

Academic Admissions Scandal Reveals Why You May Be Unwittingly Harming Your Kids

If you've been following the news, you know the academic admissions scandal has rocked the nation. Many are shocked to learn that parents are manipulating the system in illegal ways to make sure their kids get a spot in their college of choice.

Christians were even more shocked to learn that *When Calls the Heart* actress Lori Loughlin was accused of paying \$500,000 in bribes so her two daughters could attend the University of Southern California.

Richard Watts, author of *Entitlementmania* and a lawyer in Orange County, California, says this academic admissions scandal is further proof that America's parents are harming their kids in the name of love. In his book, Watts explains how parents can keep from spoiling their children—and what to do if they already have.

I recently invited Watts onto my "Strang Report" podcast to discuss this parenting trend. You can listen to the interview [here](#) or at the top of this article. He tells me that when parents cheat and pay extra money so their children can avoid challenge or failure, they rob their kids of opportunities to grow.

"The real question is how much are this generation's parents hijacking the careers of their kids by taking away the struggle from them and positioning them to go to these universities?" he says. "When the children are very young, the parents say, 'I'm going to direct you. You're going to play tennis; you're going to play lacrosse.' And it becomes this idea that parents have interfered with and taken away the failure of their kids. And that's one of the primary causes I

cite in my book *Entitlementania*—the cause of entitlementania is giving your kids too much and taking away their struggle.”

One caution Watts offers parents in his book is that for everything you give your child, you take something away. When I asked him what he meant by that, he explained that each parent has the responsibility to ask themselves one question: “What might I be taking away from my child?” Or, in other words, “If I give them a brand-new car at 16 years old, what experience am I taking away from them when it comes to learning how to maintain a used car?”

I absolutely agree with Watts. And it reminds me of a children’s story I once heard where a child saw a butterfly still in its chrysalis, struggling to get out. The child felt compassion for the little butterfly and gently opened the chrysalis with a knife to let the creature go free.

But to the child’s dismay, the butterfly was not able to fly away. Without the struggle of getting out of the chrysalis on its own, it didn’t have enough strength to learn to fly. The butterfly spent the rest of its days crawling on its belly with crumpled wings.

The story is a sad but helpful reminder that when parents don’t let their children fail or face obstacles, they rob them of the strength and wisdom they would have gained from the struggle. Watts shares his own version of that lesson.

“We look at palm trees—150-foot palm trees that can handle Category 5 winds. And we don’t realize that when a palm tree is small, it gets bent in a small wind, and it cracks its trunk. But it scars and heals. As it gets taller, it continues to crack in the wind, and the winds get stronger, and the tree gets higher. Every time that tree bends, it actually creates little fissures and cracks, and then it scars over again. By the time it’s an adult, and it’s out in the ocean or somewhere on an island, it can handle Category 5 winds.

“And as parents, we sometimes mistakenly want to grow our palm tree indoors, without the wind, in a glass house. We grow this tree 100 feet tall—our kids get to be 18 years old. And we push it out into the wind and expect it to be able to handle the forces of the wind in life when it has absolutely no experience.”

But what if you have spoiled your kids, and they’re already grown? Is it too late? Watts says absolutely not. He’s met parents in their 80s who tell their spoiled 50-year-old children they’re no longer leaving them any money. It’s incredible how quickly those middle-aged kids go back to college and start a career with endurance and hard work.

“The one thing you have to do as a parent is you need to look in the mirror and recognize that this is 100% the parents’ fault,” he says. “Kids don’t get entitled on their own. Kids get entitled because someone with the best intentions—usually a parent with love—is trying to do what they think is the right thing. They remember how difficult it was to struggle ... and it’s hijacking our parenting skills.”

Watts says this sense of entitlement is not reserved for the rich. He’s even found it in families living in the New York projects. He recalls one woman who told him she was a single mom of five kids, and yet she would spend \$130 on tennis shoes. After hearing Watts’ message, this single mom realized how ridiculous that spending habit was—and how it stemmed from a hijacked love that was spoiling her children.

And this mom is far from the only one impacted by Watts’ parenting lessons.

“I was at an affair last Friday, and a woman came up to me whom I did not know,” he tells me. “She put her hands on me—she’s 42 years old—and she said, ‘You’ve changed my life. We’ve been parenting our kids wrong. And this is so simple. I don’t know why someone didn’t tell us this.’ And I said,

‘Thank you very much.’ She grabbed both of my hands and started crying. She says, ‘No, I really want you to understand; my family’s lives have changed. And we are already in the last three months better for it.’ So my mission is also a silent ministry of sorts. I am certainly out there to try to help people recognize some real wisdom.”

I hope all parents read Watts’ book and take its message to heart. I can only imagine how the next generation will improve because of it. You can buy *Entitlementania* at or anywhere books are sold.

To learn more helpful lessons on how to raise kids who can face challenges with courage, listen to my entire podcast with Watts here or at the top of this article. And be sure to share this article on your social media! You never know who needs this message right now.