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Harding School of Theology

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Footnotes: The Coddling of the American Mind

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Footnotes¹

¹Curated Resources for Ministers



Welcome back.

Occasionally I read a book that I can't stop talking about. A few years ago, that book was Jonathan Haidt's [The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion](#). His [six moral foundations](#) explained how we prioritize our beliefs and talking points. More importantly, the book made sense of every single argument I had ever witnessed (and especially those I'd started).

I was obviously excited to hear that Haidt had partnered with Greg Lukianoff to publish [The Coddling of the American Mind](#). It has surpassed my expectations. It's not just great; it is vital and urgent. And I can't stop talking about it.

While *The Righteous Mind* explained why good people disagree, the context felt adult to me. It applied to places like the Thanksgiving table, and why your one uncle believes those things about that topic. Sure, it might help you understand him. But you could also just ask him to pass the gravy and that might shift the conversation to something more pleasant.

The Coddling of the American Mind isn't about tables of adults arguing about whether Whitney Houston or Dolly Parton sang that song better or if cornbread should have sugar. It's not for church leaders taking six months to determine that the communion can now be passed from the back of the room. It is about 11-15 year olds who visit emergency rooms for self-inflicted cutting wounds at record levels. It is about 18-22 year olds reporting suicidal feelings at unprecedented rates. It is asking why a generation of people who have had it best feel so bad about what they are experiencing. This book is not about how a particular age group is ruining this country. It is about how this country is ruining an entire age group.

Since the book is so important, I plan on handling it in two separate issues of *Footnotes*. I think you'll enjoy my chat with Mac Sandlin about how he sees coddling all around him, particularly in his work as a university professor. Next issue will have a Roundtable with other experts who are witnessing the very things Haidt and Lukianoff describe.

Let's get to it. Thanks for reading *Footnotes*.



Footnotes Audio with Mac Sandlin: The Coddling of the American Mind

My conversation about *The Coddling of the American Mind* with Mac Sandlin.



Reach and Comfort Zones (RTL podcast)

Jeff Brown's [Read to Lead podcast](#) is one of the best for keeping up with trends and habits in leadership development. [This episode](#) features Andy Molinsky's advice on how to reach outside of your comfort zone, based on his book, [Reach](#).

Suggested Syllabi

One response to mass shootings, acts of police brutality, and violence against women has been the development of literary syllabi. These online resources feature reading materials that help people outside of a particular point of view understand some of the complexities found within it. In my judgment, these syllabi have been one of the most useful and effective outcomes of recent forms of activism. Here are a few:

- [#charlestonsyllabus](#)
- [#FergusonSyllabus](#)
- [Pulse Night Club Syllabus](#)
- [#MeToo #TimesUp #TBTN Syllabus](#)

A Few More Footnotes

- A tribute to the most generous man I've ever known: [Jack P. Lewis](#).
- [The most widely misread literary work](#).
- [Students learn more](#) using print textbooks than screens.
- Egyptians used [steep ramps](#) to erect pyramids.
- Jill Lepore on [her new history](#) of the United States and how she came to be the perfect person to write it.
- A bunch of cities left disappointed by Amazon's recent choice of NYC/DC for their HQ2 (good points [here](#)). If they want to get serious and fight back, maybe they should enlist the Antiquarian Booksellers Association, who [recently stood up to the world's top company](#).
- Apparently *MAD Magazine* still exists. It made its presence felt with this [recent take on shootings](#).
- [Why French kids don't have ADHD](#).
- "If it feels as though we no longer know how to speak or listen in good faith to one another, it's because we don't," says Thomas Chatterton Williams in his [NYT review](#) of *The Coddling of the American Mind*. John Warner of *Inside Higher Ed* wishes the authors would have taken a more systemic look at the conditions that have given birth to safetyism and some of the problems on campuses, including his proposal that the scarcity of 2008 collapse was a major player. [Laura Vanderkam](#) praises the book, but wishes the authors would have put forward more realistic suggestions.



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FOOTNOTES helps church leaders discover the resources that will improve and sustain their ministries. It will regularly feature interviews, book recommendations, site reviews, and editorials. It is a project of Bob Turner. You can direct any questions or feedback to rjturner@harding.edu. Complaints can be sent to his Juno account.

UPCOMING

December 3
The Coddling of the American Mind, Part 2

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