



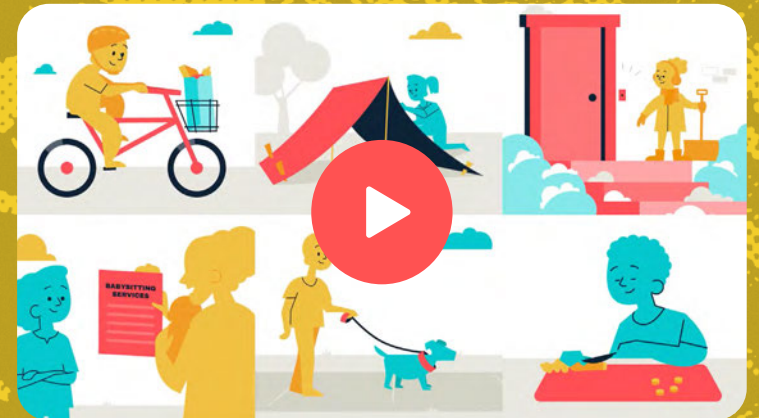
GIVING THE GIFT OF INDEPENDENCE

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION

Make it **easy,** **normal,** and **legal** to give kids
the **independence** they need to grow into
capable, confident, and happy adults.



Message from Lenore Skenazy, Co-Founder & President

This year, millions more people became aware of the growing childhood independence movement. Through my main-stage **TED Talk Why You Should Spend Less Time with Your Kids**, a feature in *The Atlantic*, and appearances on CNN and beyond, I've had the privilege of explaining how giving kids back some freedom is both normal and necessary.

A recent Harris Poll, which we helped shape with Let Grow Co-Founder Jonathan Haidt, was the first to ask kids *themselves* what they're allowed to do on their own. The results were shocking. Most 8 to 12-year-olds have never walked or biked alone, talked to a neighbor, or even gone down a grocery aisle by themselves.

And yet, they long for that freedom! The survey found that kids have a deep desire for fewer parent-supervised outings, more in-person connections with other kids, and a chance to explore their surroundings. They want this more than organized activities, or even time online!

Let Grow is turning that awareness into action. With your support, we're helping parents, principals, and policymakers rediscover the simple truth: When adults step back, kids step up.

Lenore Skenazy
Co-Founder and President
Let Grow



“Most 8 to 12-year-olds have never walked or biked alone, talked to a neighbor, or even gone down a grocery aisle by themselves. And yet, they long for that freedom!”

Message from Andrea Keith, Executive Director

This year, Let Grow achieved remarkable milestones—helping over 450,000 students in 638 schools take real steps toward independence. Our advocacy reached new heights, with Florida, Georgia, and Missouri passing Reasonable Childhood Independence laws. Now, 113 million people in 11 states—one-third of the U.S.—can let kids play freely without fear of investigation.

A fifth grader cooking dinner for the first time. A teacher watching a once-reluctant student organize his classmates. A state freeing parents from needless restrictions. That kind of impact doesn't happen by accident; it's the result of strong leadership, dedicated teamwork, and the support of incredible donors who care about childhood as deeply as we do.

None of this progress would be possible without your belief in our mission. Thanks to your generosity, the gift of independence is a growing movement. And as Let Grow looks ahead to 2026, we can make childhood independence the expectation, not the exception.



Andrea Keith
Executive Director
Let Grow



"We can make childhood independence the expectation, not the exception!"



FOUNDATIONS OF LET GROW



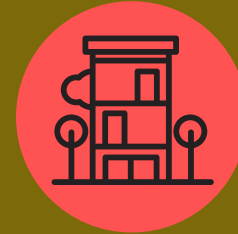
Schools

Free programs like The Let Grow Experience and Let Grow Play Clubs give K-12 students new independence through real-world activities and free play. These build confidence, resilience, and life skills beyond the classroom.



Parents

Free tools like The Let Grow Experience Family Edition and Four Weeks to a Let Grow Kid help families step back so kids can step up and see how much their kids are ready to do on their own.



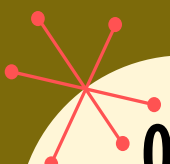
Communities

Our free resources empower neighborhoods and towns to make childhood independence easy, normal, and supported.



Legislation

Laws that protect parents' right to grant independence, and kids' right to play outside, walk to the store, etc. So far, 11 states have passed bills based on Let Grow's bipartisan Reasonable Childhood Independence model legislation.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Kids grow strong when they can play, explore, and make decisions without constant adult supervision. But over time, a fear-based culture—rooted in love but ruled by caution—has stripped kids of the autonomy and everyday independence activities that build confidence and courage.

Let Grow helps parents, schools, and communities restore these freedoms—strengthening children's capability and spirit of adventure while shifting norms and policies for lasting change.

Our Theory of Change is simple: If we restore childhood independence, we rebuild resilience. When families, schools, communities, and laws align around autonomy and trust, children thrive.

THE ORTWEIN STORY:

FROM SMALL STEPS TO SCHOOLWIDE TRANSFORMATION

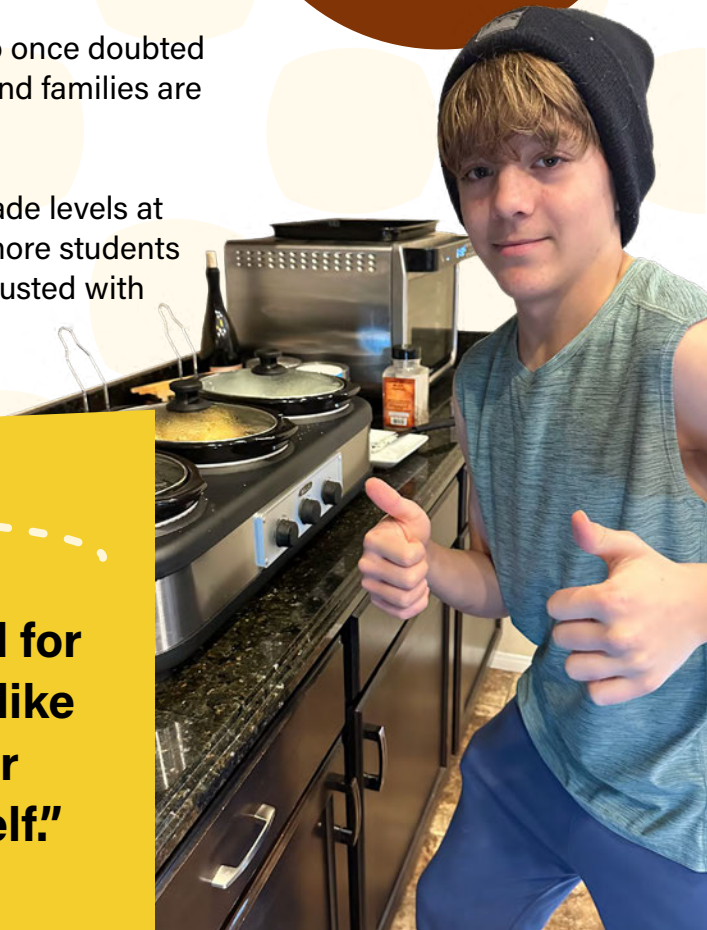
At Ortwein Elementary, a Title I school in Nevada's Clark County School District, the Let Grow Experience began with one teacher, Amy Wolfe. She challenged her fifth graders to do The Let Grow Experience—our program that gives kids the homework assignment: try something new on your own. Small new activities like cooking, biking, and going to the store soon grew into big projects. For instance, one student even organized his cousins to cook and serve a full meal for a big Super Bowl party.

"The growth we've seen is incredible. Kids who once doubted themselves are stepping up with confidence. And families are noticing it at home too," said Wolfe.

Now in its third year and adopted across all grade levels at the school, the Let Grow Experience impacts more students than ever. Ortwein proves that when kids are trusted with independence, entire school cultures can shift.

"One student even organized his cousins to cook and serve a full meal for a big Super Bowl party!"

Each student writes up what they did for their Let Grow Experience on a leaf, like "I rode my bike to school alone," or "I made mac and cheese all by myself."





Ortwein
Elementary
students who
participate in Let
Grow programs
both in and out
of school.

**"The growth we've seen is incredible.
Kids who once doubted themselves
are stepping up with confidence. And
families are noticing it at home too."**

*– Amy Wolfe, Teacher at
Ortwein Elementary*



**Watch Ortwein's
transformation!**

2025: RECORD GROWTH

	2024	2025
Teachers and schools requesting Let Grow programs:	177	1,358
Educators across the country are embracing Let Grow as a way to encourage independence at home, in neighborhoods, and throughout everyday life.		
Students reached:	36,711	458,177
Nearly half a million kids have the chance to gain confidence and resilience through independence exercises.		
Think for Yourself High School Essay Contest submissions:	3,427	4,639
Thousands of students are voicing how independence shaped their growth and courage.		
Parent resource requests:	14,496	34,837
Families everywhere are discovering simple ways to give their kids independence at home.		
States with Reasonable Independence Laws:	8	11
Nearly 113 million Americans now live where parents can give kids reasonable independence without fear.		

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STATE LEGISLATION SPOTLIGHT

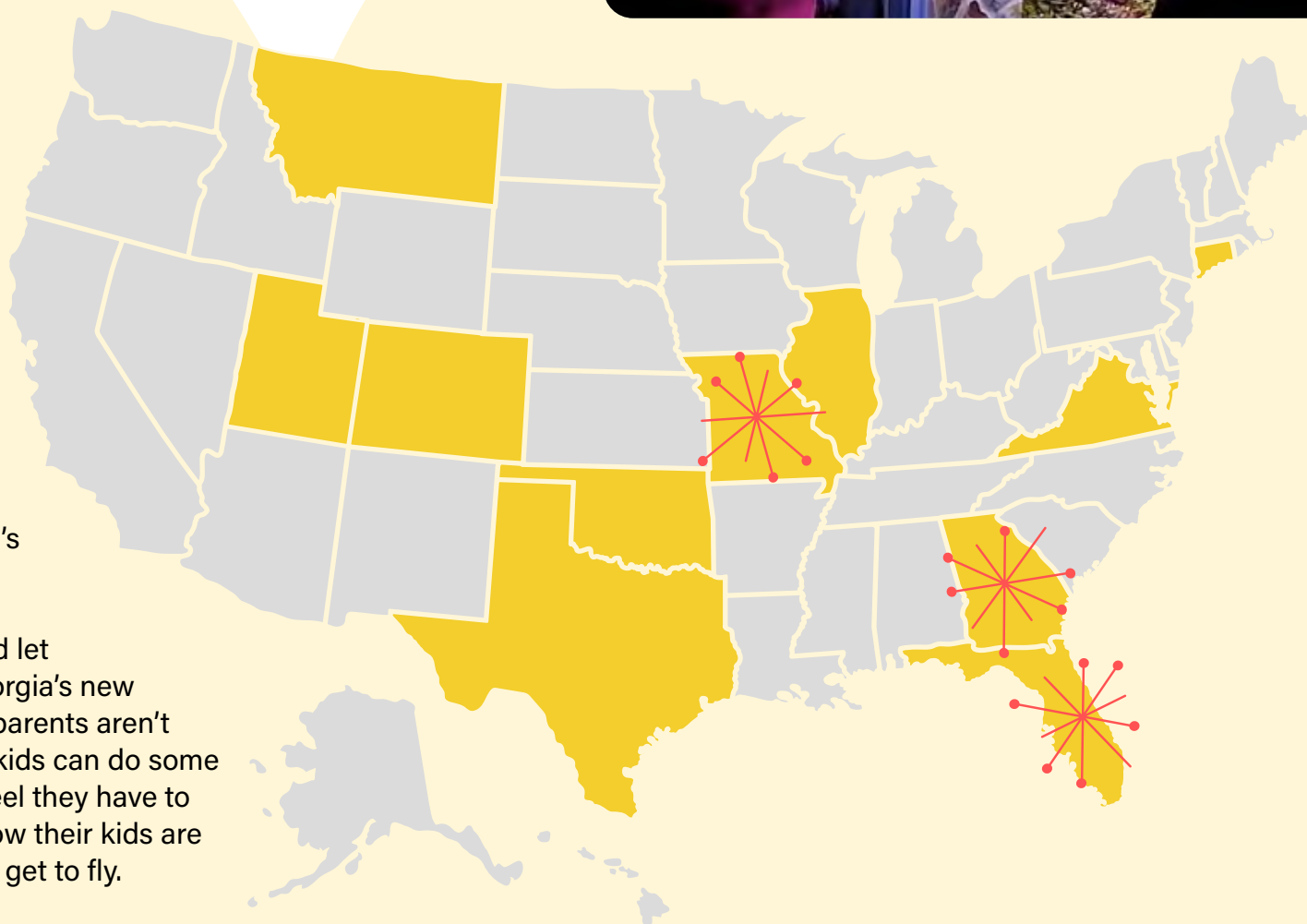
GEORGIA PROTECTS CHILDHOOD INDEPENDENCE



After Georgia mom Brittany Patterson was handcuffed in front of her kids for letting her 10-year-old walk to the store, she asked, “What am I under arrest for?” The deputy replied, “Reckless endangerment.”

Soon after, lawmakers passed a bipartisan **Reasonable Childhood Independence** law, inspired by Let Grow’s [model legislation and policy advocacy](#).

As one supporter put it, “The state should let parents be parents and kids be kids.” Georgia’s new law now makes that possible. It ensures parents aren’t criminalized for everyday decisions, and kids can do some things on their own. Now parents don’t feel they have to second-guess themselves when they know their kids are ready to spread their wings. And the kids get to fly.



 States with Reasonable Childhood Independence Laws

 Legislation Passed in 2025

2025 BY THE NUMBERS

Once parents see what kids can do,
it spreads like wildfire.

**Website
visitors:
532,000**

Families and educators are seeking out Let Grow's resources to give children the gift of independence.

**Social Media
Reach:
2,305,000**

The childhood independence movement is spreading rapidly, sparking conversations on how best to prepare kids for life. And we're not just *reaching* more people. Our social media *engagement rate* has increased too, year over year from 2.77% to 3.44%, showing that the message is truly resonating.

**Email
subscribers:
73,300 with
45% open
rate**

Our messages reach a highly engaged audience looking for practical ways to help kids discover what they can do on their own.

Sign up here:
letgrow.org/join

ONE TEACHER STARTS DISTRICTWIDE MOVEMENT

School Counselor Callie Downey started a Play Club last year at Eagle Heights Elementary. This inspired multiple schools in Missouri's Smithville School district to follow suit. This year, she's adding The Let Grow Experience to her classes. "Once parents and teachers see what kids can do, it spreads like wildfire," Downey said.



GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

Let Grow's media appearances, led by Lenore Skenazy, have inspired a national conversation that normalizes childhood independence.

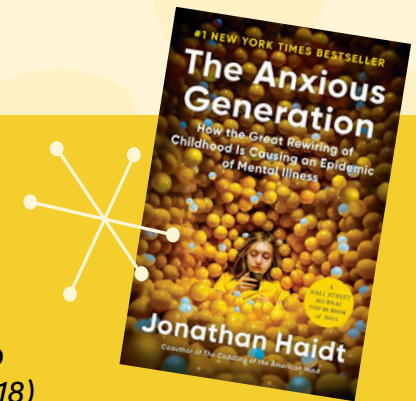


TED TALK: “WHY YOU SHOULD SPEND LESS TIME WITH YOUR KIDS”

This mainstage TED Talk challenges the modern parenting myth that children are unsafe or incapable on their own. Said Skenazy, “I did it myself!” are childhood’s magic words – and the original childhood anxiety buster. Half a million viewers have watched so far.

THE ANXIOUS GENERATION

Let Grow co-founder Jonathan Haidt’s bestselling book *The Anxious Generation* spotlights Let Grow as a key solution to rising childhood anxiety. With two chapters Lenore Skenazy contributed to, the book underscores how restoring independence and free play—central to Let Grow’s mission—can help a generation rediscover confidence, resilience, and joy. (*Read more about Jonathan’s work on pages 17-18*)



Let Grow has also been featured in these prominent media outlets:



The Let Grow Experience breaks the cycle of overprotection by giving kids the chance to do things without parental help or supervision, while giving families a safe way to step back.

The Let Grow Experience is a simple, life-changing homework assignment:

“Go home and do something new, on your own.”

Whether it’s climbing a tree, running an errand, or making a meal, the choices are endless—and the impact is immediate.

This monthly homework breaks the cycle of overprotection by giving kids the chance to do things without parental help or supervision, while giving families a safe way to step back. Teachers assign the Experience, and parents get to see their children grow more capable and confident right before their eyes.

The program is free, flexible, and works across all grade and ability levels. The K–8 version includes handouts, idea lists, and “reflection leaves” that the kids fill out, the high school Independence Inventory helps teens plan, practice, and reflect on bigger steps toward self-sufficiency. A Family Edition and Summer Edition are also available.

Step by step, students build resilience, responsibility, and confidence, thanks to the gift of independence.

Educators: To receive these free, classroom-ready programs, visit letgrow.org/program/educators

Parents: To bring these confidence-boosting resources into your home, visit letgrow.org/join

THE LET GROW EXPERIENCE

THE LET GROW PLAY CLUB

The Let Grow Play Club, the brainchild of Let Grow's co-founder Dr. Peter Gray, is based on decades of research showing that unstructured, mixed-age, no-phones free play builds creativity, connection and real-world social skills.

Play Clubs are easy to run with minimal prep. Before or after school, kids create their own games and solve conflicts while adults supervise only for safety. Schools see happier students, fewer behavior problems, and a more positive climate.

Kevin Stinehart, a fourth-grade teacher at Central Academy of the Arts in South Carolina, saw this firsthand. One student, often angry and in trouble for bullying, joined Play Club and soon was laughing and making friends. Office referrals stopped, replaced by a sense of belonging. "Starting a Play Club is truly as easy as can be—and it can transform a school into a bully-free place naturally and effectively," Stinehart said.



International Expansion

Since its founding, Let Grow has focused primarily on schools in the United States, but thanks to a generous donor we've formally expanded Let Grow Programs to Canada and are translating materials into Québécois. And our growth isn't confined to North America. Our growing global reach has inspired teachers from around the world to offer translations of our materials into Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian.

Play Clubs are easy to run with minimal prep. Schools see happier students and fewer behavior problems.

SUCCESS STORIES

FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF RIDING A BIKE TO SCHOOL

Beth from Oregon shared that her son, David, 7, began biking to school on his own this year—and everything changed. Mornings were calmer, and David felt stronger and more connected at school. “He seems to stand a foot taller now,” Beth said.

The ripple effect reached his sister, who wanted the same independence. Beth’s advice: “Kids need chances to take initiative and responsibility. As his mom, I can say, ‘Yes, he’s ready,’ and ‘This calculated risk is worth it.’”



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: DINNER AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

One of the first independence activities many kids try is cooking. For a New York fifth grader, making pasta became more than a meal. It became a lesson in patience and responsibility.

“With confidence I can talk to the kids about independence, maturity, responsibility and assign them a Let Grow Experience that leads to real conversations with kids and families — not just at school but at home and in the community,” said this student’s elementary school counselor in Dutchess County, NY.

For many families, moments like this inspire lasting change. Once parents see what their kids can do, they start saying “yes” more often and discovery just how capable their children already are.

“He knew the pressure was on not to burn it—a small but meaningful life lesson that made him feel ten feet tall!”

NEW FRONTIERS: RESEARCH ON “INDEPENDENCE THERAPY”



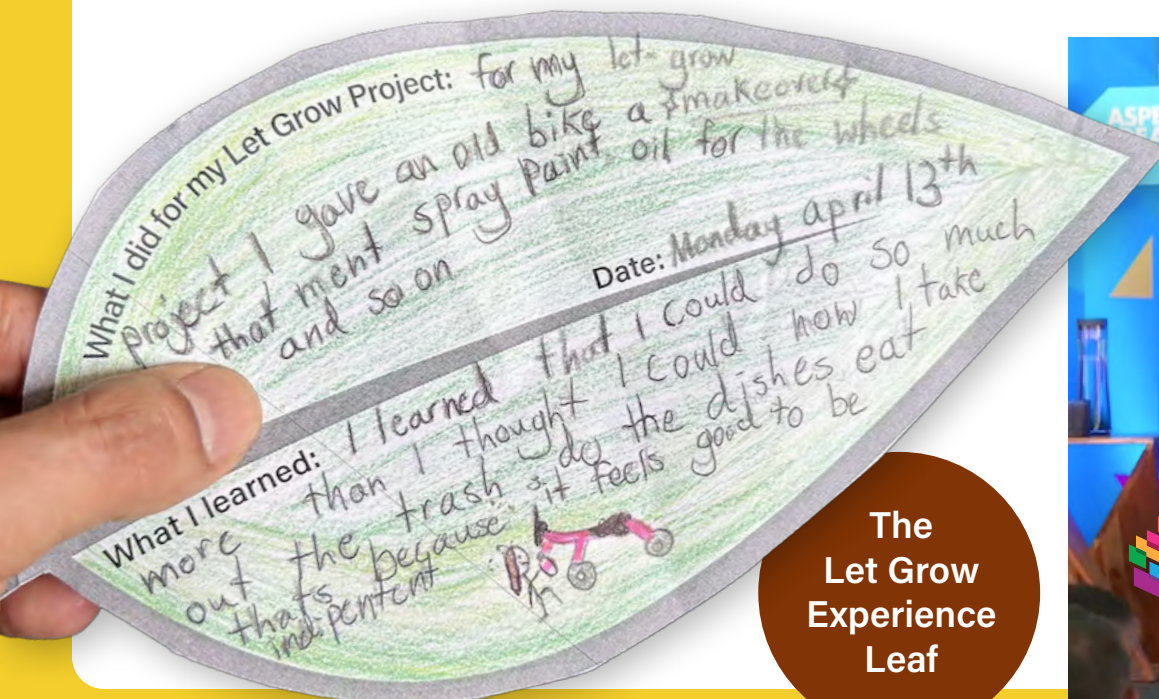
With childhood anxiety at record highs, psychologist Dr. Camilo Ortiz is testing **“Independence Therapy,”** inspired by The Let Grow Experience. His therapy has anxious kids do a series of “Let Grow-ish” activities, like walking to school or running errands. “Intense and frequent child independence may be the solution—and anybody can try it,” Ortiz says.

Early results show kids who practice independence see their anxiety abate faster than kids treated with talk therapy or medication. One 9-year-old, once afraid to sleep alone, rode the bus by herself – and even got a little lost. But that night she slept in her own bed for the first time. And then she kept doing it!

In 2025, Dr. Ortiz expanded his research and began training therapists in a series of webinars, — helping to bring independence and its restorative results to anxious kids (and their parents) nationwide.

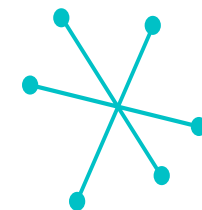
We need something new to slow down the runaway train of anxiety in children and adolescents.

Ortiz and Skenazy address the Aspen Ideas Festival



ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL

MULTIPLYING IMPACT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS



Real change happens when we join forces with visionary leaders and organizations. Several recent partnerships helped expand our reach and impact.

SOUTH CAROLINA: OUR FIRST LIGHTHOUSE STATE

The South Carolina Department of Education became the first to partner with Let Grow as a **Lighthouse State**, endorsing our programs statewide. Students there are already benefiting from Play Clubs and the Let Grow Experience.



"This Let Grow partnership is about reclaiming childhood itself. By empowering independence and play, we are preparing students not just for success in the classroom—but but for success in life!"

- Ellen Weaver, South Carolina Superintendent of Education

Let Grow's Community Toolkit helps make independence normal and supported in a neighborhood's schools, shops, and streets.



BUILDING COMMUNITY WITH THE BALANCE PROJECT **TIME**

Let Grow partnered with The Balance Project, recently featured in *Time*, to launch our Community Toolkit—an ever-growing collection of Let Grow and curated third-party resources that inspire and empower parent and community groups. The toolkit helps make independence normal and supported in a neighborhood's schools, shops, and streets. Seeing kids on their own at the park or heading to the ice cream shop becomes common again.



A Let
Grow-inspired
parent group
meet-up in
Plainview,
NY.

"Thank you Let Grow for all you do to promote independence. And to all my fellow parents, I love that we have the opportunity to cheer each other on and push ourselves as we give our children an abundance of opportunities to play and grow. What a beautiful process."

- Parent on Let Grow's
Social Media Facebook Group:
Raising Independent Kids

THE ANXIOUS GENERATION

Let Grow is proud to partner with our co-founder Jonathan Haidt, author of *The Anxious Generation*. His bestselling book highlights the steep rise in anxiety and depression as childhood independence and free play declined and screens filled the gap.

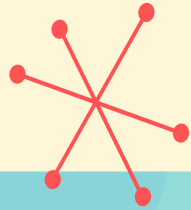
Haidt's "Four New Norms" call for delaying smartphones, delaying social media, creating phone-free schools, and restoring real-world independence and free play. Norm #4 is where Let Grow leads: giving families and schools simple, free tools to make it easier for kids to start doing more on their own. From our Play Club model to The Let Grow Experience curriculum, Haidt points readers to Let Grow as the place to start. Together, we're helping parents and educators replace screentime with the competence, resilience, and joy that only independence and free play can build.

As childhood independence and free play declined, screens filled the gap.

On an episode of *Oprah Daily*, while discussing his book, Jonathan Haidt calls for "more independence, responsibility, and free play" in real life.

"I am both excited to try this and see it as necessary to counteract some really dangerous trends in our society trends in our society."

- Rebecca Warchut, Teacher

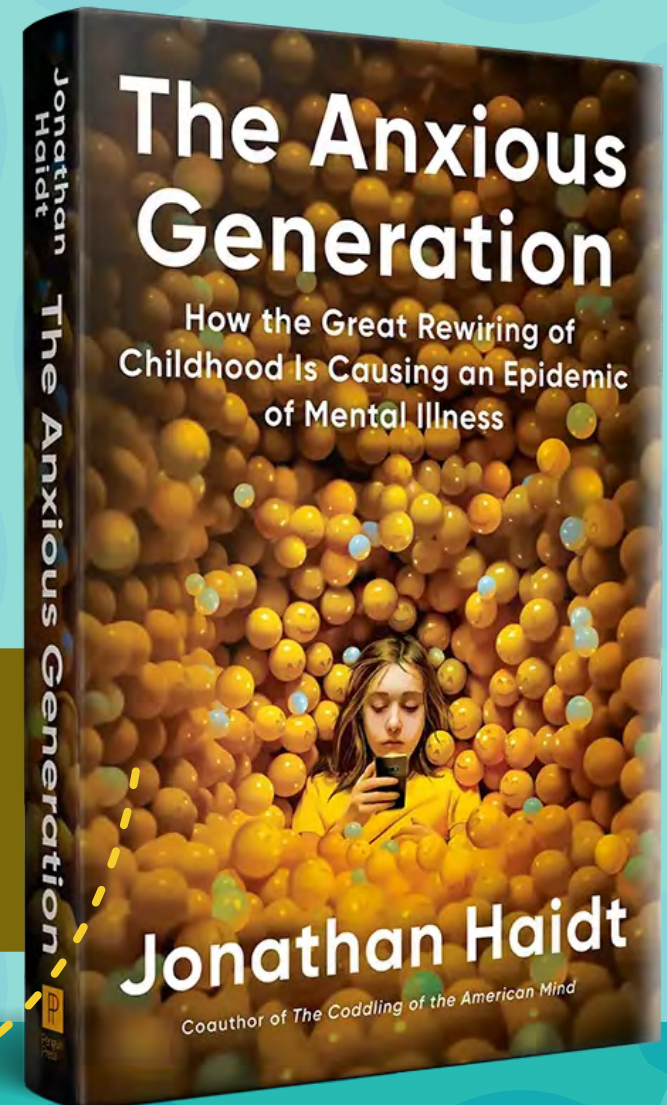


FROM THE ANXIOUS GENERATION TO CHILDHOOD INDEPENDENCE IN CONNECTICUT

At Latimer Lane Elementary, a school in Connecticut's Simsbury Public Schools district, sixth-grade teacher Rebecca Warchut launched The Let Grow Experience with 4th–6th graders this year. But she's not stopping there. With a grant, she's providing copies of *The Anxious Generation* for a parent book club, aiming to spread the movement schoolwide. "I am both excited to try this and see it as necessary to counteract some really dangerous trends in our society," Warchut said.

**"If we protect them from everything,
we harm their ability to handle anything."**

- Jonathan Haidt



[Click to learn more about *The Anxious Generation*](#)

FINANCIALS*

Let Grow turns modest resources into outsized impact, helping millions of kids grow ready for the path ahead.



Gold
Transparency
2025

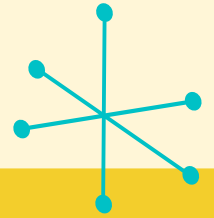
Candid.

	2023	2024
Contributions	\$946,475	\$1,088,162
Other	\$55,910	\$89,810
Revenue	\$1,002,385	\$1,177,972
Programs	\$478,060	\$593,743
Administration	\$152,564	\$168,137
Fundraising	\$132,012	\$138,101
Expenses	\$762,636	\$899,981
Cash & Investments	\$1,045,286	\$1,348,697
Pledges & Receivables	\$0	\$863,974
Other Assets	\$12,700	\$13,585
Total Assets	\$1,057,986	\$2,226,256
Liabilities	\$5,000	\$16,250
Net Assets	\$1,052,986	\$2,210,006

*Audited financials

PEOPLE

Let Grow's team members have dedicated much of their lives to building the childhood independence movement.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Daniel Shuchman,
Chairman, Co-Founder



Jonathan Haidt,
Co-Founder



Lenore Skenazy, Co-Founder



Samantha Boardman

STAFF

Lenore Skenazy, President, Co-Founder

Andrea Keith, Executive Director

Daniel Anthony, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives

Corey Sowards, Director of Marketing and Communications

Megan Hebert, School Programs Director

Sydney Jarrard, School Account Manager

Natalie Susino, School Account Manager

Diane Redleaf, Legal Consultant

Erin Henriques, Administrative Assistant

Jen Sullivan, Special Projects

Paige Moriarty, Graphic Designer

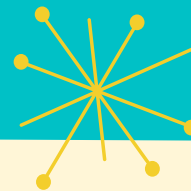
Mavis Wellington, School Account Manager

KEY ADVISORS

Peter Gray, PhD, Let Grow Co-founder &
Research Professor at Boston College

Camilo Ortiz, Associate Professor of Psychology,
Long Island University and Private Practitioner

LOOKING AHEAD: GROWING THE MOVEMENT



Independence at Scale

We'll continue to partner with more schools, build out district-wide adoptions, and secure state-level endorsements.



Corporate and Organizational Partnerships for Cultural Change

We'll seek select corporate and organizational partnerships to co-fund programs, inspire campaigns, and help make childhood independence a cultural norm.



Growing the Education Ambassadors Program

We'll expand our network of educators who champion our programs in their schools and districts, equipping them to share best practices and inspire others to join the movement.



Prepare the Child Campaign

We'll launch a national campaign reminding parents: "Don't prepare the path for the child. Prepare the child for the path."



Let Grow Experience Impact Study

We'll work with a research team to establish a benchmark for measurable increases in reported autonomy among parents and children participating in Let Grow programs.

WHEN ADULTS STEP BACK, KIDS STEP UP

Simon at age 7 running his own beverage stand.

SIMON'S STORY

"As a toddler, Simon wanted to load the dishwasher. So I let him. As he got older he wanted to try more things, and the more independence I gave him, the more his curiosity, confidence, and competence grew as he went from running his own beverage stand at seven years old to starting his own freeze-dried candy business at age ten. Now that he's a 14-year-old entrepreneur, I know that when I step back, he steps up."

-Patti, Simon's Mom and a Let Grow Advocate in Denver



Simon at age 10 running his freeze-dried candy business.

Now age 14, Simon continues to be an entrepreneur and practice childhood independence.





Let Grow makes it easy, normal, and legal to give kids the independence they need to grow into capable, confident, and happy adults.

Join us in helping give this gift to millions more children, families, schools, and communities.



LETGROW.ORG

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