



Parent & Faculty Education Conference  
EMPOWERING OUR KIDS  
Menlo School, February 6, 2016

**Julie Lycott-Haims**

*Attendee Notes*

**Introductory Remarks**

Thanks to all the organizers and other leadership at Menlo. She expressed gratitude to join our dialogue since she is our neighbor down the street in Palo Alto.

We as parents are a work in progress. We are still becoming ourselves. We are not stagnant, done, finished. This is our one precious life. We should take an interest in the questions raised. Parent Ed is about working on us, ourselves.

Reflections on the film:

We can and must develop character. We can and should respect the best in others, and in ourselves. Is what am I about to do a reflection of what I am and who I want to be?

How do we prepare ourselves to be our best to prepare our kids to move into the world.  
I will say what needs to be said.

"I love that nobody said the word 'college.' "

It's an important opportunity in the life of a developing human. College matters but we are so wrong about how we prepare for that.

Story about being at a breakfast with others talking about the pain our community is under. So many teens feel powerless, helpless. We need more mental health access/providers. We can solve that with money and no one has more money than us to build centers and hospital beds. But the real question is *why do so many kids need them?*

There seems to be a checklist of childhood. We want our kids in the right school and classes to get the best grades and scores. So there's tutoring and test prep, accolades and sports and clubs. And community service – need to check that box too to tell others how much you care about others. It seems all about checking off the list.

No sleep, no daydreaming/dreaming. Our children are tired and fragile. They need play and they cannot play fully. They are like little greyhounds and we as parents are running alongside like trainers at the Westminster dog show.

These are our precious children and we act this way because we fear they will not get into college.

Parenting is about love, not college. *APPLAUSE!!!!*

### How to do it?

Look our children in the eye.

When they come home – don't ask how was the math test? Or how much homework do you have?

Take an interest in who they are not what they accomplish.

Ask how they are. Ask how was your day? Be actually interested in whatever their answer is. What was "fine" about today? Show them that we care about them.

Help them unfold into their adult selves. Yes, messy and terrifying. This is a task we have chosen for ourselves.

Do you believe that? If so, make eye contact with your children.

Tiffany described skills we need to boil down to being human. Skills that computers don't have.

As Dean, I worked with humans unfolding into their adult selves.

We must bring humility, perseverance, and perspective.

We need to focus on our own character before we can build our kids' character.

### Julie struggles too:

When my kid was struggling with 5 hours of homework and the Gunn High class load, he was red eyed.

After realizing it was too much, I asked him if he would drop a class. My son responded, "Can I? Isn't this what you wanted from me?"

I said we care about you. My son dropped a class. And we watched the spring return to his step. Some colleges will say he's not worthy since he dropped a class. We're ok with that. Colleges will understand - the right ones for him.

What we need is more mental health.

*Julie then introduced Ross Szabo*

## INTRODUCTION from Campuspeak

### **ROSS SZABO** (*Zay-bo*)

At this time, will you please take a moment to turn your cell phones to "silent" or "off" and refrain from text messaging during the program in consideration of our speaker and our audience. Thank you.

Ross is the CEO of the Human Power Project, a company that creates cutting edge mental health curriculum. He's an award winning speaker, author, trainer and Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

Ross was the Director of the National Mental Health Awareness Campaign for 8 years. In that time he spoke to over one million people, created the first youth mental health speakers' bureau in the country, reached millions in media appearances and wrote a book titled, Behind Happy Faces. After 8 years on the road he burned out, so he did what anyone would do when they're exhausted. He joined the Peace Corps.

Ross served in Botswana for 2 years. When he came home he decided to start his own company to create mental health curriculum for people of all ages. His first curriculum also titled Behind Happy Faces is being used by over 70,000 high school and college students.

He's a social pioneer who has led the youth mental health movement, a blogger for the Huffington Post, a former mall model, and knows how to track lions by watching the movements of other animals.

Today, he's here to talk to us about mental health. Get ready to laugh and change.

Please welcome Ross Szabo.