



Ready or Not, Here Life Comes

Mel Levine

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Every parent wants to know, "What will he be like when he's in his twenties?" After decades of observing children grow into young adults, Dr. Mel Levine, nationally known pediatrician and author, addresses the question of why some youngsters make a successful transition into adulthood while others do not.

In recent years, says Dr. Levine, we have experienced an epidemic of career unreadiness as too many young people begin what he calls "the startup years" unprepared for the challenge of initiating a productive life. Parents and schools often raise children in a highly structured world of overscheduled activities, meeting kids' demands for immediate gratification but leaving them unable to cope on their own. Instead of making a smooth transition into adulthood, many youngsters find themselves trapped in their teenage years, traveling down the wrong career road, unable to function in the world of work. These young people have failed, says Dr. Levine, to properly assess their strengths and weaknesses and have never learned the basics of choosing and advancing through the stages of a career.

Dr. Levine urges that schools focus less on college prep (which, he points out, generally means "college admissions prep") and instead teach "life prep," equipping adolescents with what they will need to succeed as adults. He identifies these skills as falling within four growth processes, "the four I's": inner direction, or self-awareness; interpretation, or understanding the outside world; instrumentation, or the acquisition of mental tools; and interaction, or the ability to relate to other people effectively. It is these abilities that ensure a successful transition into the startup years of early adulthood. Parents, schools, and adolescents themselves can all work together to improve work-life readiness, and Dr. Levine shows how. He even offers advice for young adults who find themselves unable to navigate the world of careers.

Insightful, wise, and compassionate, *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes* is a powerful commentary on our times and a book that can help adolescents and startup adults -- with an assist from parents and educators -- to spring from the starting gate of adulthood.

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