

## **BOOK**

*The Coddling of the American Mind*

## **AUTHOR**

Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt

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## **SYNOPSIS [FROM THE PUBLISHER]**

Lukianoff and Haidt investigate the many social trends that have intersected to promote the spread of these untruths. They explore changes in childhood such as the rise of fearful parenting, the decline of unsupervised, child-directed play, and the new world of social media that has engulfed teenagers in the last decade. They examine changes on campus, including the corporatization of universities and the emergence of new ideas about identity and justice. They situate the conflicts on campus within the context of America's rapidly rising political polarization and dysfunction.

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"This is a book about three Great Untruths that seem to have spread widely in recent years: The Untruth of Fragility: What doesn't kill you makes you weaker. The Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: Always trust your feelings. The Untruth of Us Versus Them: Life is a battle between good people and evil people."

"While many propositions are untrue, in order to be classified as a Great Untruth, an idea must meet three criteria: It contradicts ancient wisdom (ideas found widely in the wisdom literatures of many cultures). It contradicts modern psychological research on well-being. It harms the individuals and communities who embrace it."

"Teen anxiety, depression, and suicide rates have risen sharply in the last few years. The culture on many college campuses has become more ideologically uniform, compromising the ability of scholars to seek truth, and of students to learn from a broad range of thinkers."

"In years past, administrators were motivated to create campus speech codes in order to curtail what they deemed to be racist or sexist speech. Increasingly, however, the rationale for speech codes and speaker disinvitations was becoming medicalized: Students claimed that certain kinds of speech – and even the content of some books and courses – interfered with their ability to function. They wanted protection from material that they believed could jeopardize their mental health by "triggering" them, or making them "feel unsafe."

"What is new today is the premise that students are fragile. Even those who are not fragile themselves often believe that others are in danger and therefore need protection. There is no expectation that students will grow stronger from their encounters with speech or texts they label "triggering." (This is the Untruth of Fragility: What doesn't kill you makes you weaker.)"

"Students were beginning to demand protection from speech because they had unwittingly learned to employ the very cognitive distortions that CBT tries to correct. Stated simply: Many university students are learning to think in distorted ways, and this increases their likelihood of becoming fragile, anxious, and easily hurt."

"We submitted the article to The Atlantic with the title "Arguing Towards Misery: How Campuses Teach Cognitive Distortions." The editor, Don Peck, liked the article, helped us strengthen the argument, and then gave it a more succinct and provocative title: "The Coddling of the American Mind."

“In that article, we argued that many parents, K-12 teachers, professors, and university administrators have been unknowingly teaching a generation of students to engage in the mental habits commonly seen in people who suffer from anxiety and depression.”

“We have always been ambivalent about the word “coddling.” We didn’t like the implication that children today are pampered, spoiled, and lazy, because that is not accurate. Young people today – at a minimum, those who are competing for places at selective colleges – are under enormous pressure to perform academically and to build up a long list of extracurricular accomplishments.”

“So most kids don’t have easy, pampered childhoods. But as we’ll show in this book, adults are doing far more these days to protect children, and their overreach might be having some negative effects. Dictionary definitions of “coddle” emphasize this overprotection;”

“But overprotection is just one part of a larger trend that we call problems of progress. This term refers to bad consequences produced by otherwise good social changes.”

“That means seeking out challenges (rather than eliminating or avoiding everything that “feels unsafe”), freeing yourself from cognitive distortions (rather than always trusting your initial feelings), and taking a generous view of other people, and looking for nuance (rather than assuming the worst about people within a simplistic us-versus-them morality).”

“The story we tell is not simple, and while there are some heroes, there are no clear villains.”

“But it turns out that the harm was severe.<sup>3</sup> It was later discovered that peanut allergies were surging precisely because parents and teachers had started protecting children from exposure to peanuts back in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> In February 2015, an authoritative study<sup>5</sup> was published. The LEAP (Learning Early About Peanut Allergy) study was based on the hypothesis that “regular eating of peanut-containing products, when started during infancy, will elicit a protective immune response instead of an allergic immune reaction.”

“Among the children who had been “protected” from peanuts, 17% had developed a peanut allergy. In the group that had been deliberately exposed to peanut products, only 3% had developed an allergy. As one of the researchers said in an interview, “For decades allergists have been recommending that young infants avoid consuming allergenic foods such as peanut to prevent food allergies. Our findings suggest that this advice was incorrect and may have contributed to the rise in the peanut and other food allergies.”

“Human beings need physical and mental challenges and stressors or we deteriorate. For example, muscles and joints need stressors to develop properly. Too much rest causes muscles to atrophy, joints to lose range of motion, heart and lung function to decline, and blood clots to form.”

“In his 2007 best seller, *The Black Swan*, Taleb argued that most of us think about risk in the wrong way. In complex systems, it is virtually inevitable that unforeseen problems will arise, yet we persist in trying to calculate risk based on past experiences.”

“Taleb asks us to distinguish three kinds of things. Some, like china teacups, are fragile: they break easily and cannot heal themselves, so you must handle them gently and keep them away from toddlers. Other things are resilient: they can withstand shocks. Parents usually give their toddlers plastic cups precisely because plastic can survive repeated falls to the floor, although the cups do not benefit from such falls. But Taleb asks us to look beyond the overused word “resilience” and recognize that some things are antifragile. Many of the important systems in our economic and political life are like our immune systems: they require stressors and challenges in order to learn, adapt, and grow.”

“Just as spending a month in bed . . . leads to muscle atrophy, complex systems are weakened, even killed, when deprived of stressors. Much of our modern, structured, world has been harming us with top-down policies and contraptions . . . which do precisely this: an insult to the antifragility of systems. This is the tragedy of modernity: as with neurotically overprotective parents, those trying to help are often hurting us the most [emphasis added].”

“Taleb opens the book with a poetic image that should speak to all parents. He notes that wind extinguishes a candle but energizes a fire. He advises us not to be like candles and not to turn our children into candles: “You want to be the fire and wish for the wind.”

“There’s an old saying: “Prepare the child for the road, not the road for the child.” But these days, we seem to be doing precisely the opposite: we’re trying to clear away anything that might upset children, not realizing that in doing so, we’re repeating the peanut-allergy mistake.”

“Avoiding triggers is a symptom of PTSD, not a treatment for it.”

“A culture that allows the concept of “safety” to creep so far that it equates emotional discomfort with physical danger is a culture that encourages people to systematically protect one another from the very experiences embedded in daily life that they need in order to become strong and healthy.”

“Safety is good, of course, and keeping others safe from harm is virtuous, but virtues can become vices when carried to extremes.”

“First, members of iGen are “obsessed with safety,” as Twenge puts it, and define safety as including “emotional safety.” Their focus on “emotional safety” leads many of them to believe that, as Twenge describes, “one should be safe not just from car accidents and sexual assault but from people who disagree with you.”

“Today’s college students were raised by parents and teachers who had children’s best interests at heart but who often did not give them the freedom to develop their antifragility.”

“Children, like many other complex adaptive systems, are antifragile. Their brains require a wide range of inputs from their environments in order to configure themselves for those environments.”

“Concepts sometimes creep. Concepts like trauma and safety have expanded so far since the 1980s that they are often employed in ways that are no longer grounded in legitimate psychological research.”

“Safetyism is the cult of safety – an obsession with eliminating threats (both real and imagined) to the point at which people become unwilling to make reasonable trade-offs demanded by other practical and moral concerns.”

“Cognitive behavioral therapy was developed in the 1960s by Aaron Beck, a psychiatrist at the University of Pennsylvania.”

“Beck’s great discovery was that it is possible to break the disempowering feedback cycle between negative beliefs and negative emotions. If you can get people to examine these beliefs and consider counterevidence, it gives them at least some moments of relief from negative emotions, and if you release them from negative emotions, they become more open to questioning their negative beliefs.”

“With CBT, there is no need to spend years talking about one’s childhood. The evidence that CBT works is overwhelming.”

#### **EMOTIONAL REASONING:**

Letting your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. “I feel depressed; therefore, my marriage is not working out.”

#### **CATASTROPHIZING:**

Focusing on the worst possible outcome and seeing it as most likely. “It would be terrible if I failed.”

#### **OVERGENERALIZING:**

Perceiving a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident. “This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things.”

**DICHOTOMOUS THINKING** (also known variously as “black-and-white thinking,” “all-or-nothing thinking,” and “binary thinking”):

Viewing events or people in all-or-nothing terms. “I get rejected by everyone,” or “It was a complete waste of time.”

**MIND READING:**

Assuming that you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts. “He thinks I’m a loser.”

**LABELING:**

Assigning global negative traits to yourself or others (often in the service of dichotomous thinking). “I’m undesirable,” or “He’s a rotten person.”

**NEGATIVE FILTERING:**

You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. “Look at all of the people who don’t like me.”

**DISCOUNTING POSITIVES:**

Claiming that the positive things you or others do are trivial, so that you can maintain a negative judgment. “That’s what wives are supposed to do – so it doesn’t count when she’s nice to me,” or “Those successes were easy, so they don’t matter.”

**BLAMING:**

Focusing on the other person as the source of your negative feelings; you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself. “She’s to blame for the way I feel now,” or “My parents caused all my problems.”<sup>11</sup>

“As you read through that list of distortions, it’s easy to see how somebody who habitually thinks in such ways would develop schemas that revolve around maladaptive core beliefs, which interfere with realistic and adaptive interpretations of social situations.”

By Sue’s logic, however, CBT itself can be a microaggression, because it requires questioning the premises and assumptions that give rise to feelings.

More generally, the microaggression concept<sup>19</sup> reveals a crucial moral change on campus: the shift from “intent” to “impact.” In moral judgment as it has long been studied by psychologists, intent is essential for assessing guilt.

“Hanna Holborn Gray, the president of the University of Chicago from 1978 to 1993, once offered this principle: ‘Education should not be intended to make people comfortable; it is meant to make them think.’”

“Among the most universal psychological insights in the world’s wisdom traditions is that what really frightens and dismays us is not external events themselves but the way in which we think about them, as Epictetus put it.”

“There is a principle in philosophy and rhetoric called the principle of charity, which says that one should interpret other people’s statements in their best, most reasonable form, not in the worst or most offensive way possible.”

“It’s as though some of the students had their own mental prototype, a schema with two boxes to fill: victim and oppressor. Everyone is placed into one box or the other.”

“The bottom line is that the human mind is prepared for tribalism.”

“Tribalism is our evolutionary endowment for banding together to prepare for intergroup conflict.”

“Any kind of intergroup conflict (real or perceived) immediately turns tribalism up, making people highly attentive to signs that reveal which team another person is on. Traitors are punished, and fraternizing with the enemy is, too. Conditions of peace and prosperity, in contrast, generally turn down the tribalism.”

“King’s approach made it clear that his movement would not destroy America; it would repair and reunite it.”

“Someone who accepts this framing – that the right is powerful (and therefore oppressive) while the left is weak (and therefore oppressed) – might be receptive to the argument that indiscriminate tolerance is bad. In its place, liberating tolerance, Marcuse explained, “would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.”

“But why does this vision continue to flourish fifty years after the publication of “Repressive Tolerance,” in a country that has made enormous progress on extending civil rights to groups that did not have them in 1965, and in an educational system that cannot be said to be controlled by the right? Even if Marcuse’s arguments made sense to many people in 1965, can his ideas be justified on campus today?”

“Intersectionality is a theory based on several insights that we believe are valid and useful: power matters, members of groups sometimes act cruelly or unjustly to preserve their power, and people who are members of multiple identity groups can face various forms of disadvantage in ways that are often invisible to others. The point of using the terminology of “intersectionalism,” as Crenshaw said in her 2016 TED Talk, is that “where there’s no name for a problem, you can’t see a problem, and when you can’t see a problem, you pretty much can’t solve it.”

“(Virtue signaling refers to the things people say and do to advertise that they are virtuous. This helps them stay within the good graces of their team.)”

“Taken at face value, the author seems to be engaging in a number of cognitive distortions. The most evident is catastrophizing: If Milo Yiannopoulos is allowed to speak, there will be “broken bodies” on our side. I might lose my “right to exist.” Therefore, violence is justified, because it is self-defense. The author also engages in dichotomous thinking: If you condemn my side’s violence, that means you condone Yiannopoulos’s ideas. You must “pick a side.” You’re either with us or against us. Life is a battle between good people and evil people, and if you disagree with us, you’re one of the evil people.”

“Jones then delivered some of the best advice for college students we have ever heard. He rejected the Untruth of Fragility and turned safetyism on its head: I don’t want you to be safe ideologically. I don’t want you to be safe emotionally. I want you to be strong. That’s different. I’m not going to pave the jungle for you. Put on some boots, and learn how to deal with adversity. I’m not going to take all the weights out of the gym; that’s the whole point of the gym. This is the gym.”

“The most famous witch hunt in U.S. history occurred in Salem, Massachusetts. In January of 1692, two young girls began to suffer from fits and tremors, which their elders attributed to witchcraft. In the following months, dozens of people claimed that they were tormented by witches or that they or their animals had been bewitched. Legal action was taken against at least 144 people (38 of them male) who were accused of practicing witchcraft. Nineteen were executed by hanging; one was crushed by heavy stones.”

“Bergesen notes that there are three features common to most political witch hunts: they arise very quickly, they involve charges of crimes against the collective, and the offenses that lead to charges are often trivial or fabricated. Here’s how Bergesen puts it: They arise quickly: “Witch-hunts seem to appear in dramatic outbursts; they are not a regular feature of social life. A community seems to suddenly find itself infested with all sorts of subversive elements which pose a threat to the collectivity as a whole. Whether one thinks of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, the Stalinist Show Trials, or the McCarthy period in the United States, the phenomenon is the same: a community becomes intensely mobilized to rid itself of internal enemies.”<sup>10</sup> Crimes against the collective: “The various charges that appear during one of these witch-hunts involve accusations of crimes committed against the nation as a corporate whole. It is the whole of collective existence that is at stake; it is The Nation, The People, The Revolution, or The State which is being undermined and subverted.”<sup>11</sup> Charges are often trivial or fabricated: “These crimes and deviations seem to involve the most petty and insignificant behavioral acts which are somehow understood as crimes against the nation as a whole. In fact, one of the principal reasons we term these events ‘witch-hunts’ is that innocent people are so often involved and falsely accused.”

“To Bergesen’s list we’ll add a fourth feature, which necessarily follows from the first three: Fear of defending the accused: When a public accusation is made, many friends and bystanders know that the victim is innocent, but they are afraid to say anything. Anyone who comes to the defense of the accused is obstructing the enactment of a collective ritual. Siding with the accused is truly an offense against the group, and it will be treated as such. If passions and fears are intense enough, people will even testify against their friends and family members.”

“It is no surprise that, on the whole, professors lean left. So do artists, poets, and people who love to watch foreign movies. One of the strongest personality correlates of left-wing politics is the trait of openness to experience, a trait that describes people who crave new ideas and experiences and who tend to be interested in changing traditional arrangements.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, members of the military, law enforcement personnel, and students who have well-organized dorm rooms tend to lean right. (Seriously. You can guess people’s political leanings at better-than-chance levels just from photographs of their desks.)<sup>41</sup> Social conservatives tend to be lower on openness to experience and higher on conscientiousness – they prefer things to be orderly and predictable, they are more likely to show up on time for meetings, and they are more likely to see the value of traditional arrangements.”

“Cohesive and morally homogeneous groups are prone to witch hunts, particularly when they experience a threat, whether from outside or from within. Witch hunts generally have four properties: they seem to come out of nowhere; they involve charges of crimes against the collective; the offenses that lead to those charges are often trivial or fabricated; and people who know that the accused is innocent keep quiet, or in extreme cases, they join the mob.”

“In Part III, we present six interacting explanatory threads: rising political polarization and cross-party animosity; rising levels of teen anxiety and depression; changes in parenting practices; the decline of free play; the growth of campus bureaucracy; and a rising passion for justice in response to major national events, combined with changing ideas about what justice requires. We believe that it is impossible to understand the state of higher education today without understanding all six. Before we present these threads, however, we must make two points explicitly and emphatically.”

“Play is essential for wiring a mammal’s brain to create a functioning adult. Mammals that are deprived of play won’t develop to their full capacity. In one experiment demonstrating this effect, rat pups were raised in one of three conditions: (1) totally alone in a cage; (2) alone except for one hour a day with a normal, playful young rat, during which time normal rough-and-tumble play occurred; and (3) same as condition 2, except that the visiting young rat was treated with a drug that knocked out rough-and-tumble play while leaving other social behaviors, such as sniffing and nuzzling. When the young rats were later put into new situations, those that had engaged in rough-and-tumble play showed fewer signs of fearfulness and engaged in more exploration of the new environment.”

“Gray notes the tendency of kids to introduce danger and risk into outdoor free play, such as when they climb walls and trees, or skateboard down staircases and railings: They seem to be dosing themselves with moderate degrees of fear, as if deliberately learning how to deal with both the physical and emotional challenges of the moderately dangerous conditions they generate. . . . All such activities are fun to the degree that they are moderately frightening. If too little fear is induced, the activity is boring; if too much is induced, it becomes no longer play but terror. Nobody but the child himself or herself knows the right dose.”

“Why is this happening? Why have we deprived kids of the healthiest forms of play and given them more homework and more supervision instead? One of the major reasons for the decline of all forms of unsupervised outdoor activity is, of course, the unrealistic media-amplified fear of abduction, which we described in the previous chapter. In one large survey, published in 2004, 85% of mothers said that their children played outdoors less frequently than they themselves had played when they were the same age.”

“But there’s a second reason, a second fear that haunts American parents and children – particularly those in the middle class and above – far more than it did in the late twentieth century: the college admissions process.”

“Kindergarten in 1979 was devoted mostly to social interaction and self-directed play, with some instruction in art, music, numbers, and the alphabet thrown in. Erika Christakis notes that kindergarten classrooms would have been organized to build social relationships and facilitate hands-on exploration (such as with blocks or Lincoln Logs) and imaginative and symbolic play (such as a store or housekeeping corner with props and costumes). Back then, kindergarten, which for most children was a half day, probably looked more like what passes for a progressive preschool today, consisting of “open-ended free play, snack, singing songs with rhyming words for a little oral language exposure, a story, maybe an art project and some sorting games or block building for math awareness.”<sup>24</sup> Today, kindergarten is much more structured and sedentary, with children spending more time sitting at their desks and receiving direct instruction in academic subjects – known as the “drill and skill” method of instruction, but that teachers not-so-affectionately call “drill and kill.”

“For children of many educated parents with means, instead of afternoons and weekends spent hanging out with friends or resting, that nonschool time is increasingly used to cultivate skills that will allow those children to stand out later on in the college admissions game.”

### **1. Prepare the Child for the Road, Not the Road for the Child**

Assume that your kids are more capable this month than they were last month. Each month, ask them what tasks or challenges they think they can do on their own – such as walking to a store a few blocks away, making their own breakfast, or starting a dog-walking business. Resist the urge to jump in and help them when they’re struggling to do things and seem to be doing them the wrong way. Trial and error is a slower but usually better teacher than direct instruction. Let your kids take more small risks, and let them learn from getting some bumps and bruises. Children need opportunities to “dose themselves” with risk, as Peter Gray noted. Jon’s kids love the “junkyard playground”<sup>5</sup> on Governor’s Island, in New York City. It lets children play with construction materials, including scrap lumber, hammers, and nails (after the parents sign a long liability waiver). On their first visit, Jon watched from outside the fence as two ten-year-old boys pounded nails into lumber. One of the boys accidentally hit his thumb with the hammer. The boy winced, shook his hand out, and went right back to pounding nails. This happened twice and did not deter the boy. He learned how to hammer nails. Learn about Lenore Skenazy’s Free-Range Kids movement, and incorporate her lessons into your family’s life. Remember the first-grade readiness checklist from 1979 that asked whether your six-year-old can “travel alone in the neighborhood (four to eight blocks) to store, school, playground, or to a friend’s home?” Start letting your kids walk places and play outside as soon as you think they are able. Send them out with siblings or friends. Tell them it’s OK to talk to strangers and ask for help or directions, just never go off with a stranger. Remember that the crime rate is back down to where it was in the early 1960s.

### **2. Your Worst Enemy Cannot Harm You as Much as Your Own Thoughts, Unguarded**

Teach children the basics of CBT. CBT stands for “cognitive behavioral therapy,” but in many ways it’s really just “cognitive behavioral techniques,” because the intellectual habits it teaches are good for everyone. Parents can teach children the basics of CBT at any age, starting with something as simple as getting in the habit of letting children watch parents talk back to their own exaggerated thoughts. A technique Greg learned involves practicing hearing his anxious and doomsaying automatic thoughts as if they are being said in funny voices, like Elmer Fudd’s or Daffy Duck’s.

### **3. The Line Dividing Good and Evil Cuts Through the Heart of Every Human Being**

Give people the benefit of the doubt. Use the “principle of charity.” This is the principle in philosophy and rhetoric of making an effort to interpret other people’s statements in their best or most reasonable form, not in the worst or most offensive way possible.

Practice the virtue of “intellectual humility.” Intellectual humility is the recognition that our reasoning is so flawed, so prone to bias, that we can rarely be certain that we are right. For kids in middle or high school, find the TED Talk titled “On Being Wrong.”

Look very carefully at how your school handles identity politics. Does it look and sound like the common-humanity identity politics we described in chapter 3? Or is it more like common-enemy identity politics, which encourages kids to see one another not as individuals but as exemplars of groups, some of which are good, some bad?

### **4. Help Schools to Oppose the Great Untruths**

Discourage the use of the word “safe” or “safety” for anything other than physical safety. One of Jon’s friends recently forwarded to him an email that a third-grade teacher sent to parents about recess and about children forming “clubs.” (Kids who played together at recess were not allowing “nonmembers” to join in.) Reasonable minds can disagree about the wisdom of compelling kids to be inclusive at recess, but the last line of the email alarmed Jon: “We are thinking about how everyone at recess can feel safe and included.” This is the seed of safetyism. It is painful to feel excluded, and it is good for the teacher to use kids’ exclusion as a basis for discussion to help kids reflect on why inclusion is good. But the pain of occasional exclusion doesn’t make kids unsafe.

Cultivate the intellectual virtues. The intellectual virtues are the qualities necessary to be a critical thinker and an effective learner. They include curiosity, open-mindedness, and intellectual humility.

### **5. Limit and Refine Device Time**

Aristotle often evaluated a thing with respect to its “telos” – its purpose, end, or goal. The telos of a knife is to cut. A knife that does not cut well is not a good knife. The telos of a physician is health or healing. A physician who cannot heal is not a good physician. What is the telos of a university? The most obvious answer is “truth” – the word appears on so many university crests. For example, Veritas (“truth”) appears on Harvard’s crest, and Lux et Veritas (“light and truth”) appears on Yale’s. If we allow the word “knowledge” as a close relative of truth, then we take in many more university mottos, such as the University of Chicago’s, which, translated from Latin, is “Let knowledge grow from more to more; and so be human life enriched.” (Even the fictional Faber College in the movie *Animal House* had the motto “Knowledge is good.”)<sup>1</sup>

If the telos of a university is truth, then a university that fails to add to humanity’s growing body of knowledge, or that fails to transmit the best of that knowledge to its students, is not a good university. If scholars do not advance the frontiers of knowledge within their disciplines, or if they betray the truth to satisfy other goals (such as accumulating wealth or advancing an ideology), then they are not good scholars.

### **1. Entwine Your Identity With Freedom of Inquiry**

Endorse the Chicago Statement.

Establish a practice of not responding to public outrage.

Do not allow the “heckler’s veto.” University presidents must make it clear that nobody has the right to prevent a fellow member of the community from attending or hearing a lecture.

### **2. Pick the Best Mix of People for the Mission**

Admit more students who are older and can show evidence of their ability to live independently.

### **3. Orient and Educate for Productive Disagreement**

Explicitly reject the Untruth of Fragility: What doesn’t kill you makes you weaker.

Explicitly reject the Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: Always trust your feelings.

Explicitly reject the Untruth of Us Versus Them: Life is a battle between good people and evil people.

### **4. Draw a Larger Circle Around the Community**

Foster school spirit.

Protect physical safety.

Host civil, cross-partisan events for students.

### **Five questions alumni, parents, college counselors, and prospective students should ask universities:**

What steps do you take (if any) to teach incoming students about academic freedom and free inquiry before they take their first classes?

How would you handle a demand that a professor be fired because of an opinion he or she expressed in an article or interview, which other people found deeply offensive?

What would your institution do if a controversial speaker were scheduled to speak, and large protests that included credible threats of violence were planned?

How is your institution responding to the increase in students who suffer from anxiety and depression?

What does your university do to foster a sense of shared identity?

Look for answers that indicate that the institution has a high tolerance for vigorous disagreement but no tolerance for violence or intimidation. Look for answers that indicate a presumption that students are antifragile, combined with the recognition that many students today need support as they work toward emotional growth. Look for answers that indicate that the institution tries to draw an encompassing circle around its members, within which differences can more productively be explored.