



# JIM HARSHAW JR

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*Revealing Failure as the Path to Success*

## **Success Through Failure Podcast**

Action Plan Episode #86

Jessica Lahey

Jessica Lahey is an educator, writer, and speaker. And she's the author of the New York Times bestselling book "The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed." Reading from her website about the book it says, "In the tradition of Paul Tough's book *How Children Succeed* and Wendy Mogel's *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*, this groundbreaking manifesto focuses on the critical school years when parents must learn to allow their children to experience the disappointment and frustration that occur from life's inevitable problems so that they can grow up to be successful, resilient, and self-reliant adults."

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### **About Learning While Educating**

"We all want those things for our children. And the more you teach something, the better you become at it so you just may become more successful, resilient and self-reliant yourself."

### **About Measuring Successful Parenting**

"We used to call it child-rearing. Now we call it parenting. The focus has shifted from the child to the parent. We use our kids as an assessment of how we're doing as parents."

### **About Children Making Decisions**

"That's what childhood should be- trying on lots of different things and see what works."

### **About Good Sleep Being a Priority**

"Sleep is one of the most important things we can give our kids. Not soccer or piano lessons."

### **About Handicapping Children into Learned Helplessness**

"Kids who are parented by overbearing parents, parents that are what we call directive or controlling, those kids don't have to sort of come up with or learn the emotional wherewithal to persist when they get frustrated because there's always someone there to tell them what the next step should be. But the children of what we call autonomy supportive parents are more able – and the research shows – to persist and to finish tasks, even when those tasks get frustrating. The reason that's so important is that there's this learning tool called *Desirable Difficulties* and it's been around for a while. But there's a great book that came out a few years ago called *Make it Stick* from Harvard University Press where they talk very specifically about why this works. Desirable difficulties are one of the most important tools that teachers have and it is essentially just something that's a little bit harder than your normal comfort area. Something you have to manipulate a little bit with your mind, something you have to work harder to understand. It turns out when we engage desirable difficulties, we automatically help students move information from short-term memory to long-term memory. We help them encode that information. So if you have a kid who can't be frustrated, a kid who collapses and gives up and is helpless, the moment they get frustrated, I as a teacher use desirable difficulties with that child so that child is automatically starting out with a handicap in my classroom. So in essence, what I'm telling parents is all those things you are doing to make your kids' life easier and not have them be frustrated and you think have them feel better about themselves, it's actually handicapping them in the long run when it comes to learning. Those kids also end up with this thing called learned helplessness because it turns out that our default mode when exposed to long-term hardship and frustration is to curl up in a ball and say, "I can't do it," and to go helpless. But just recently, Martin Seligman at University of Pennsylvania said the father of positive psychology published a paper showing that the default mode in our brain is this helplessness state. But the one way that we can sort of get past that learned helplessness state is control; being given some control, some autonomy over a task. So the more control we can give our kids, the more we can help our kids learn to be comfortable with frustration and something that's little harder than they can handle, the better that kid will be at learning."

### **About the Never-ending Journey of Learning**

"What's important is to value the process of learning rather than the end product. What's more important? That these loops are spaced? Or that the process of learning can continue?"

### **About Hiding Your Flaws from Children**

"For parents trying to keep the charade up that we're perfect, I've got bad news for you. They're completely onto us."

### **Other Episodes Referenced:**

Episode #84 Jason MacKenzie

### **Recommended Books:**

The Gift of Failure by Jessica Lahey

Make It Stick by Harvard University Press

### **Websites and Social:**

Twitter: @JessLahey

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