole idea of accountability. Accountability is really just a kind of fancy word for letting you control you. Let me as some politician or someone outside of your school system tell you whether you're doing a good job or not.

Jon Vroman ([30:08](#)):

Very strong feelings. I agree. There's this chapter in a book called [inaudible]. A sense of control goes to school. Yeah. We talk about testing in our feeling is that most recent public education, most of the changes in the last 20 years I've been made by people who either know nothing about development or nothing about the brain or don't share anything because anything that makes life more stressful for kids or parents, it's good advice almost by definition can interfere with their learning and their development. Just being stressed all the time is terrible for your brain and you don't, you don't learn. So we think that this energized testing is huge. Waste of time is probably counterproductive because it just places the values.

Jon Vroman ([30:58](#)):

And it's a little bit like I, you know, we're talking this through bill a couple of weeks ago, uh, finding myself as a parent more often and I'm pretty, I'm probably better than most, but, but asking how did that quiz go? How did that test though with my kid? And sometimes it's really curiosity cause I know he's worked hard, but I also find myself occasionally doing that. Just wanting to hear him tell me it went fine. So it lowers my stress. And so when we do these standardized tests across the board and say, Oh, our school where we're an a plus star, we're three gold, whatever, you know, we're 93rd percent or

whatever, and then everyone can relax and think, okay, we're safe as opposed to it's really, we got terrible scores. Well we know this is an entire population. It has a lot of headwinds. These are some kids who need a lot more support.

Jon Vroman ([31:42](#)):

Do we really need the test to tell us that these kids need more support? And then you know, then you make the big structural changes and whipsaw everyone, let's try different reform. Let's try different reform. Oh and look for an a test to tell us that everything is safe. If kids slept an extra hour, it'd be so much better for their education and testing them all the time. It's just, yeah, yeah, yeah. I agree with that 100% guys, I know you poured heart and soul into this book and like I said, I loved it and thank you for writing it. A big question would be leading. Yeah. What do you hope people talk about? You know, as a keynote speaker, when I'm thinking about a message, I often ask myself when somebody walks out of that room and they walk, you know, and they're just catching up with a buddy in the hallway that didn't see the speech and they say, what was John Roman's speech about?

Jon Vroman ([32:29](#)):

I'm always very curious about what they'll say in that moment. What is the big value? What's going to change their life? What habit are they going to implement right away? Cause they're not going to remember the whole, they're probably going to take away a big idea or a couple of concepts that they might be able to implement. But it's probably going to be one thing. So when you think about that with the self-driven child and somebody reads it and then talks to a friend, what do you hope that they are getting from the book? What's the one action? If they only change one thing that a parent would do differently after reading it than they would do before? For me, the biggest thing that we would all make a shift from thinking that it's our responsibility to help our kids come out a certain way.

Jon Vroman ([33:13](#)):

Jude thinking, how can I help make it come out the way that he wants to? And so we talked in the book there, the idea of being a consultant, not a manager. If you're my business consultant, you can't tell me what's important to me. You start by you all these questions. W w what do you, what do you want out of here? Do you want to grow your company massively. Do you want to have more free time? Do you want to have the culture? Do you want to prove margins? Whatever you have, I have to, I have to know what I want and then it's your job to help me to achieve those goals. And that's what we should be doing as parents is trying to create all the space and the curiosity and love for our kids so that they can spend their childhood, their adolescence, figuring out what matters to them.

Jon Vroman ([33:51](#)):

Now obviously we have values to them. Okay. It's their lives and it's our job to help. The worst job in the world is trying to get kids to do things that they don't because it's terrible for our relationship with them is terrible and we're basically telling them what you want to do doesn't matter. And even if you want kids to be really focused on their education and when you change the effort from trying to, you know, force help or force advice to saying, is there a way that I can help? Would you like to hear my perspective on this? It completely changed the energy and it's just, it's so much more respectful than if we go back to what you talked about. You're nicer to the person you know and target, then you may be with your family. I don't go around the street telling people, you know, ma'am, you really, that's a terrible blouse with that skirt.

Jon Vroman ([34:35](#)):

That's what, what are you doing there sir? Are you really, is that how you get it? We just don't do that, you know? Can you see I just had a great vision of like maybe talking to like seeing a guy outside of target, not wearing a coat. And I'm like, you seriously left the house without wearing your coat, right? Oh that's right. Cause a lot of times parents think, well what you're saying is just leave your kids. Let, let, let them do whatever they want. And we're not seeing that at all. We're saying you love your kids more than anyone could possibly love kids and you know more about them. You're prepared to give time and energy and for you or reorganize your whole life. Say, how can I be a better dad? And so what we're not talking about is stepping away. We're talking about stepping rather than being in front of them, you know, leading the way or be behind them, pushing them. We're talking about stepping aside and walking with that and saying, can I offer some advice? And you just, you consult with them and you advise rather than try to try to manage your force. I I agree and certainly I think most people

Dr. William Stixrud ([35:38](#)):

feel that the major take home point is this idea of taking yourself more as a consultant than your kids boss or manager homework, police like that and there's really four implications of this idea. One is that we offering help has all the kids that I see, did they need help? Did they need tutoring or a language therapist or they need accommodations. They need medicine and I just don't believe in trying to force up like they don't need because it'd be basically we enforce this denial unless they're suicidal since. Second is that saying that we offer our advice and our wisdom and we don't try to force it. It has this car tutor. The dads hold these two boys by the name of the deck. He says, listen up boys, listen up. Good cause I'm only to tell you this a million times.

Dr. William Stixrud ([36:33](#)):

Stop doing it. Just saying, yeah, I've got an idea about that. Do you want to be here? Offer your advice as much as possible, encouraged kids to make decisions, which is parts consulting. I personally feel, and I think we both feel that the best message you can give a teenager design is kind of going back to the trust you. I have confidence in your ability to make decisions about your own life and to learn from your mistakes and I want you to have tons of experience doing it before you've left. It was a little kid. The message is you're the expert. Nobody knows who your unfruitful preaching, and the fourth is, kids become resilient. [inaudible] your own problems if you don't solve your own problems. Basically when the semi stressful happens, you look to other people.

Dr. William Stixrud ([37:21](#)):

We don't want kids to be chronically stressed. Well, when, when they have problems, we want to remind ourselves and help us support them. They need it. But increasingly I agree that that's the major problem. Major points, and I'll say that there's a woman who's come. A lot of, when people come to our lectures multiple times and what they say is there, when I hear him folks talk, I feel so much calmer about my kids and I have these two perspective that I feel like I don't have to worry about him all the time. I push them all the time. I'm not responsible for making me turn out a certain way and then they go to school and they talk to another parent. We could all wound up again. I'm curious. You're welcome to read the book and read it. Did you start reassure yourself? The science is on our side. The science isn't the side of trusting kids. One of the most beautiful things anybody ever said to me was years ago, I don't remember who it was. [inaudible]. One of the things that I love about it raising adolescents is when they come home from school, you can just see who they're deciding to be that love, respect. This is their law. Yeah. I wanted to dig in here a little bit to giving them choice, right? Being their consultant

Jon Vroman ([38:37](#)):

and what you also just said there, Ned, about kids become resilient by solving their own problems and I couldn't stop my brain from immediately going to a current situation with my 10 year old, I'm maybe having a little bit of an internal wrestling match about whether or not he should be responsible for getting out of bed or he's only 10 and I should be getting him out of bed because I'm leaning towards the bottom and alarm clock. I taught him how to set it, he knows how to set it. I taught him how to hang up a sign next to his bed that says set my alarm clock because I want to teach him how to B, self-reliant in that place to wake himself up and to get rolling and to do the things he needs to do. And I'm at the place now where I want to just let him sleep in and be late to school when he doesn't set as alarm so that he can learn to do this.

Jon Vroman ([39:26](#)):

I also don't want to throw him under the bus because, and I often wrestle with this like at 10 years old, like, Hey, you're being a little tough on him. He's 10 right? He's, you know, he's still getting things figured out. And then the other part is he's 10. If he's, if he lives in Amish country, he's driving a tractor and working two hours a day. Right. Well, I tell you, I had that dilemma with my son. It's probably around that age, maybe a little better. I'm not sure. And part of this is my kid goes to school, there's basically two blocks away. It's like the world's shortest commute. That's us. That's our situation. [inaudible] I said, can I ask you a question? I said, I am. I want to ask about this morning thing because it drives me a little nuts. I feel like it gets you up and I feel like mom and I are always on, you know, an alarm clock.

Jon Vroman ([40:12](#)):

It's, it does it help you? But, but then you'd say, yeah, yeah, yeah. And then every five minutes we're coming back and for like 40 minutes every stupid day, right? Trying to, I said, does it help you for mom and me to get you up or would you rather use an alarm clock? And so it actually like it when you wake me up. They said it's much more gentle. Said, okay, fine. I said, here's the question, I would get you up. But then we, we then clearly become a snooze button, right? We can coming back, I said, how many times should I come back for? I'm like, that's it. And you're just like this morning you sleep through whatever. And he says once or maybe twice, he says after that, the more times remind me the less I wanted to. And so for your son, I would absolutely have this conversation like, dude, I don't want to be on top of this.

Jon Vroman ([40:49](#)):

I think you're perfectly capable of doing this. Do you think you're capable of doing this? Because if you don't, I'm happy to ask him because in some ways you feel like this is, you know, you're, you're kind of damned if you do, damned if you don't, if you, if you abandon and he's going to be so upset with you, right? And if you, but if you keep doing this for the rest of your life, you know, you'll be his alarm clock and calling Moody's 34 to wake him up, you know, make this be his problem. Right? And just ask him does it help or does not help? And so you're, again, you're being that consultant and you're not acting like it's your job to figure that whole thing out because whatever decision he makes, you want him to own it, right? Because otherwise if you make it for him and it doesn't go up, dad, I told you either way you're toast.

Jon Vroman ([41:28](#)):

Right? And so my, my son is still chronically at the second, almost every day and my wife's like, and I'm like, no, no, no, no. This is his problem. If he's late to school and he has to sit in study hall and he doesn't have free passes if the teacher's mad at him, that's his problem. That is not a reflection on me as a parent. That's reflection in him as a guy who does everything last minute in my reminded. If it is not going to change that behavior, someone else is going to change that behavior. If you, you know, it gets a teachers like they just knew a couple of weeks ago, you're late too often. That's a habit. Change it. Okay. Yeah, I see it the same way. I think that certainly one of the points for me this related this is that you don't want to be fighting about the same thing over and over and over again.

Jon Vroman ([42:11](#)):

I really appreciate that dilemma because the one he had, I think we probably under expect kids are capable, the underestimate kids are really capable of hearsay, but also that there's a lot of things that are important, but we don't need to master them today or even next month. I mean, so one possibility, but let's set a goal. You being able to get yourself up by yourself by your birthday, by the time you're 11 and a half then cause that's been the calendar. Let's work towards that and see what works. You know, and, and certainly one, one thing is that the sleep experts say that if kids have to be woken up, they probably aren't getting enough sleep. Right? So one thing might be to think about, let's work on bedtime a little bit here and see so that it's not so hard to wake up for a 10 year old. I think probably most 10 year olds need to be woken up. Some are really hard to wake up and some days they're really hard to wake up.

Jon Vroman ([43:08](#)):

The last thing I'll say is that there are kids who parents wake them up and they curse and we don't want that. Your son was always grateful for your way. I see a lot of kids, it's just so painful because the kids are so hostile. Yeah. We don't want to get to do this, that getting kids in bed on time, but I think, you know, he's not getting out of bed. That's the hardest part is getting kids getting in bed. The hardest part, I have a boy is ninth grade and the family asked me to consult with him about his ADHD, inattentive and executive function, blah, blah blah. And the first thing I went right at was sleep because he was up till 12 o'clock which is way too late for a kid to, you know, for, for good, for an adolescence. And so sort of talk through the signs of in Nashville might help.

Jon Vroman ([43:51](#)):

And we kind of made a whole plan and again, very consultative way. It was, it came back in a month, about a month later. And his grades, he still struggles a little motivation. His grades are better, they're not, they're not worse. Parents want to be, but they've gone up from fees to be pluses. So I thought that was great. But I said, I said, what's the biggest change you've made? So I'm now going to bed at about 11 rather than 12 and I said, great. I said, well, have you noticed any changes? And he says, yeah, I'm just, I'm less angry in the morning. Yeah, the parents were happy, you know, the sleeping is a big one and I just ran a call yesterday for our group, about five of them. The strategies that I've seen work within our brotherhood most effective and we have five pillars

Speaker 4 ([44:32](#)):

of our brotherhood, one of which is emotional mastery. All right. And this is the self awareness and the self control and keeping our cool. I think for me there's been a few things that have been dug game changers with emotional mastery, sweating, silence and then sleep right. And also sobriety. Just all those basic things when you start thinking about a kid, not just sobriety from like an alcohol perspective,

but having a sober body that's not impacted by caffeine and sugar and things like that. Like feeling completely like your body is in a state of homeostasis and feeling clean. And like when I'm well rested and I'm not highly caffeinated or had uh, alcohol and I've meditated and I've had some silence, I'm very hard to rattle in almost any situation. And then I think about like that's the basic recipe for a kid to like before you get really critical about their judgment. Like are they hydrated, are they fed, are they, have they slept, you know, all these things. Are they getting for them? Maybe it's not as much of silence, but perhaps it's more sports. Like are they getting exercise, are they getting outdoors? Like you said, so are they sweating?

Jon Vroman ([45:42](#)):

That's great. And so and so was that. I mean it sort gives, well we had the book that a lot of times when we're not behaving well or you know, our kids aren't behaving well, it's easy to judge ourselves, to judge them and think this is an issue of character. We're so often it's an issue of chemistry and if we can support the things that have as beach or point in this homeostasis were most of the time were, were pretty resilient and you know, we can take it to Knox and keep on going. I didn't mean to do it with a smile on our face. Boy, they makes everything these, all the systems go better.

Speaker 4 ([46:11](#)):

Wow. I just made a note of that. Yeah. It's not always an issue of character. It may be an issue of chemistry. That's a game changer for me. I will remember that. I will remember that guys, this has been wonderful. I want to be respectful of the clock here and your very busy schedules once again. Want to thank you for writing this book. I really think it's excellent. I hope everybody goes out and gets a copy of it and I also hope that I know what it's like when you put a book out there. You want others to find it, so my ask for the community is read it, implement it, but then also give it a rating and a review and share it with somebody. I think that will help get this message out and I think guys need this. I mean I think people need this. This is not a book written just for dads. This is share it with your wives. Share it with people who want to have an impact on kids in their lives. It's brilliant.

Jon Vroman ([47:02](#)):

I appreciate that. You know, one thing every chapter ends with what's to do tonight. So if people who you know, like I just want the cliff notes or the I guess SparkNotes version to, you know, thinking can go right to the end of that. You know, inter point about implemented, one of our favorite reviews on Amazon was a parent who was, was reading this book and she kept kept mentioning it over and over to her teenage son and I guess she was deepened the chapter on technology. It was called we call team in the beast of technology and the, the sign, it's sort of heard one too many. You clips from his mom and said, I need to read this book myself. And he took one upstairs and James comes down about 45 minutes later and looks at his mom and says, I think I'd like your help managing my use of technology.

Speaker 4 ([47:40](#)):

Whoa. Yes. That's so cool. I love that about this because I also listened to the book in the car with my son and how he's listening to it and I just talked to him. I said, I'm always looking to be a better dad. You know, I want to be better for you, so I'm always learning and, and I want him to hear some of that stuff and it does make a difference. He does listen. He does here any processes and, and also we just watched a documentary called that sugar film all about sugar. And I could have talked to my son about brushing his teeth until I was blue in the face, but when you have somebody on the big screen, a movie star, you

know who's talking about this, there's something really powerful about that. So different modalities to communicate with our kids. I love hearing that, man. That's so cool.

Dr. William Stixrud ([48:25](#)):

I just want to say that I love your mission, John, and just in part because there's so much research to suggest how important fathers are, the development of both boys and girls to their academic development or emotional development and just being committed as you folks are to kind of get into priorities straight and so much. A lot of our second book was good. Focusing on how do we keep our priorities straight because most kids, most of the guys that we work with, I grew up thinking that the highest priorities must be success and some status, money and power. And because those are the things that you get through lead education. Yeah. And I think that most parents want the kids to be happy. They want them to be well adjusted. They want them to have a life, they want those kids who grew up leaving. But I think that being as clear as you folks are about what's important

Jon Vroman ([49:18](#)):

really. It's funny cause we, bill and I, because we've been doing this long while often work with some of the more sophisticated people here in D C and we've had a number of a lot of things, incredibly affluent people including, you know, more than a handful of billionaires. And one of the things that far more often than not is you look at these folks who have every thing [inaudible] worlds

Dr. William Stixrud ([49:39](#)):

except for

Jon Vroman ([49:40](#)):

peace,

Dr. William Stixrud ([49:42](#)):

happiness.

Jon Vroman ([49:43](#)):

Can you think? What's it all for? I know. So, so that idea that you guys are trying to be so intentional about nurturing the things that matter most, which are your wives and children.

Speaker 4 ([49:55](#)):

Thanks guys. Appreciate those words. And guys out there listening, go get a copy of this. It's available on Amazon guys, what websites should we point them to if they want to go learn this self-driven child.com.

Jon Vroman ([50:06](#)):

Okay. Self-driven child to show up there. We've got it. We have a Facebook group where where people join in and we try to support each other and you know, post things on there and um,

Speaker 4 ([50:16](#)):

Oh I took a ton of great notes here guys that I'm going to post on the website at [inaudible] dot com you can read more about bill and Ned there. We throw it up there. Bio's, we'll link to the that were mentioned or anything that was mentioned during the show. And again, grab a copy, read it, implement

it and then leave these guys a review, an honest review about their book and help spread the word. We all need this. This is a very important conversation for me guys. And I'd imagine a couple of other people are going to benefit, but if I am just the one, I hope it was worth your time, so thanks guys. Thanks a million.

Speaker 5 ([50:53](#)):

Hey guys, if you haven't already done so, go right now to [front row dads.com/facebook](http://frontrowdads.com/facebook) and join the conversation that's happening right now on line. We designed this group for guys who are entrepreneurial in their thinking that are high performing guys with low egos. We're looking for the dads that believe in teaching their kids how to think, solve problems and be real leaders. We're looking for guys who believe in being family, men with businesses, not businessmen with families. We're looking for the fathers who have great knowledge but also believe that they have so much more to learn and we're looking for men who want to add value by sharing their wisdom and those that are willing to ask the questions that we all need and want answers to. That's [front row dads.com/facebook](http://frontrowdads.com/facebook) or simply go to Facebook, type in front row dads and you'll get to our group and what we put in there, links to all the podcasts and videos and other resources that you can't get access to anywhere else except for in this group. We want to give you the best ideas to help you with your marriage, balancing work and family life communication strategies with your spouse and also your children, travel ideas and even suggestions on the latest gear that would save you time and help you be more effective. We've got updates on upcoming events and so much more. Go right now to [front row dads.com/facebook](http://frontrowdads.com/facebook) and join the conversation. I'll look forward to connecting with you there. [inaudible].