

Recess Is Practice For Democracy | Jonathan Haidt | Dad Saves America

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SUMMARY

Alexis de Tocqueville's observations of American problem-solving in the 1830s highlight a distinctive spirit of democracy and self-reliance that may be waning in today's youth due to overprotection and regulation. This shift could lead to a generation less equipped for democratic participation and more susceptible to authoritarian figures promising easy solutions.

- Tocqueville noted Americans' proactive approach to problem-solving compared to the passive attitudes in France and Britain.*
- Overprotective parenting is leading to children who fear risks and rely on authority figures for solutions.*
- This shift may diminish the "can-do" spirit essential for democracy and self-governance.*
- A regulated upbringing fosters compliance rather than independence, undermining the spirit of liberty.*
- Children who learn to make their own rules and take responsibility are better prepared for democratic participation.*
- The fragility of democracy requires nurturing a generation capable of self-initiative and critical thinking.*

- When Alexis de Toqueville traveled around America in the early 1830s, he observed something that he was amazed by. He observed that Americans, when there's a problem to be solved, they just get together and figure out how to solve it. Sort of the Ben Franklin spirit. He noted in "Democracy in America," that in France, people would just wait for the king or the government to do it. And in Britain, they would wait for the nobles or the royalty to do it.

The common people don't have an internal locus of control. The common people don't feel that they can solve problems, but in America they do. Well, that might be changing. When we raise kids with this level of overprotection who are afraid to take risks, afraid to put themselves out there, when we tell them, tell an adult, don't solve this yourself, we are raising kids who are losing that distinctive American can do spirit, the spirit of democracy. We may be raising kids who will be more receptive to a strong man, to someone who says only I can fix it, to someone who says the cause of your problems is something else and I will take care of it.

Democracy is fragile. The Founding Fathers knew that. They warned about that. And I am concerned that the way we're raising kids is not preparing them for democracy. For those of us who grew up in the 20th century, there was a common phrase that we'd say on the playground, it's a free country. You can't tell me what to do, but kids today have such regulated lives. There are so many rules. I think we've created a generation of kids that are accustomed to being told what to do.

This is not conducive to the spirit of liberty. I do think that when we raise kids with the spirit of liberty, kids learn how to make rules for themselves, enforce them for themselves, make their own choices, and then take responsibility for their actions, becoming more receptive to value living in a free country. (gentle music)