

Opening Reflection

What do you have?

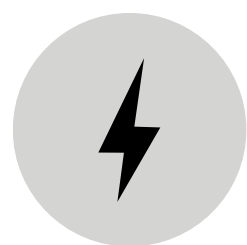
What did you NOT have?

Who supported you?



The Student Paradox

TODAY'S STUDENTS ARE LIVING A SERIES OF CONTRADICTIONS



More Connected

843 friends online
7+ hrs screen time
Always reachable

More Disconnected

Fewer deep bonds
Rising loneliness
No eye contact



More Protected

Helicopter parenting
Safety nets everywhere
Curated environments

More Anxious

Record anxiety rates
Fear of failure
Low distress tolerance



More Supported

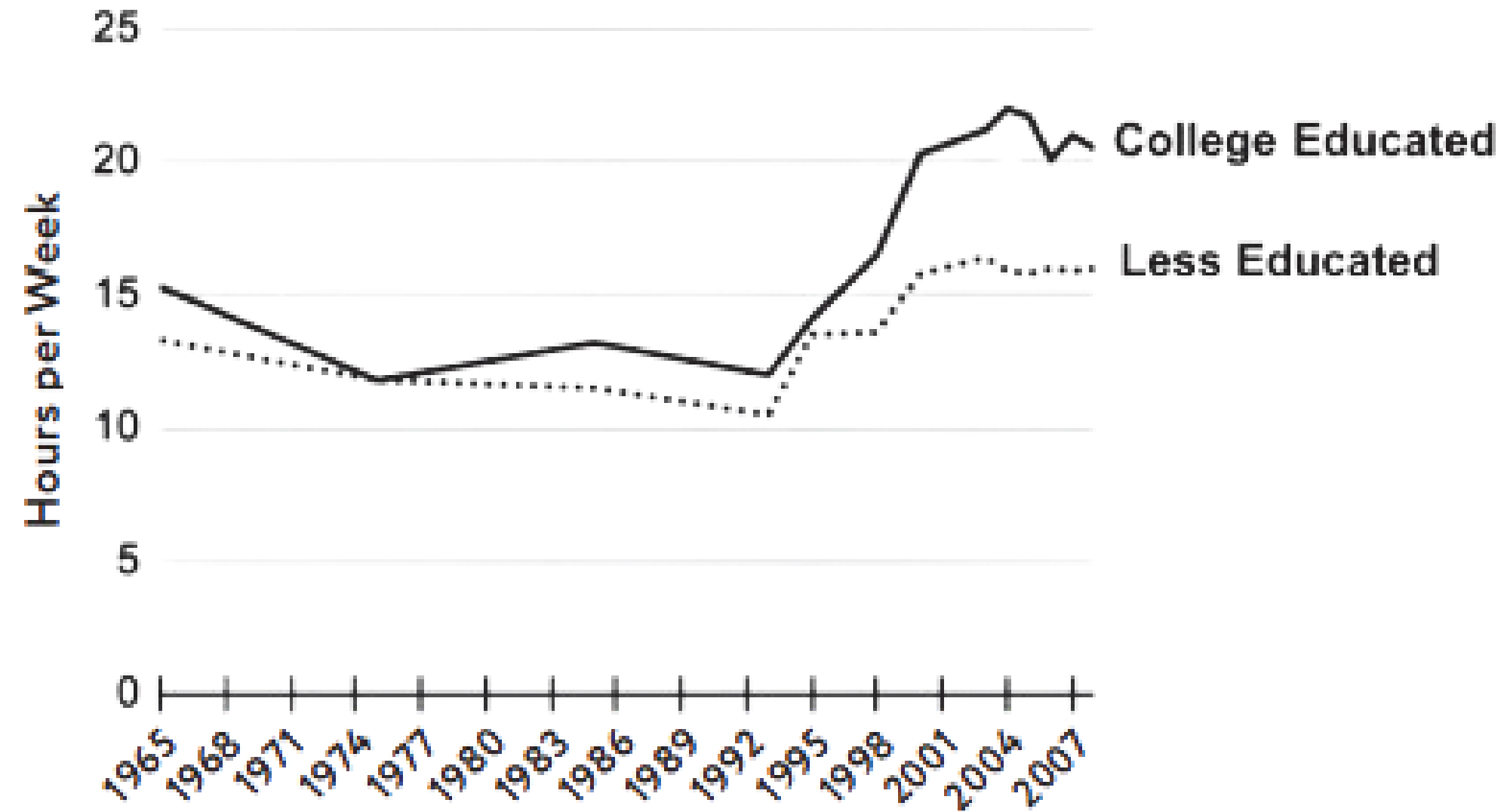
Tutors, coaches
Mental health resources
Instant expert access

Less Independent

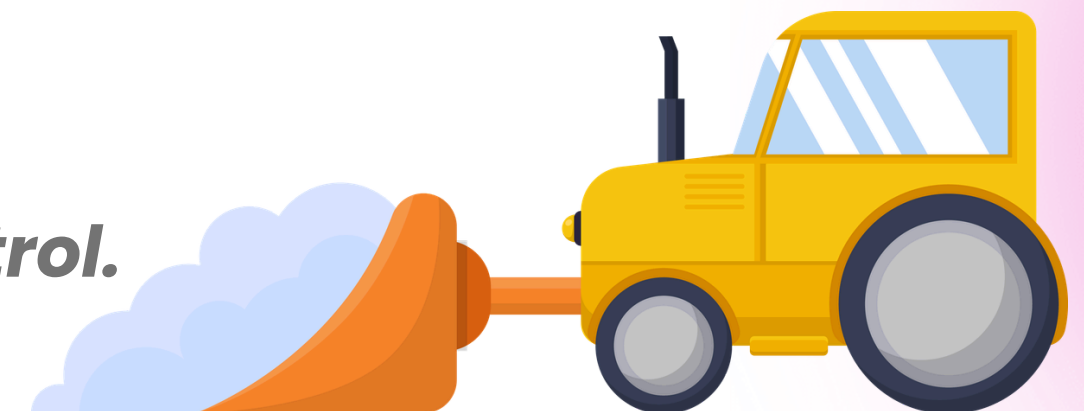
Struggles with autonomy
Decision paralysis
Fears being alone

The greater the gap between these contradictions, the deeper the crisis.

TIME SPENT PARENTING BY MOTHERS



We have reduced childhood independence while increasing adult control.



YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

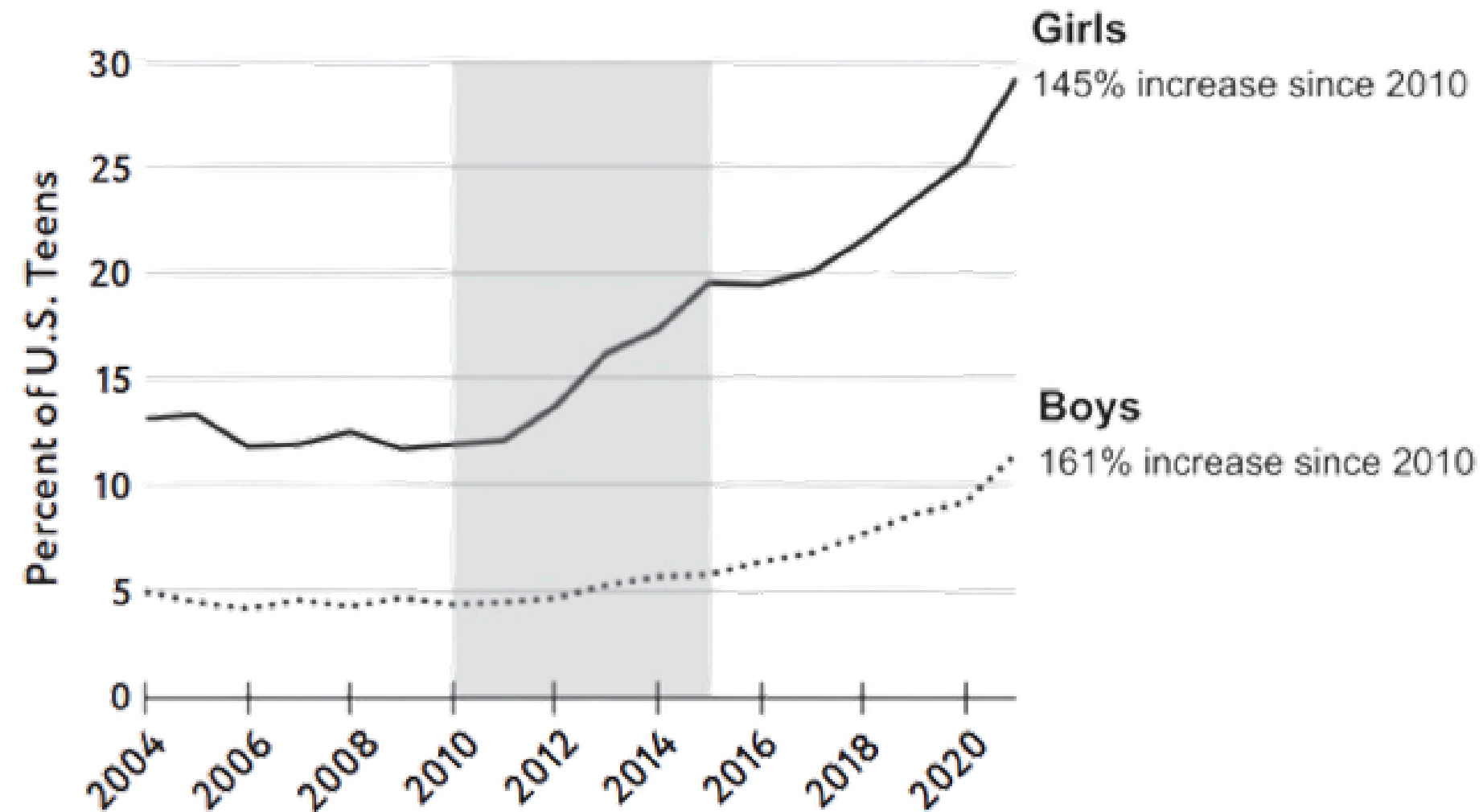


Figure 1.1. Percent of U.S. teens (ages 12–17) who had at least one major depressive episode in the past year, by self-report based on a symptom checklist. This was figure 7.1 in *The Coddling of the American Mind*, now updated with data beyond 2016. (Source: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health.)³

Root Causes

Shift Over Time:

- Less free play
- Less unstructured time
- Fewer real responsibilities
- Increased supervision & pressure

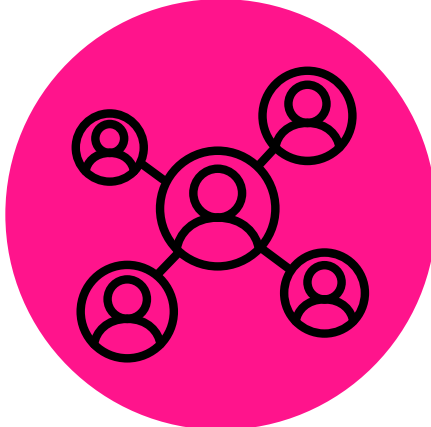
In Schools:

- Over-scaffolding
- Compliance-driven environments
- Limited student voice



The Growth Equation

Student growth happens when:



Connection
Safety & Trust

+



Independence
Confidence & Competence

+



Belonging
Identity & Purpose

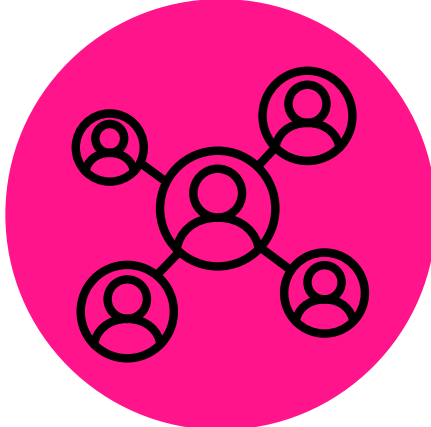
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Growth & Success



The Growth Equation

Student growth happens when:



Too much
Connection

without *independence*
leads to
DEPENDENCE

+



Too much
Independence

without *connection*
leads to
ISOLATION

+



Too much
Belonging

without *voice*
leads to
COMFORMMITY

=

Growth & Success



The Mission

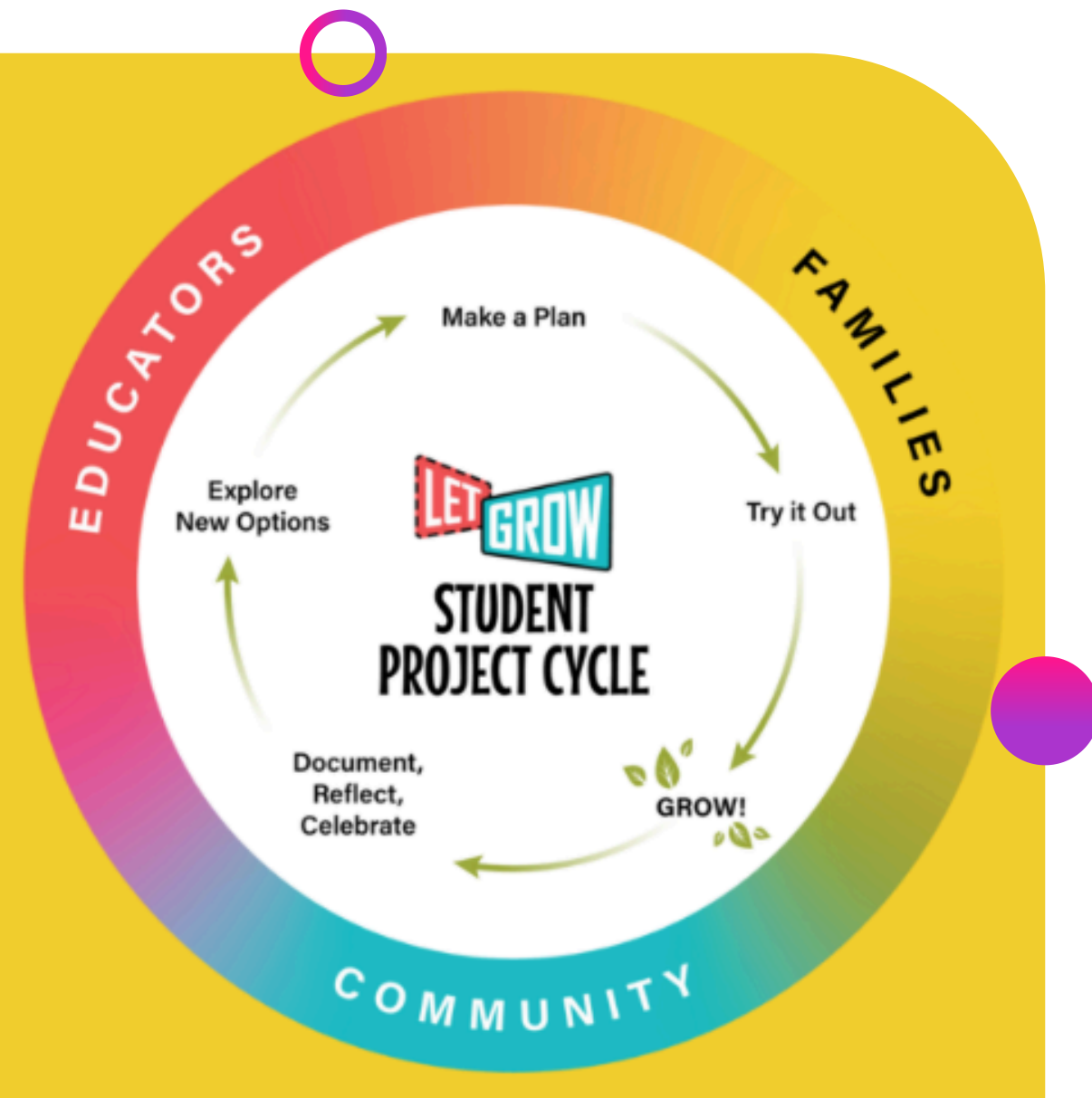
Make it **easy**, **normal**, and **legal** to give kids the **independence** they need to grow into capable, confident, and happy adults.



The Case for Let Them Grow

Students need:

- **Real responsibility** – opportunities to contribute in meaningful, authentic ways
- **Chance to fail safely** – where mistakes are part of learning, not punishment
- **Problem-solving experiences** – space to think, struggle, and figure things out
- **Trust from adults** – belief in their ability to handle challenges and grow



Brain Science

- Challenge builds neural pathways
- Productive struggle strengthens executive functioning
- No challenge = limited growth

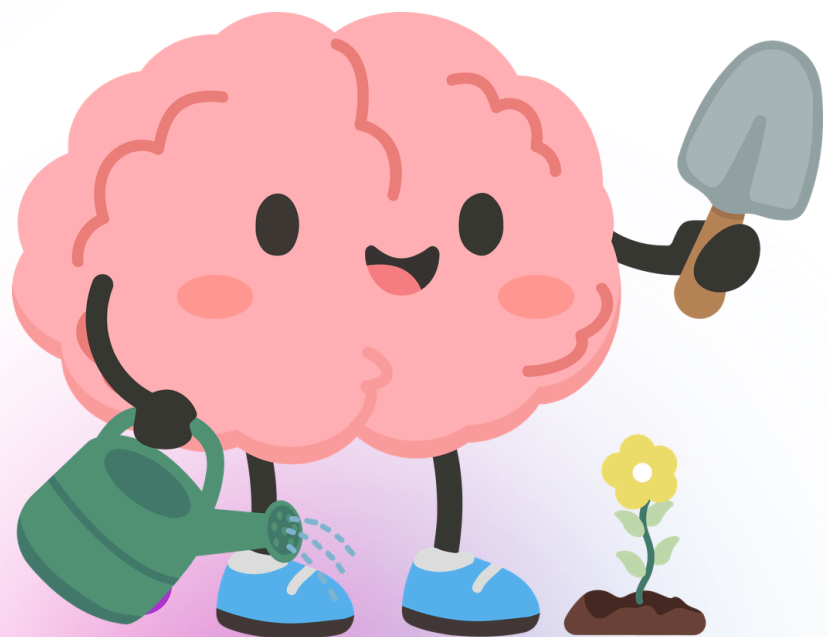
What We Often Do

- Step in too quickly
- Solve problems for students
- Prevent discomfort
- Over-scaffold learning

Our Shift

- Fixer → Coach
- Protector → Guide
- Controller → Partner
- Rescuer → Co-regulator

Struggle is not the problem, unsupported struggle is.



Practical Strategy #1: Build Independence

In the classroom:

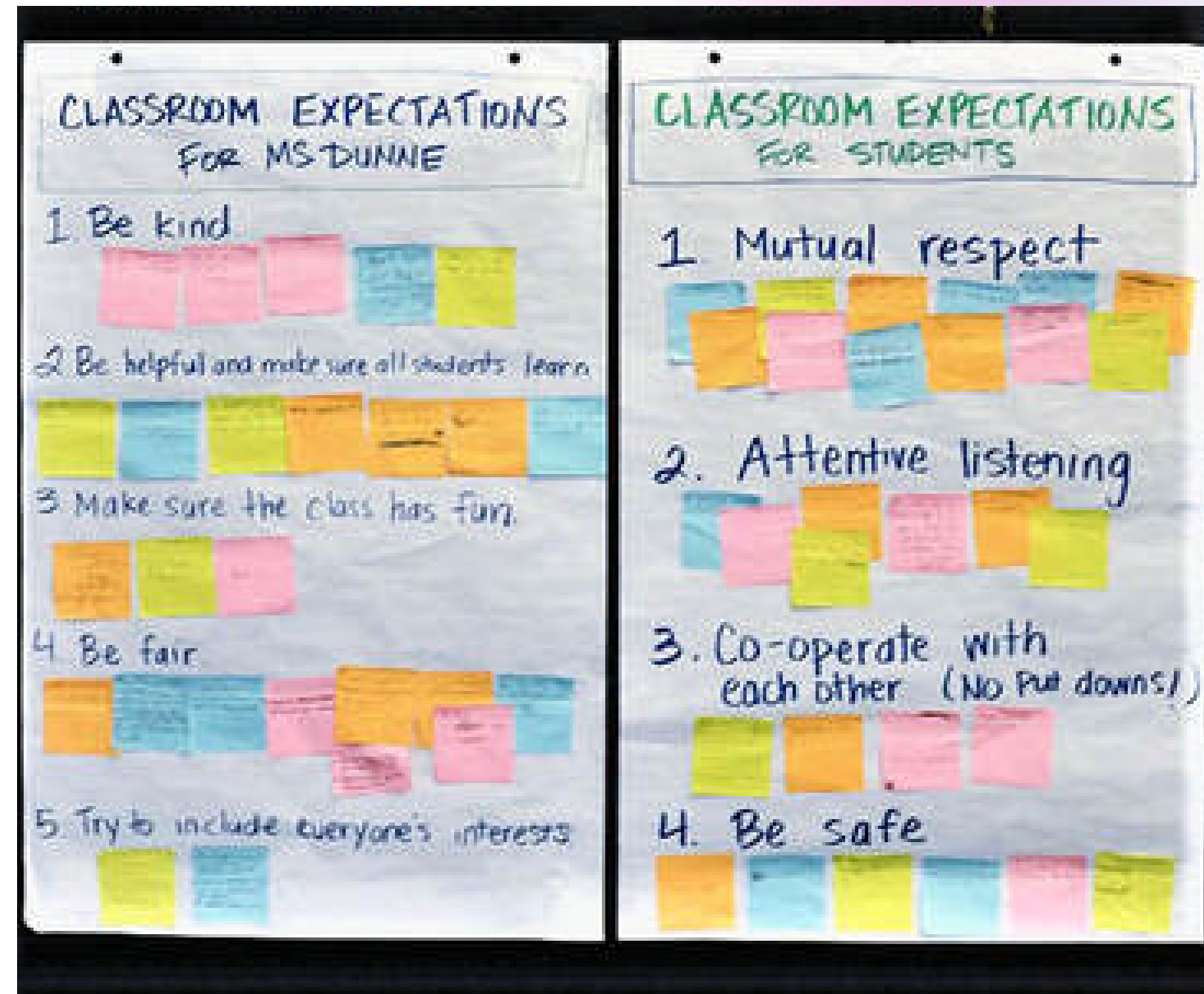
- Meaningful Classroom Jobs
- Experience Struggle
- Use “What do you think?”
- Normalize mistakes



Practical Strategy #2: Increase Student Voice

In the classroom:

- Choice. Choice. Choice.
- Student-led conference
- Co-create norms and expectations
- Project-based learning tied to “real life”



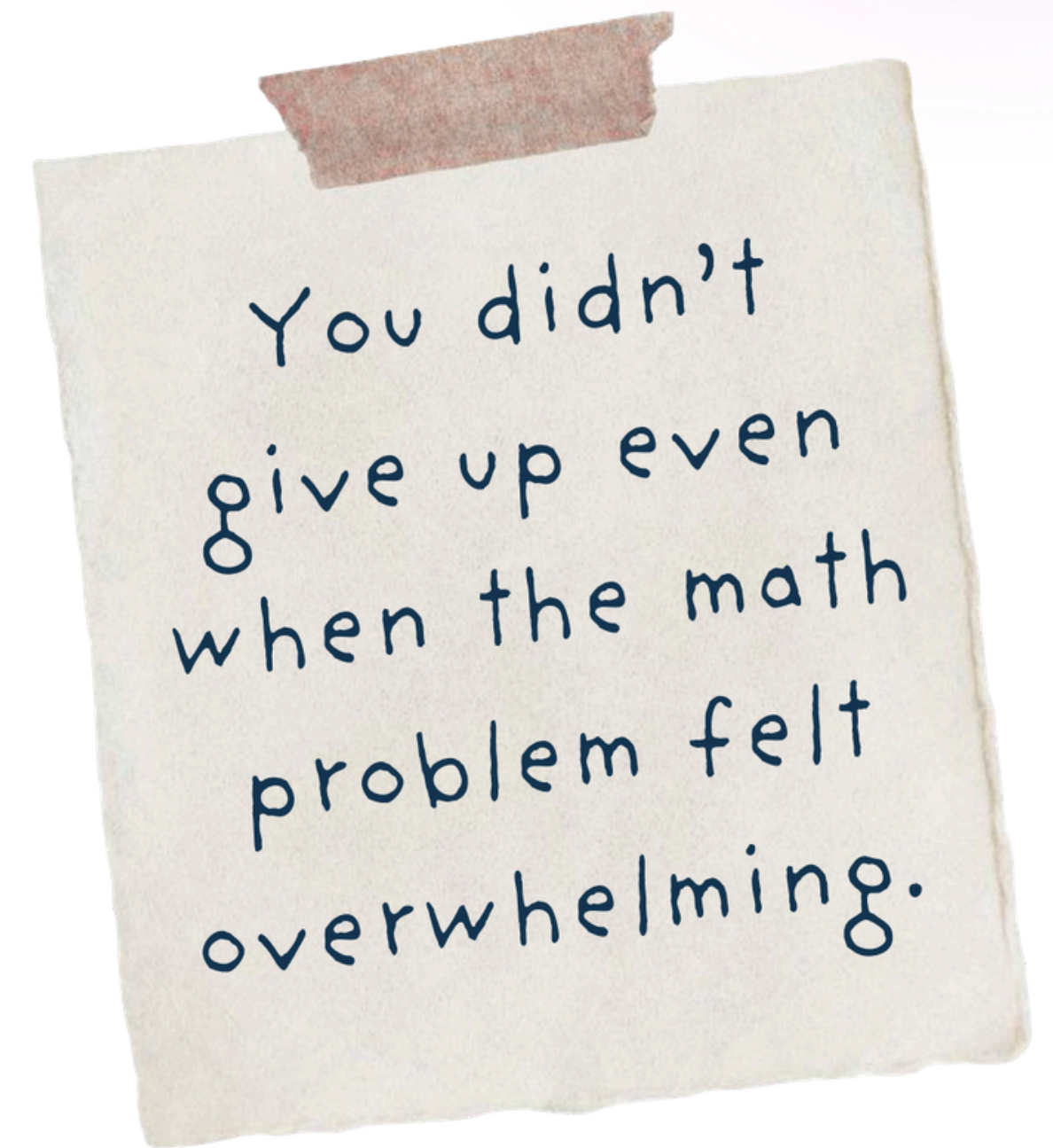
Practical Strategy #3: Create Safe Risk Taking

In the classroom:

- Normalize discomfort
- Celebrate effort, not just outcomes
- Build “failure-friendly” environments

Language Shifts:

- “You’re not there...yet.”
- “What did you learn?”
- “Try a different strategy.”



Practical Strategy #4: Strengthen Connection

In the classroom:

- Daily Relationship rituals
- 2X10 strategy
- Check-ins
- Adult modeling vulnerability



Connection is the secret sauce that ignites engagement!



THE GOAL



**Capable
Problem Solvers**



**Confident
Risk-Takers**



**Connected
Humans**

Final Reflection

What is one way you will
“LET THEM GROW”
this week?