



Four Corners Press

## ON PURPOSE BEFORE TWENTY by Adam Cox

Why does the literature of childhood focus on what is a responsibility or worry to others? Drawing upon clinical practice and interviews with students from around the world, psychologist Adam Cox defies this “cultural adultism” to offer a compelling new narrative about childhood priorities, adolescent angst and the work of schools. He declares these topics to be worthy of serious consideration, and children as fascinating and complex as any other age group with respect to their attitudes and understanding of what a good and purposeful life implies. Cox’s powerful examination of youth culture and education is engaging, iconoclastic, and original:

“George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is a novel of vocation...She understood that finding purposeful, fulfilling work is fundamental to giving life meaning, and she has us judge her characters in part based on how successful they are at doing it. Psychologist Adam Cox begins his recent book, *On Purpose Before Twenty*, with the same understanding, writing: “The primary missing ingredient in the lives of young people—the opportunity that separates them from a sense of personal accomplishment, maturity, and resilience—is purposeful work’.... Cox argues that this attitude is not a whining sense of entitlement, but a valid form of rebellion.”

*- Paula Marantz Cohen, The American Scholar*

“A fascinating and deeply moving account...His focus is on "life purposes" -or, as he puts it, work. It's a powerful examination on the impact of disrespecting work, viewing it as "necessary" but unworthy of high ideals. It goes well alongside Mike Rose's *Minds at Work*. “

*- Deborah Meier, McArthur Award winner, Founder, Coalition of Essential Schools, NYU Steinhardt School Senior Scholar*

“Rich in ideas for teachers to read, consider and reflect upon as we consider today's young learner -it's a book of essays that just might help shift thinking about who it is we are teaching!” *-Linda Gibson-Langford, Journal of the School Library Association NSW*

*On Purpose Before Twenty* presents a series of provocative, engaging essays: *The Purpose of Work*, *Sovereign Minds*, *The Case for Boredom*, *On Monstrous Children*, *Being Harry Potter*, and *School as Wisdom Culture*. How do we provide an education relevant to the concerns and priorities of youth? What is the purpose of school? Is ADHD the new “normal?” Examining these questions, Cox addresses how the next generation is radically different in terms of motivation, communication, and vocational perspectives. He suggests that knowing one's purpose is as important as a good education and loving parents. His book echoes a fundamental belief that our serious regard for the potential of young people makes the world a more welcoming place for them. It is as much an essential form of stewardship as protecting forests, and creatures living on the brink of extinction.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Adam Cox, PhD, is a licensed, board-certified clinical psychologist. As a consultant and lecturer on child development, and author of a global school-based research project, he has visited hundreds of schools and organizations in the U.S., Canada, U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Africa. His books about the emotional and cognitive development of school-age children include *No Mind Left Behind: Understanding and Fostering Executive Control – The Eight Essential Brain Skills Every Child Needs to Thrive* and *Boys of Few Words: Raising Our Sons to Communicate and Connect*. His work has been translated into multiple languages, and his commentary on youth and education has appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The New Atlantis*, and *Newsweek*. Along with writing and clinical work, he runs a small blueberry farm in New England with his wife and son.

### About Adam Cox's previous books:

“Important, insightful, and timely.” – *Mary Pipher, PhD, author of Reviving Ophelia*

“A wonderful source of practical wisdom...There is no better book offering humane, clinically informed, valuable advice in this essential area.” – *Simon Baron-Cohen, PhD, author of The Essential Difference*

“Dr. Cox is onto something important...Parents and teachers, pay attention!” – *Jane Healy, PhD, author of Endangered Minds*

*On Purpose Before Twenty*

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One of the essays in this collection, “*The Case for Boredom*,” first appeared in *The New Atlantis*.

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