

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you listen to this show on your Apple podcast app, remember you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. And with that, please enjoy this week's episode.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:00:31 In the fall of 2013, something odd was happening on America's college campuses. Words were increasingly being seen as dangerous. A series of strange reports began to emerge of undergraduates asking for threatening material to be removed from the college curriculum. By the spring of 2014, the New York Times began reporting on this trend, including demands that school administrators des-invite speakers whose ideas they found offensive. But what was most concerning beyond the sensitivity and the heckling, were the justifications being put forward by these students. They were claiming that certain kinds of speech interfered with their ability to function, jeopardizing their mental health and making them feel unsafe.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:01:25 In one case, students at Columbia University argued that professors teaching core curriculum classes, which included the works of Ovid, Homer, Dante, Augustine, Montagne, and Virginia Woolf should issue trigger warnings when reading or assigning passages that might be interpreted as threatening. All of this prompted the publication of an article by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt that made the cover of the Atlantic Magazine in the summer of 2015, titled the Coddling of the American Mind. In the, the two chronicled what they believed was happening on college campuses, including the emergence of micro-aggressions and safe spaces. Little did they know that in the two years following its publication, all hell would break lose at America's universities.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:02:22 In the fall of that year, protests over issues of racial injustice irrupted at dozens of campuses around the country. Amid these processes arose, however, a series of bizarre incidents leading to the resignations of several highly regarded professors and deans at some of the countries most progressive universities, not to mention the physical assault of a professor at Middlebury College, which required her to undergo six months of physical therapy and rehabilitation.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:02:57 Perhaps the most bizarre case, however, is that Evergreen State College in Washington state, which in the spring of 2017, announced a day of absence where white students and faculty

were expected to stay away from the school. In a letter of protest, biology professor, Brett Weinstein, refused to leave the college campus leading to a series of frightening incidents of unrest where campus police became concerned for Weinstein's physical safety, leading eventually to his resignation in September of last year.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:03:36 This week on Hidden Forces: Jonathan Haidt, trigger warnings, safe spaces and the Coddling of the American Mind.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:04:02 Jonathan Haidt, welcome to Hidden Forces.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:04:04 Thank you, Demetri.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:04:05 It's a pleasure having you on the show. I was telling you before we started the interview that I really enjoyed your book and that I found it emotionally difficult because of, not just the actual reading, but you have so many citations in the book and there's so many opportunities to actually look at some of the videos of some of the things that you talked about. How did the idea for this book come together?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:04:26 So it came to me in the form of a friend, he was just an acquaintance at the time, Greg Lukianoff, who is the President of the foundation for Individual Rights in Education. He's been working on free speech issues for college students since around 2000 and for most of his career, he was basically fighting administrators who were putting down speech codes and making little tiny free speech zones, things like that. And suddenly around 2013, 2014, he noticed now, for the first time ever, students were asking for protections from speech for people to be stopped from speaking, for books to be not welcomed on campus, and it was very strange to him. He had suffered from depression and had learned to do cognitive behavioral therapy, in CBT you learn to challenge your distorted thinking, black-and-white thinking, catastrophizing, all these distortions that we do that make us depressed and anxious, and he suddenly started seeing the students doing exactly the distortions that he'd learned not to do. Like catastrophize, like if somebody were to come to campus and give a talk, it would destroy people, it would traumatized people, like really? If someone gives a talk and you don't go, you're going to be traumatized?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:05:31 So he came to me with this idea that something we're doing on campus is actually making ... It's teaching students to think themselves into depression, and I thought this was brilliant because I had just begun to see this myself, teaching at NYU. So

I said this is a really cool idea, I'd be happy to help you write it if you want, and he said yes, he'd love to. So we worked together, wrote an article on the Atlantic, came out in summer 2015, we thought we were done, we made our point and then all hell broke loose on campus at that Halloween. I won't tell the whole story - they are long and involved - but the point is that there were protests about Halloween costumes. There was all kinds of tumult and controversy about ... Not that anyone actually wore any bad costumes, but the possibility was somebody could wear an offensive costume and how much guidance do students need so that they don't wear offensive costumes.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:06:19

Can you tell that story? That was at Yale or Princeton?

Jonathan Haidt: 00:06:22

That was at Yale. Well, in the briefest form, there is a wonderful developmental psychologist named Erika Christakis, she has a great book called *The Importance of Being Little*, and like a lot of developmental psychologists in recent years she's noticed that we are not letting kids be kids. We are overprotective them, overguiding them, oversupervising them. This is what she does for a living, this is her passion, she really cares about kids, and she was the wife of the master of Silliman College. So at Yale there are 12 resident colleges and her husband Nicholas Christakis was the residential head. I went to Yale in the 80s, the master is someone who is there partly in a supervisory quasi parental position, but also partly intellectual position, he hosts talks.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:07:09

So Erika sent a letter to all the Silliman students after Yale had sent out a big email with all kinds of guides, don't wear this, don't wear this, do this, do this, do this, and Erika thought that Halloween should be playful and, you know what, kids should be able to work things out themselves and this is just oversupervising. So she wrote this very thoughtful, very respectful email suggesting to the Silliman students, is this really right to have this guidance, and some of the students took it in the worst possible way, that is, they said Erika Christakis think it's okay for students to wear blackface, which of course she doesn't. But in the new climate fueled by social media, when one makes an accusation, others will back you up and in general, people are afraid to stand up against or to defend people, lest they be tarred with the same brush.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:07:54

The long story short, there were big protests, a lot of people marched to the president of Yale, to his house ... Actually, I skipped over the part where the students surrounded Nicholas in the courtyard of Silliman College, and the videos, they are really chilling. Students were screaming at him, cursing him,

speaking to him as disrespectful as you could imagine, because they demanded that he denounced his wife or apologize for her. He tried to be as understanding as he could, but he's not going to say I apologize for my wife, she was wrong. And so they marched to the president's house and gave him a list of ultimatums for ways that he has to change Yale, and he agreed. He apologized, never said anything to defend the Christakis and validated their reading and once he did that, then the protests went national.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:08:36 That's one common theme also, this call out to apologize and oftentimes, resignation and retraction, also, of articles.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:08:43 That's right. So it's a very general feature of the social media landscape. The heart of the book is about events on campus, but really these are trends going on all over the place because we're all being driven crazy by social media. My own research is on moral psychology and how we are basically tribal creatures that are living way above our design constraints, we're able to live in these giant, diverse secular societies, but it's really hard to do that and we can revert to tribalism very quickly if we're not careful. Social media makes it so easy to call out the tribalism. And, yes, the general demand of a social media mob is not just let's all agree he's wrong, let's all agree he's stupid, it's he must be punished, who's the relevant authority, we must compel the relevant authority to censure or fire that person.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:27 That's a very interesting aspect of it as well, this appeal to authority, and that also feeds into this notion that there is a childlike quality to this new generation that didn't exist in the prior generation or was more tempered. The past generations have been more mature. This particular generation, and I want to get into the details of the I generation that has come into campus during the time in which this phenomenon has occurred ... And I should state, this to me, the event in Yale, is one of the least egregious, least frightening. The most frightening ... Well, there was the one with Dean Spellman, which was I think up there, but the one in Evergreen State College was by far the most bizarre.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:10:04 That's right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:10:05 Well, let's talk about the point on maturity, and there's also something else too I would love to get into at some point, which is there seems to be, and I feel like you're a part of this and there are other people that are playing this role like Sam Harris and other people across the political spectrum, mostly people on the left, classical liberals in some sense or another, there's

this resurgent interest in questions of moral philosophy, in some sense there's, though it hasn't been expressed precisely in this way, it's really questions about what is good, what is bad, what is a good life? Questions like this seem to be seeing a resurgence.

- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:10:37 That's right. On the maturity side first, so there's two pieces to it. It's always easy to say the current generation is terrible and, boy, when we were their age we were storming the beaches of Normandy, so let's break it down, the really clear difference is that, and this what Greg came to talk to me about, is that there have been waves of student activism and protest, there's nothing wrong with that, but this wave is different in that the students weren't saying this is outrageous, this is terrible, this is evil, they were saying this is dangerous if this person is allowed to speak, if this idea is put out in a letter it will harm members of marginalized groups, it will harm me, it will harm my friends, it will traumatize us, it will reactivate PTSD. And so there's this idea that students are fragile, so fragile that they must be protected, so the homework of this new culture is the word safety. This is it.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:11:30 And again, we're not blaming the students, we raise them, we'll get to this later, we raised them to be scared out of their minds. We raised them to think that danger lurked everywhere, that they were going to be kidnapped and so for this generation, kids born after 1995, especially, known as Gen Z or I Gen, for that generation, they were taught to see things through the lens of safety versus danger.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:11:51 Now, if you come to a college campus, and especially a place like Yale ... I mean, there are literally moats around the building so it's a very safe place, physically, and if you interpret ideas, books, classes, things said in seminar class through the lens of is that safe or is that dangerous, well, they've been taught that safety trumps everything. You don't mess around if it's a safety issue.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:12:11 So this is a very, very bad way to look at the world, and that's the point of our book, it's really about three bad ideas, and the first of those three bad ideas is what doesn't kill you, makes you weaker, so you should not just avoid things that make you uncomfortable or make you feel challenged, you need to be protected by them and you need to demand that the relevant authorities protect you. That's why we call it safetyism.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:12:33 Well, let's expand on that one. I want to also drive another further point home, in the book you write a bit about this, the

way in which, I think you call it concept creep, and the way in which words have crept to mean other things. Violence is, of course, one of them. This idea that words can be violent, it's something that is relatively new. But in terms of safety and fragility, you borrow from the work of Nassim and his concept of anti-fragile, which I think is great and I think it's helpful, can you expand on that a little bit here?

Jonathan Haidt:

00:13:06

Yeah, it is very helpful here for understanding why many students see themselves as fragile, so there's this wonderful, wonderful concept from Nassim Taleb, the author of the Black Swan, and he had observed after the financial crisis that there are certain systems, like economic systems or banking systems, that if you don't challenge them, if they're not shocked or stressed, they get fragile and then they break easily. So he actually called the financial crisis. He saw it before him, the banking system is not going to be resilient if there's a shock. And so he was looking around, what word do we have for the opposite of fragile, and there is no word, so he made up the word anti-fragile. So the way to think about it is that a wine glass is very fragile and if you let your kids play with it, it's guaranteed to break and nothing good comes of that. If you give them a plastic cup, it's resilient and so they can play with it and they'll drop it, but nothing good comes of that. It just doesn't break. It doesn't get better. And then there are certain things, not a lot of them, but are there certain very important systems in the world that will only get better if you drop them. They'll only get better if they're shocked and stressed.

Jonathan Haidt:

00:14:09

The immune system is the classic example, the immune system is an amazing system built by evolution to be ready for whatever life throws our way and it doesn't know what to be allergic to, it doesn't know what to react, so it has to be exposed to all kinds of dirt, germs, bacteria and, it turns out, even parasitic worms. We evolved with parasitic worms. And if we keep immune system safe, if we protect our kids with antibacterial wipes and put them in a bubble, we warp the immune system. We prevent it from developing and then they have a lot more autoimmune diseases, specifically peanut allergies. Peanut allergies are very rare unless you don't expose your kids to peanuts, and that's what we started doing in the '90s. We started overprotecting our kids because, one in a thousand or something, it was very rare until the '90s, but we started saying because some kids have peanut allergies we have to not have any peanuts in school. If kids are not exposed to peanut proteins, mostly the skin of the peanut is what does it, their immune system doesn't learn and that's why peanut allergies are going up so high.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:15:08 Well, Ricky Gervais has a funny comedy bit, have you seen this?

Jonathan Haidt: 00:15:11 No.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:15:11 It's about peanut allergies and a fantasy that he has about ... Because he went on an airplane one time and they didn't let him eat peanuts, he was upset so he began to fantasize about smearing peanut dust on him before he went on a plane so that someone could have an allergic reaction and that he couldn't get blamed for it-

Jonathan Haidt: 00:15:27 Well, if it was a plane full of kids that would probably be a good prosocial thing to do, but once they're adults it's not a good thing to do, they're fragile.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:15:33 Yeah, exactly. So let me ask you further to this point, I think you go as far back as 1979, I forget the name of that boy that was kidnapped famously in the Soho Area --

Jonathan Haidt: 00:15:42 Eton Paetz

Demetri Kofinas: 00:15:42 -- Right, but for me it seems like most of the contributing factors here are, at least as you lay out in the book, are social media, I'm very curious about that, and the another one is the heightened safety environment that came out of the 9/11 attacks.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:15:59 Yeah. So let's take it in order, so there are countries in which children are highly protected ... There's a lot of kidnapping in South America in some various periods. People have not let their kids up because of kidnapping, but that was never the case here. Even during the peak of the crime rate, which was the 1970s and '80s, kids went outside to play. Anyway, I'm 53, anybody over 40 remembers after school, you go out and you play with your friends and you're in the street, or backyards, or a park, and then you come home for dinner. That's the normal way that kids are raised, they need time to play and they need to be self-governing. They need to work out problems for themselves. And in the process of that, some bad things happen, they get hurt, they get in fights and that's like being exposed to peanuts when your kids. You have to have conflicts, you have to be able to work them our yourself, and that's how your psychological system becomes like your immune system, it gets stronger and tougher and you're ready to go off to college and regulate your own affairs.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:16:49 But what we started doing, for a variety of reasons, some of which you just mentioned, we gradually tighten the noose around our kids were, or maybe we should say we gradually tighten the protective bubble around them, thinking we were helping them but in fact we were harming them. So the key events were there were two very high-profile killings of six-year-old boys, Etan Patz in 1979 and Adam Walsh in 1981, and cable TV came out right around then, around 1981 especially, and so in the '80s Americans were just bombarded with stories about kidnapped kids. Now, there's almost no kidnapping of kids other than by the noncustodial parent, it's almost always a relative of the kidnapped kid who didn't get it-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:17:30 So the statistics, it's .001% or something?

Jonathan Haidt: 00:17:31 It's about 100 kids a year. In the country, 350 million, about 100 kids a year are true kidnapped, like true kidnapped-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:17:37 That's a lot lower than most people would assume.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:17:39 Yeah, it's microscopic. It's a crazy thing to do. It's not a profitable thing. We don't have a big kidnapping industry in this country, but they're incredibly vivid. They're the worst that you can imagine. And so while the frequency didn't go up, the visibility of them did, and so parents started freaking out and gradually overprotecting them. When I was a kid I remember the first milk cartons coming out, and one of the first pictures was Etan Patz, and by the '90s these pictures of missing kids were everywhere. They were on electric bills, they were on pizza boxes-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:18:06 And movies, too.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:18:07 That's right, there were all kinds of TV shows and, in fact, the crime wave, at the extent that there was a big crime wave in the '70s and '80s, that was actually ending in the '90s, but American parents began freaking out more. So we were afraid of crime, inappropriately because it really wasn't a threat to our kids, then there was also the rising competitiveness of college. So in the 1990s, especially middle-class and above, they got suckered in, taken in with the stupid idea that if you expose your kids to Mozart or to early math classes that this will give them a head start, and they got it exactly backwards. What kids need to do until the age of seven is play, play, play, play, play, play, play. That's it. They don't need math, they don't need spelling, none of that helps. There's research showing early math exposure doesn't help. What they need is to play. In fact, a report just came out a couple weeks ago from the American Pediatric

Association saying we need to prescribe a lot more play. We need to let our kids play. So the doctors are now chiming in that we're really doing a number on our kids by depriving them of play.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:19:04 So there's play deprivation, and then no child left behind really did a number on our kids because that was further ramping up of the idea that kids shouldn't be having unstructured time, they need to be cramming for tests even early on. We have kindergartners doing homework. It's ridiculous.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:19:19 So there's a lot of really interesting stuff there, one of them is I wondered how that also contributes to this need for, you've already thought of it I'm sure, this need for an authority figure, this need to say okay, something's not right here I want to appeal to an authority because I'm used to having such structure time. I also want to just mention this, this was also a bizarre thing for me in the book because it seemed so commonsensical. This didn't seem like one of those things that you needed to discover through scientific research. The idea that unstructured time is useful makes absolute sense to me. Also, we know, or at least we've known for a long time, about the placidity of the brain and the way in which ... I mean, any athlete knows if you learn how to play sport when you're younger it's much easier to do it when you're older, it just seems odd that people didn't have that. Also the other point about the anti-fragile and the antibiotic resistance, playing in dirty environments that also seems very intuitive that that would be something that would build your body's immune system.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:20:12 For a lot of people ... I mean, germs are pretty disgusting and threatening and it doesn't seem intuitive, but I think you're right that these ideas, once you explain them, people get them, and so we're hopeful, Greg and I are hopeful that once we lay it all out like ... So we know that kids are having a lot of problems these days, the rates of anxiety and depression are way up, their strength and resilience is way down, parents are noticing this, teachers are noticing this, so we're hopeful that there's an awareness that there really is a problem. We've done a number on our kids, we got to undo it.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:20:41 I think that's an interesting point because you brought up depression, you brought up anxiety and there also seems to be, in the larger culture, a loss of a common narrative, and one of the things that the works of people like Joseph Campbell around the monomyth and the decline of religion ... There does seem to be this sense of what is life about, what is the meaning? What is

the purpose? How do I live? How does one live a good life? Which brings us back to this moral, philosophical question, could you talk a little bit about that and how that has influenced this generation and even us as well, I think?

- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:21:13 Yeah, that's right. So the loss of meaning is something that we don't get into the book that much because it's hard to find evidence of it, but I think you're that it's a piece of it. Part of what's happening to us, America had a period of unusually high coherence commonality in the mid-to-late 20th century for a variety of reasons, one was that we had extremely high rates of immigration in the 19th century and early 20th, and that led to a nativist reaction in which we shut the doors. Immigration was very, very low after the 1920s. So my grandparents came here from Eastern Europe with a gigantic wave of Jewish immigrants. America was very diverse. And many people perceived were coming apart, there's no trust, that's what usually happens when you have high immigration. There are many benefits to it, but I'm just saying high migration leads to certain reactions.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:21:59 So then we had low immigration and at the same time we fought and won World War II. We got to tell ourselves a story, I think a true story, that we fought against fascism, we fought for liberty. We had a real sense that America was the land of the free, the leader of the free world because we went from the fighting the Nazis to fight the Cold War against the Russians. We had a long run in which we were the saviors of the world. The American way was the best way. Liberal democracy was the only solution in 1990s. Francis Fukiyama writes *The End of History*, arguing that perhaps this is the endpoint of cultural evolution, so there was a real sense of direction and purpose.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:22:36 And in 21st century that seems to all be gone. There are a lot of reasons for that, it's a complicated sociological puzzle-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:22:42 Why do you think it is?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:22:43 So I like to think about a society having forces pulling it apart and forces pulling it together, and so we might think about like a thing spinning around and the centrifugal forces are the forces pulling it outwards to break apart and the centripetal forces are the forces pulling it in. So if you have common religion, common heritage, common language, everybody watches the same TV shows, everybody knows the same commercial jingles, these are all forces for having a sense that we're one people. We understand each other. If you have a fracturing of the media system as we did in the '80s, beginning with cable news, if we have the loss of a sense of us versus them in terms of us versus

the Cold War, if you have rapidly rising rates of immigration, and again immigration does many good things but we have to be comprehensive here and look at the whole range of effects of immigration-

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:23:32 It's been profoundly impactful in Europe, particularly.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:23:35 That's right. I think the difficulty of talk about immigration because of political concerns, because of political correctness concerns, means that I think many countries are not crafting immigration policies that are both good for the country in the long run and humane. They are crafting policies in response to political pressures that are basically setting them up for right-wing forces to take over in 5 or 10 years. That's what we're seeing in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats, it seems likely to take power.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:24:02 Particularly relevant in those countries because the social welfare state that was the ideal model of some of these northern European countries, that was based on this ... Like you said, you had the end of World War II, you had strong social cohesion and you also had, again a very homogeneous population.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:24:20 That's right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:24:21 And that has torn those apart.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:24:22 Well, that's right. Yeah, Scandinavian capitalism is fascinating ... I'm supposed to be writing a book on moral psychology and capitalism, that what I was supposed to be doing when Greg came to me, and everybody's favorite example of capitalism is the Scandinavian. They have the best balance of ... They way I put it in the book I'm supposed to be working on is dynamism and decency. You have to get both. America's always gone in for dynamism and is willing to sacrifice decency. Places like France and Japan go for decency and then have low dynamism. But the Scandinavians have really done the best job of maximizing both, and part of it is they have such high trust, and that is based in part on their high degree of homogeneity and also their long tradition of egalitarianism. They never had feudalism. They have a lot of advantages, they have a very complex society, and I do think that they put it at risk when they have high rates of immigration without assimilation. So I'm in favor of immigration with assimilation. Again, immigration brings diversity, it's good for the economy, there are many good things, but you have to watch out for your social capital.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:25:21 Anyways, I guess this has taken this far a field from the current book, the coddling book, but the larger point is that American society is in a state of, as many other societies, of incoherence, a sense of losing who we are, and that leads to massive distrust of each other. A sense that if the other guys get control ,it's the end of the world and therefore any methods are justified-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:25:43 Well, let's talk about the other guys because the other guys are really the other political party. You have this really great chart in the book where you show people's ... Not identification, I don't know how you mentioned it, but sort of polarization --

Jonathan Haidt: 00:25:57 Yeah, the Pew survey.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:25:58 Right, and you showed just how much ... Why don't you walk us through the chart?

Jonathan Haidt: 00:26:02 Sure. So there's a lot of research on political polarization, and if you look at what people think on issues, like about abortion, we're not really coming apart. Most people have kind of a middle view. But if you look at what we think of each other ... So a variety of survey companies have surveyed Americans on what they think of each other, that's called affective partisan polarization, how much do you hate the other side, and that's been going up and up and up. And so if you really hate the other side more than you did 10 or 20 years ago, then compromise is much more difficult, and that's what we see in Congress and that's what we see on campus.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:26:36 So 10, 20 years ago you could have had a conservative speaker come at a lot of schools and people would've disliked it maybe, but they wouldn't have protested, and now because political passions are so much higher there's more likely to be a protest-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:26:50 It's not just protesting, people going to the hospital ... I mean, who was the professor who was moderating the panel-

Jonathan Haidt: 00:26:53 Allison Stanger at Middelburg.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:26:55 Frightening.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:26:55 Yes, true. But let me just make the point that there has actually been very little violence committed by students. So there've been a variety of mob scenes, the violence at Berkeley and Middlebury where people really were injured, students were involved in the mobs but we don't know that it was students who threw the punches or banged people on the head. We

don't know that. So the number of incidents where students have been intimidating, or pushed, or shoved, and there are some, but let me be clear, I don't want to play into the right-wing outrage mob and moral panic, most students are fine, most students are perfectly healthy, the great majority of students are in favor of free speech, what we're talking about here is not that students are losing their mind, it's that a subtle dynamic has changed that has allowed certain kinds of belief, certain students who are very angry, to push a set of understandings, and while the majority may disagree with them, they're afraid to stand up to them. And so there's been a change the dynamic on campus since 2015 and it doesn't show up on most campuses, but at elite schools in the Northeast and the West Coast in particular, we're seeing much more intimidation, much more fear from students and faculty who are concerned, or afraid, reluctant, to say what they think if it goes against the prevailing political view.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:28:07 You make another interesting point in the book that I never would've thought of which has to do with the rising tuitions. You teach at NYU, I went to NYU, I'm an alumni of NYU, I remember when I went to NYU that was basically when John Sexton took over as president, and he was really great in terms of building up the school, he built the Kimmel Center was under Sexton and he spent all this money, but of course tuition rates went up from what they were then, which I remember them being so high to what they are now. I did the math and I think it comes out to, with room and board, it comes out to like \$270,000 for four years. I mean, I had the math here somewhere, I did it, but I was just blown away by that. And you make the point in the book that ... By the way, I also did the interest payments on it and by what I did, the interest payments on it would've been \$1,000 a month for the rest of your life without paying down principle. So that to me, I think, is one of the biggest unaddressed crises in America. It's one of the, I think, least appreciated. But the further point I believe I was trying to-
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:29:05 Yeah, the customer orientation.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:29:07 Right, the customer orientation, can you talk a little bit about this?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:29:09 Sure, sure. So first let me just defend NYU by saying that Sexton did ... I love John Sexton. He lives in my building. I thought he was a great president. He did take a gamble and he did raise NYU's profile, he did spend money, we are the first global network University, we had these amazing campuses in

Shanghai and Abu Dhabi, and we have the highest cost per student of anyone in the country because we're in Manhattan, our real estate costs are through the roof. So, yes, NYU is expensive, I don't know at what percentage people pay the full rate, we do try to give-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:29:39 Well, to be clear, I was using NYU as an example because I'm an alumni and you teach there, but this is nationwide. It's not just NYU.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:29:46 That's right. Yes, it is a crisis, and there are a lot of reasons for it. I'm not an expert in this, what I can say is that part of the reason for the rise ... So we don't have more faculty and we are using more adjunct faculty, which is cheaper, we are spending a lot more on amenities, which might seem like a luxury, so some people refer to universities as club ed, but there's also a huge rise because of federal regulations. We have to have so many different compliance officers, and there's also federal mandates on higher education, but the larger point is that universities used to be more run by the faculty and they were focused on teaching. The dorms were kind of crappy, the coffee was bad if there was any at all, and that's what it was.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:24 That's what was so charming about it.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:30:26 Well, that's right.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:26 For a student.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:30:27 That's right. It was a little bit of physical hardship, it was the life of the mind ... And again, we could do this golden days things when we were young and-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:35 No, look, Sexton was great, and like I said the Kimmel Center is fantastic and he did a lot of really great stuff, I just made ... The point being that I remember that being a big change in the cost of NYU.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:30:43 In the last few years people are talking about it a lot. In fact, there was an interesting poll recently, what do Americans think about higher education ... Now, in the United States, the military is widely respected on both sides, conservatives think super highly of it and the liberals, or the Democrats, are a little lower but still very respectful of it, and the same used to be true of higher ed, in reverse that is people on the left loved higher ed and people on the right used to like higher ed just a little less than the people on the left. But that was until 2015 and it was,

either Pugh or Gallup or both, they have data points in 2015, showing that it's very steady, the support for higher ed, between 2015 and 2017, support on the right plummets. It drops down to like 35 or 40%, saying that universities overall are good things or make a positive contribution to society because they see these videos of things going on campus, of students protesting conservative speakers, saying things, terrible things about America, terrible things about conservatives, so the right is losing faith and trust in higher ed. I bring this up now because the most recent one I saw showed that people on the left are losing faith in higher ed a little bit, but their reason is because of the cost and the debt.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:31:53

So everybody realizes that higher ed, it costs too much, it's trying to do too much, there's too many mandates, so we do need some very serious reforms. We're an essential industry, but we are an industry that is very ripe for reformulation in some ways.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:07

Media plays a huge role in this too. In fact, you made that point of why are we seeing rising outrage ... You mentioned in the book Bill Bishop's book on the sorting in America, The Big Sort, how people have been self-segregating. You also mentioned media, which is huge, and in fact, I made the point to you, which is that for

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:24

Which is huge and in fact I made the point to you, which is that for years I've been seeing references to these videos and I've just ignored it. I've assumed that it was just some kind of fake news or some kind of trolling by the right of the left just to get reactions. It wasn't until this book that I started ... In fact, I didn't even know that Brett Weinstein was Eric's brother. I had no idea that that relationship was there. Brett is the biology professor at Evergreen, which I said was the most insane one of all. But there's also you mentioned in the book that the Gingrich Clinton period ... I do remember that politically. In fact, I had read this great book about the rise of neoconservatism in the 1970s and how that was a reaction to McGovern and you had a lot of these disenfranchised Democrats that left the party and went to the right and that's the birth of this values-driven politics. And when I read your book, the previous book, not this one, The Righteous Mind, you made a point of explaining that, that really this idea that people are rational in any way it makes no sense whatsoever, particularly for national politics, can you talk a little bit about that and how that plays a role here?

Jonathan Haidt: 00:33:26

Yeah. So just to go back briefly, so I wrote two books before this, my first book is The Happiness Hypothesis, Finding Modern

Truth in Ancient Wisdom, and it's about 10 ancient ideas, things like what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and life itself is but what you deem it, so be careful how you think about things, and it's as though on campus people read my first book and then did exactly the opposite of what I recommended, or what the ancients recommend I should say. Then my second book was on my own research, on moral psychology, and as you say my own research was on how we think that we're being rational, we think we have reasons for our moral beliefs, but they are largely driven by gut feelings, emotions, intuitions and group loyalties, and then we're very, very good at making up reasons post hoc to explain why we believe a certain thing. The larger message of the book is, hey, folks we're coming apart here, we are tribal creatures, we are very good at forming teams to fight each other and we have to really work hard to live together in peace. We have to work at it. An ethnically diverse liberal democracy isn't going to just maintain itself. You have to really watch out for forces that turn up the tribalism.

- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:34:34 So it's as though on campus people read my book and then did exactly the opposite of everything I said we should do, so we really should be doing the mid-to-late 20th century idea that we need to play down race. I don't mean ignore it as an issue in society. What I mean is we need to encourage students to not judge each other by their race. We need to encourage people to see each other as human beings.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:34:55 Well, you make a point in the book to differentiate between two different types of identity politics, the kind that Martin Luther King talked about when he was about taking one group and putting within the larger group and what we have today, can you talk ... Because I think that's really great.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:35:09 Yeah. So I think one of the most important innovations in our book is we're waiting into an incredibly polarized field where people on the left and the right have made up their minds, they think the other side is evil and lying, and we're looking at all these concepts, things like identity politics and social justice, and it'd be very easy for us to say that these things are obviously right and necessary because America is a racist country, or to say these things are obviously ridiculous because this is just Marxist SJW postmodernism, and we don't do either of those. We say, if there is a movement, there's almost certainly something legitimate about it. There's almost certainly something that they're right about, a problem they're addressing, and so identity politics is like that. Identity politics can be so simple. Politics is people coming together in groups to pursue common aims, and so if you're winemakers you have a

lobby, and if you're a race car enthusiast you might come together and have a lobby for that, and if you're LGBT, or if you're African-American, or Jewish, or anything, you can come together to argue for places where you're excluded or anything like that. So identity politics is not a bad thing at all. It's normal politics.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:36:20 But what we found as we looked through writings about identity politics is that it can be done in a way that first you draw a circle around everybody and then you say within this circle there are some people who are being denied their rights, and that's what Martin Luther King was so brilliant at. And not just him, many ... We quote Polly Murray who specifically says something like when my brothers try to draw a circle to exclude me, I will draw a larger circle to include them. That is very wise from a basic social psych point of view. It recognizes the Bedouin proverb, me against my brother and me and my brother against our cousin, me, my brother and cousin against the stranger. So if you draw a larger circle and say we're all in the same tribe, now let's work out our differences, that works. We call that common humanity identity politics.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:37:10 Unfortunately, what we see happening on campus, there's a movement ... Well, it goes by the name of intersectionality, which again, there's something deeply right about it. It's basically that the experience of, say, a black woman is not just the sum of being black and being female. There's something deeply right about the idea, but the way it's worked up in practice, it tends to teach students to look at people and see dimensions of power and privilege, judge people by the number of dimensions on which they are on the low side, low is good, high is bad, and so we call this common enemy identity politics. If you're saying let's all unite to fight the enemy, and the enemy is the privileged that is straight white males, especially with a variety of other ... There's like seven other dimensions, but straight white male is the main thing, that's a really, really bad idea. People will say, oh, you're just a straight white male defending your privilege, but this is basic social psychology. If you're trying to create a harmonious environment on a campus, you shouldn't do it by uniting people in hatred.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:38:08 Well, it's also racist, which doesn't really make sense why it's not ... But what's also interesting about that, like intersectionality and white male privilege, these are intellectual concepts which are very interesting to explore intellectually, well, I think the problem is that you're taking an intellectual construct, or idea, and you're turning it into some type of ideological framework that people rally around. I feel like that is

kind of the issue, and I wonder, A, do you agree with that, and B, to a larger point, why have we moved in this direction? I don't understand it. I didn't understand the way in which the election of Barack Obama seemed to have brought out, based on what the media was reporting, these sentiments of racism and identity politics among certain white voters, white demographics, how much of this is being driven by fringe elements that are radicalizing a larger part of the electorate?

Jonathan Haidt: 00:39:02 That's right. So again, let's go back to the basic psychology here is that we evolved for tribalism, we evolved at the drop of a hat, we'll go into our tribes, hate the other side, gear up for battle, I believe we evolved for warfare. Now we don't have to live in tribes. We can calm it down, we were very good at trade and we're curious, our ancestors have moved all over the world to explore, but it's always there in the base of our hearts and minds, this ability to just do us versus them.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:39:30 Now, there are some people on the fringes of both sides that they are easily roused to hatred and that hatred can be harnessed to violence. It's especially studied on the right where there's right-wing authoritarianism ... I'm a big fan of the political scientist, Karen Stenner, an Australian political scientist that does wonderful work on how authoritarianism is something that comes up when people perceive that we're coming apart morally, when they perceive there is no moral order, there is moral chaos and, boy, there is a lot more moral chaos now than there was 20 or 30 years ago. And so the election of Barack Obama, while it was celebrated by the majority of the country, he won a majority, and then even after that a lot of people who didn't vote for him were still very happy that America had elected a black president had overcome, at least in that instance, but yes, there are some people, especially on the far right, although there are also Democrats as well, but there are people for whom this was a threat to their conception of what America was. They saw this as America coming apart. So, yes, there was a rise in a certain subclass of racist reaction against him.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:40:32 Now, what do we do about that? One thing we could do is some people, they get very upset and say, see, they're racist, the right is racist, and this is how you start a polarization cycle is the people on each side have plenty to point to about how awful the other side is. Unfortunately, Obama's election coincided with the rise of social media, the iPhone comes out in 2007, he's elected in 2008, by 2010 or 11 most Americans have an iPhone and some sort of social media, so you get all kinds of horrible conspiracy theories, birtherism, obviously Trump was involved

in some of that. So it's really hard to manage a diverse liberal democracy and then suddenly you take all of our connections and you multiply them by 100 and all kinds of sick stuff happens, and that's where we are now.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:18 There's another thing you talk about in the book that you also mention in *The Righteous Mind* which has to do with justice and our notions of justice, which I think is very powerful, in general this idea of values I found very powerful. You talk, again, I'm bringing up *The Righteous Mind*, but I think there's so much interconnection. You talk about disgust, and in fact I think thought you may not have actually ... Trump was not elected at the time you wrote the book, but I was reminded of that in the way that Donald Trump talks about often disgust, and that has to do with moral repulsion of a sort that is irreconcilable. I think that's what you talked about. I think that's very interesting and I'm curious if you can elaborate a bit on that and how that sense of repugnance and difference of moral values has played a role in the polarization that we see today in American politics?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:42:08 Sure. So the key idea in *The Righteous Mind* was my research on what's called moral foundations theory, that we have six taste buds in our moral sense, care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority and sanctity. And the people on the left across countries tend to focus on care, fairness, and sometimes, liberty. The people on the right do those, but then they also do group loyalty, respect for authority and a sense of sanctity or purity. They do that more often than people on the left do. And Trump, while he is rather low on compassion, that's not his strong suit, but boy is he all about disgust, contamination. He himself is very disgust-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:48 He's a germaphobe.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:42:49 That's right. So there's something going on his brain that reacts very strongly ... He sees things in terms of germs and threat and contagion. And anti-immigrant sentiment, going back to the 19th century, probably the 18th for all I know, had a lot of that. They would show the dirty horde of the unwashed streaming across our border.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:43:07 So I'm trying to find that ... I just saw Trump tweeted something yesterday about Chinese heroine coming across our borders, we've got-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:43:15 Chinese heroin?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:43:16 Yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:17 Was he thinking that he was back in the-

Jonathan Haidt: 00:43:19 Opium wars, yeah that's right. That's right. I wish I could find-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:22 I didn't know there was an epidemic of heroine crossing the border of China.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:43:27 I don't know either, that's what he said. He said it's coming in by the US mail, that people are ... I don't know what, but the point is that in one tweet he hit four more foundations, so he is very clear-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:36 He's very good at that.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:43:37 He's a natural. I don't think he's not known for reading books, he's not known for listening when advisors tell them things, so I think he's just doing this naturally. He's just really good at stamping on the sense that we're coming apart, bad people are coming in, dark people are coming in, we got to build a wall, we got to protect our immune system, or our health, and that's classic authoritarian language.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:59 What about this dichotomy between proportional procedural justice and equal outcomes justice? Another person who's very popular in the media lately is Jordan Peterson, he's gotten a lot of play around this issue of equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome. It seems like this is similar and it's something that the right tends to be more interested in equality of opportunity and the left seems to be more aligned with the quality of outcome and the idea being that if there is a divergence of outcomes for particular groups, it must be a result of systemic bias. This idea seems, again, I go back to common sense, wrong. It's wrongheaded from a commonsense standpoint. It just seems too asinine. What is this sort of thing? I guess, is this at a more extreme place than it's been before and how does this factor into the stuff that you've written about in the book?

Jonathan Haidt: 00:44:49 Sure. Let me just read that tweet and then I'll-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:51 Sure.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:44:52 I found the tweet. So Trump tweeted I guess it was yesterday or something-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:56 We're recording this about ... It's going to come out about two weeks from the recording.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:45:01 Okay. Yeah, that's right since I asked Demetri not to air this until the book came out. The Penguin required me to do that.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:45:06 That's fine. That's fine.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:45:07 So Trump tweeted on August 20th, "It is outrageous that poisonous synthetic heroine fentanyl comes pouring into the US postal system from China. We can and must end this now. The Senate should pass the Stop Act and firmly stop this poison from killing our children and destroying our country." He's such a master of playing on the emotions-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:45:30 He's also a master and he gives you cues by capitalizing certain words in that you're reading it exactly the way he probably wrote it, as in caps and exclamation marks.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:45:39 That's right. Okay, so now onto social justice. So as with identity politics, there's a real meaning to it, but how you implement it ... There's a way that I think really accords with very widespread notions of justice and then there's a way that violates most people's notion of justice.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:45:55 So in the book, in Chapter 11, we distinguish between equal outcomes, social justice, which is where ... This is what students are taught to do now, whatever it is, if there's a panel with three men on it, you say, oh my God, it's all men, that's wrong. Or if most physicists are men, you say, oh my God, that's sexism, it's institutional sexism. Any difference, anything that departs from population means is taken as evidence of systemic racism or sexism typically, and while it could be, I mean there really could be reasons that women are being discouraged from going into a field, absolutely, it could be, you need to look into that, but if that's your assumption and you don't verify it, you just take it for granted, you're going to end up putting into place all kinds of policies that are not going to work because there are many reasons, especially for gender, there are many reasons why we have different outcomes. Differences of ability between men and women are tiny, differences of interest between men and women, as with boys and girls, are gigantic, and so when you're in a free society you're never going to have perfect, equal outcomes everywhere.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:46:55 What the sense of justice is, is not a quality of outcomes. What we know from research, both across culturally and with children, is that children very quickly come to an ocean of proportionality. So if you're giving out rewards, and very young children think you should give them out equally, but if one kid didn't do anything and the other kids did the work, even very

young children will feel like, no, that's wrong, he shouldn't get anything. We have a line - there's a wonderful developmental psychologist at Yale, Paul Bloom, did a review of the research on equality and proportionality and came to the conclusion that children, like adults, prefer fair inequality to unfair equality.

- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:47:37 So if you would just think so that the most successful people have to be penalized in order to bring them down to average, most people hate that, they think it's really unfair, and some social justice movements tend to do that, so we're just trying to clean it up. We're trying to say those who are concerned about racism and sexism, wonderful, clean it out, let's find all the places there are still problems. But if you commit yourself to saying that we will not rest until everything is 50% female, 15% black, 15% Hispanic, we will not rest and we will keep charging institutions and attacking the leaders and calling them out, you're tilting at windmills and 500 years from now your great, great, great grandchildren will still be tilting at the same windmill.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:19 It's also not clear if people would find such a world satisfying to live in where there isn't that diversity of outcome. I mean, that's kind of what allows us by seeing that there are differences around us, that's informational cues. Also, many of these ideas have been debunked in other ways in behavioral psychology. I remember seeing this really great video of chimpanzees having a sense of proportion-
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:48:39 Yeah, that work is controversial. I'm not sure about that.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:43 So I'm talking about the one-
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:48:43 With the grapes and the cucumbers?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:44 Yeah. Is that controversial?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:48:47 Yeah it is because it's not entirely clear. So as I understand it, it's where-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:52 Let our audience know what I'm referring to.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:48:54 So there's research by some very good primatologists where they ... I'm trying to remember exactly how the setup is, but the point is-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:59 Chimps can see each other through a glass, and one chimp is getting, let's say, a certain type of fruit.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:49:04 Yeah, if they're doing something and they're being rewarded with a piece of cucumber, they like cucumber, they're willing to do it, but then they see the other guy next door getting rewarded with a grape and they get very upset, and that is taken to be evidence of unfairness. But there's a control condition in which they're being rewarded with a cucumber and there's just a grape sitting there, and they get very upset. They want the grape.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:49:25 That was so interesting. So interesting.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:49:25 I mean, they have a response to that. They say, well, yes, but there's a statistical ... It's complicated. All I'm saying is the evidence for fairness in chimpanzees ... There's a little bit, they might have it, they might have some, but they're really different. Humans have this intense, intense sense of fairness and it comes out ... I did a study with my colleagues at the University of Virginia, by age three, if you give kids something they should be happy, but if you give them something and the guy next to them gets more, they're unhappy. So it's really, really deep in human beings.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:49:56 So let's, before we run out of time, you mentioned kids, let's bring it back to kids. I want to talk about what sort of prescriptions you have in the book because I think they're very very interesting. Before we do the one other thing I want to talk about with respect to children and campuses and college students, it has to do with anxiety and depression, you touched on it a little bit, but the statistics are actually alarming and I think very concerning. For anyone who is not aware of them, I'd like for you to give them a chance to understand just what kind of an epidemic this is and how it also varies across genders as well. It's not the same for suicide rates and depression and anxiety. They're not the same for men and women.

Jonathan Haidt: 00:50:33 No, that's right. So on campuses, for a number years now, we've been talking about the ... It just seems like students are in fact flooding the campus health centers. Most universities are having just floods of students coming in that they can't keep up with the demand. Now, is this because students are just more comfortable seeking help? Maybe. Have they been raised to think about psychotherapy and take Prozac? Yeah. So, is it real? Yes. And the way we know that is ... Well, two things, one is that the data from self-report from students shows it's not just that they say they are depressed, they report the actual symptoms of depression, anxiety, and that is fairly flat throughout the early 2000s. Boys always have lower rates of internalizing disorders, that is depression, anxiety, ways in which they make

themselves miserable. Girls are always higher on that. Boys are always higher on externalizing disorders, that is ways that they make other people miserable, so it's a shorthand. But the rates are fairly flat throughout the early 2000s, and then right around 2011, 2012, they start going up and they start going way up for girls, up somewhat for boys, to the point where ... I think we have in one graph in there-

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:38 We have a number of graphs. I mean, there's one for the percentage of college students who say they have a psychological disorder, females from 2010 to 2016 went from under 6% to above 14% where males was going up a bit, but relative to females it's nothing.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:51:53 That's right. So what we have to really make clear here is that this book is not about millennials, the millennials are actually fine-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:01 We're in the clear.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:52:03 Yeah. Yeah, you got your problems, but it's within the bounds of normal problems. Each generation is a little bit different, but your generation does not have higher rates of anxiety and depression-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:14 More suicide rates. The suicide rates that's also very, very concerning.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:52:17 That's right. So it's kids born after 1995, that's where the problems start, and they were hit by a triple whammy, I think. So one is they were the ones who were raised with almost no time to be outside unsupervised. They were the ones who were raised where if they went to play in a park at the age of eight, nine, their parents could be arrested, so you don't see kids in parks anymore-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:38 Well, you have ... Who was on America's Worst Mom?
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:52:40 Yeah, Lenore Skenazy.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:41 Crazy story.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:52:42 Yeah, she let a kid ride the subway at age nine and a lot of people got upset.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:45 Yeah, they wanted to arrest her didn't that?

- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:52:47 Well, not her, but sometimes that does happen. So the point is, kids born after 1995, they really were raised with the crackdown on freedoms, they had very little freedom, they had very little chance to practice freedom. They were raised in the aftermath of 9/11 so there's more fear, there's more danger in the world and, of course, there is stranger-danger, don't talk to strangers. They were raised with no child left behind so they had much less play time. But the most specifically time thing is Facebook lowers its age in 2006 and the iPhone comes out in 2007 and, not a lot of kids have social media in 2008, but by 2010 and 11, they do.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:53:21 So with social media, boys, when they get an iPhone, what do they do? They play video games. They use social media somewhat, but they don't bully each other on social media. Boys bullying is physical, and so social media and iPhones didn't change that. Whereas girls aggression, we've known for many decades, girls aggression is not physical, it's relational. They're just as aggressive as boys, but it's aimed at other girl's relationships and destroying their reputations, and the iPhone and Facebook, or whatever, Snapchat, or other things, it is God's gift to relational aggression. It allows you to destroy another girl anytime of the day or night, even on the weekends when school is not in session, you can still destroy her. So the bullying really affects the girls rather than the boys.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:54:01 The other thing is fear of missing out. Girls especially use social media to show all the great things they're doing, they spend a lot of time curating selfies, and each selfie is a way of saying, look at me, look at who I'm with and you're not here with us. And so it's much more painful for girls to scroll through other girls social media feeds than it is for boys to scroll through other boys social media feeds. So for a variety of reasons, the rates of mental illness on campus from previous generations through the millennials, were relatively low, and that's what this graph is here, we have a figure of 7.3 ... So in 2012, which is the last year when universities are full of millennials, it's about 3% of males and 6% of females say that they have psychological disorder just by their own reckoning. They think of themselves as being sick, and usually with anxiety or depression. And then from 2012 to 2016, just four years, that's the four years when the last millennial says goodbye and the first members of I Gen come in, so in 2016 it's all I Gen, at least for those who went straight through from high school, now the numbers go up to 6% for boys, so that's about a doubling, and to 15% for girls, so that's more than a doubling.

- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:55:07 So about one in six college women in America thinks that she has a mental disorder. And if you think you do but it's going to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even if you don't, if you think, oh, I suffer from anxiety therefore I can't do that thing because it'll make me anxious. But the more you shelter yourself, the more you don't do things that are challenging, the more you will become anxious. The more you do have an anxiety disorder.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:55:28 So, what can we do as a society, particularly administrators and professors on campus and then the students themselves, these kids and their parents too who I think are playing an outside role in their lives at their age today than our parents would have played at our age because they are less mature, they haven't matured as quickly-
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:55:48 That's right. So I think the first thing is we have to come to a national understanding that there's a problem here. This is not a left or right issue. This is an issue in which adolescents, American adolescents, are doing terribly, they are anxious and depressed, they are killing themselves in record numbers, especially the girls ... I mean, the boy's rate is higher, but the girls increase has been much larger, so this should make us just stop with the political fighting, stop with the free-speech focus ... I mean, that's important, but let's set those specific battles aside. Let's recognize we have a national catastrophe here. The causes of it are complex, but it's pretty clear now that one cause is overprotection. Kids have to have the chance to practice being independent. The job description of a parent is you have to work yourself out of a job. Your goal is to make yourself no longer necessary, and we're not doing that anymore. We're making ourselves so necessary that even when kids go off to college, they still stay in very close touch and after college, they're much more likely to move back in with their parents than they used to be. Again, many reasons for that included, and some financial, but some is emotional.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:56:48 So if we can come to a national understanding that we're messing up our kids by overprotecting them, then the way is open to give them a lot more free time, a lot less academic stuff, especially before they're eight or nine years old, they should be having a lot more time to play and very little homework. Schools need to give them much more recess and it has to be much less supervised. We have to let kids practice the art of association. We have to let them learn to manage their own affairs. That's one thing.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:57:14 Then when they get to college, then we can start backing off and letting them manage their own affairs thereto as they used

to. Somebody says something insensitive, you either talk to them, or you talk to your friends, but you don't go to an administrator. Campuses have instituted what are called bias response teams, so at NYU, where I teach, in every bathroom there's a sign telling students how to report me if I say something they don't like, they can report me by email, by phone, there's all sorts of ways to report me-

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:57:42 That's insane. I saw that in the book and I found the chart online, that is nuts.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:57:46 Yeah. So what it means is I can't trust them. Now, most of my students are great, but if I have a room of 30 students, one or two might be the sort who would report me, so I don't make jokes, I don't show videos, I don't take chances. I play it straight, I'm a boring teacher now because why take chances? Why be provocative? I used to be a very provocative teacher at UVA and I got teaching awards and very high rating.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:58:07 I used to have a professor named David Denoon, he still teaches at NYU I'm sure, he was my foreign policy professor, and he really stuck it to students all time. He would say it, what do I care I have tenure and if I get fired I don't care.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:58:18 Yeah. Now, that can go too far and there are professors --
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:58:23 I don't know how he's managing this situation, but that is so insanely bizarre.
- Jonathan Haidt:** 00:58:28 Yeah. So that's the overprotective reaction. That's what creates a condition that sociologists call moral dependence. This generation has been told since they were little, if there's a problem tell an adult, find an adult, someone says something mean to you find an adult, and so that's called moral dependence. And then they come to college and if there are professors who tell off-color, sexual jokes and jokes that they may not think are racist, but by today standard's are ... So I'm not saying everything was fine and your provocative professor shouldn't change, probably he should change, but how should that be done? It would be great if students would talk to them in private. I understand that would take some guts, that's asking a lot of the students, but that would really work and that would train the students to actually handle things. Whereas the more we give students a line to call to bring in an authority, the more we are, in a sense, crippling their social development.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:59:19 Also, shining a light on something, I think is the most helpful way to have a society change. One of the things I thought about when I was reading the book had to do with the importance of culture in the evolution of societies, and culture is a manifestation of language, if we didn't have language we wouldn't have culture ... I mean, can you send me ... On some sense, I suppose you could say that animals that don't have language have culture, but that's something that I think is really important to be able to make mistakes and not be on pins and needles all the time.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:59:48 Also, just to close this point, it brings us back to, I think, this question of moral philosophy, which is that there is merit and there's value in courage, and in overcoming, and resilience, and I think that's something that maybe our society doesn't appreciate as much, we appreciate other things, maybe looking good, or certain outcomes being a certain way, but actually confronting adversity and overcoming that is virtuous. I think that's something that we would benefit from retaining.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:00:18 Jonathan, I deeply appreciate you coming on the show.

Jonathan Haidt: 01:00:21 My pleasure.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:00:21 Thank you so much for doing this.

Jonathan Haidt: 01:00:23 My pleasure. I enjoyed talking with you.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:00:25 And that was my episode with Jonathan Haidt. I want to thank Jonathan for being on my program. Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Edge Studio in New York's Times Square. For more information about this week's episode, or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you're a regular listener of the show, take a moment to review us on Apple podcasts. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. Today's episode was produced by me and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our website at hiddenforces.io. Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at Hidden Forces pod, or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.