



photo by Bruce Weber

*Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed. - Michael Jordan*

UCSF's Young Adult and Family Center is comprised of a group of doctors and researchers who dedicate themselves to helping young people become their very finest selves, with a deep love of life, an abiding connection to others and a desire to pursue environmental and social justice. Gritgeneration.com is an outgrowth of this dedication.

At UCSF we find that grit is the essential element that allows young people to persist in the face of obstacles. Grit comes through passion, perseverance and stamina. The mission of gritgeneration.com is to create an on-line mentorship program to help young adults discover their own grit. We strongly believe grit is proactively cultivated in adolescents and young adults through education, character development, citizenship, good health, and a strong connection to the environment.

Gritgeneration.com draws from our own research at UCSF's Young Adult & Family Center, as well as from other outstanding and rigorous research that exists in our field. We create highly readable, engaging and accessible content to directly appeal to young adults. We give young people practical exercises to cultivate wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence.

The site is divided into six sections: **About Me, Winning Friendships, Modern Love, Occupy Nature, Weathering Storms, Collective Grit.**

# ABOUT ME

## CHARLIE SIEM, CONCERT VIOLINIST

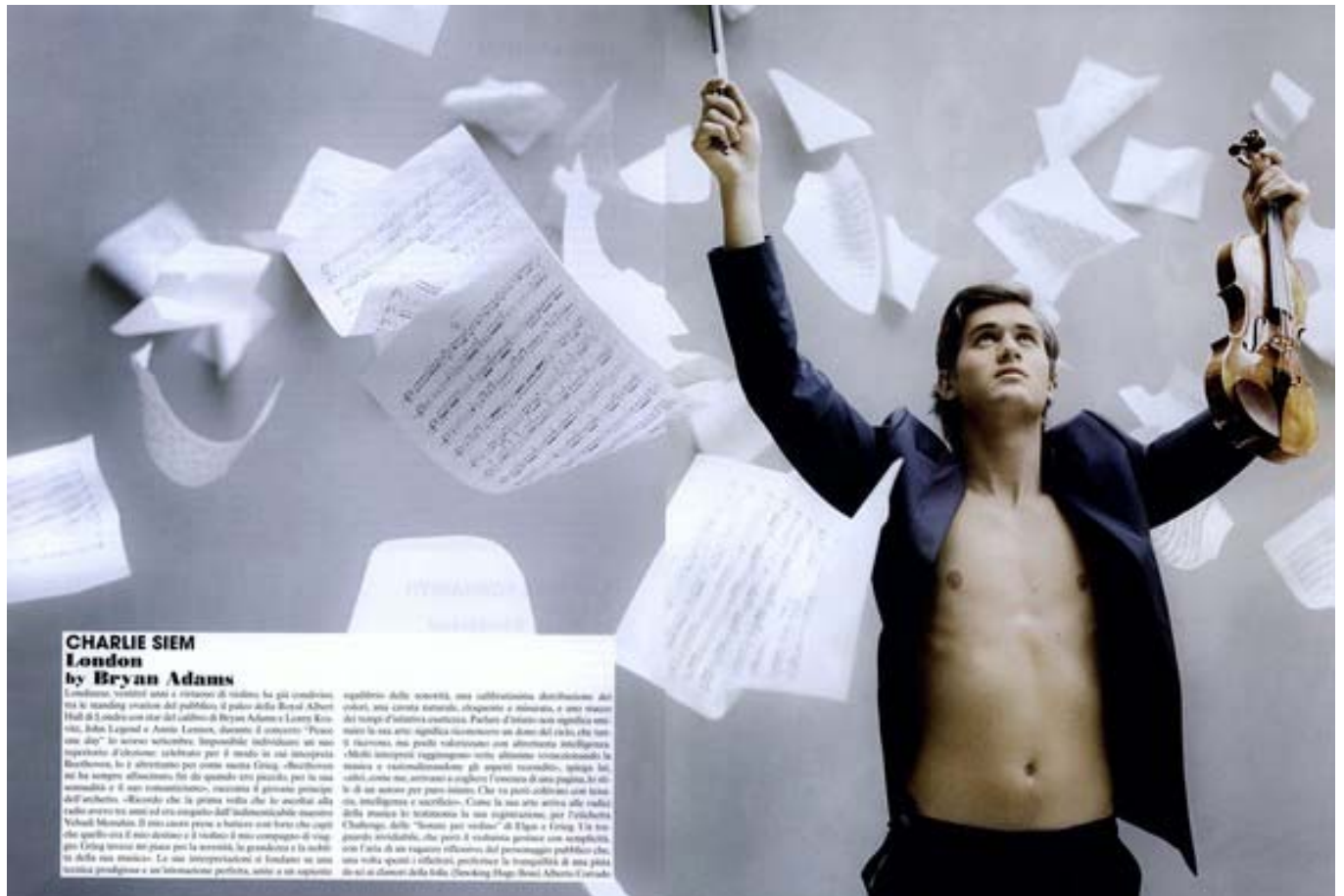


photo by Bryan Adams Charlie Siem

*Well, I am not a crusader by any means. I do what I do and I try to do it as best as I can. I am stimulated by constantly challenging myself and doing things differently to how I did them previously. At the moment that is all that concerns me. – Charlie Siem*

*I believe, however, that people of my generation simply haven't been exposed enough to classical music and the wizardry of violin-playing! I think that when they make this discovery they will find a new dimension that will enrich them enormously. – Charlie Siem*

*That's the only thing I lived for -- to become this person, to be exactly like this ballerina.*  
Michaela DePrince

**MICHAELA DePRINCE, PRINCIPAL DANCER, American Ballet Theater**



photo by Arthur Elgort Michaela DePrince

*Remember, I was only four years old and lived in abject poverty, so I was most influenced by her luxurious costume and pink satin shoes. (She is speaking of a photo of a ballerina she keeps, even now.)*  
*However, I also was fascinated by the fact that she was standing on pointe, so I spent a lot of time trying to walk on the tips of my little bare toes. - Michaela DePrince*

*The documentary film, FIRST POSITION, gave me an opportunity to speak out and dispel the myths that people sometimes have about black dancers in classical ballet. It also gave me a chance to show that young ballet dancers don't all starve themselves, and that the struggle to achieve is often painful. – Michaela DePrince*

An abundance of new research on how adolescent and emerging young adult brains work demonstrates that their brains are continually developing, pruning synapses, and insulating neurons to build turbocharged learning machines. By an understanding of their brainpower, as well as their capacity to internally generate beliefs, values, identity and social relations, young adults can form composite portraits of who they are as their “best selves”.

For instance, stereotype barriers adversely hijack young adults academic motivation. We know that African Americans and women in math and science believe their intelligence is immutable, and their assets are limited. These assumptions allow them little room for constructive growth. This stereotype hijacking needs to be countered. In academic settings, recent research indicates that a young adult who feels the most minimal cues of social connection to another person or group robustly increases that individual’s intrinsic achievement motivation. Discovering the many facets of identity means cultivating and refining the groups with whom you associate, discovering passions and finding strengths that honor individual differences. Adolescents and emerging young adults who encounter research, such as the study above, and personal narratives (both written and visual) have opportunities to reflect and reframe their assumptions. They are then able to discern that these stereotypes are insidious and influence their friends, their goals and their confidence to achieve. Great writers are made, not born. Business leaders are made, not born. Great scientists are made, not born. We encourage adolescents and young adults to value their individuality and maintain friendships with others who share similar beliefs and values. We validate them as thinkers and as burgeoning scholars.

Too often college choices and the decisions not to attend college occur in young adults because of misinformation or lack of information on applying to appropriate schools and financial assistance that is available. Feelings by young adults that they “do not fit in” or cannot afford to continue their education lead to a higher number of high school dropouts and students who fail to complete a four-year college program. Compassionate, thoughtful and intelligent insights on [gritgeneration.com](http://gritgeneration.com) from counselors, admission directors, financial aid directors at colleges and universities, and students attending college provide much needed resources for emerging young adults and their families. Online academic advising is a key venue through which educators from around the country may engage emerging young adults in critical thinking about their choices and encourage them to enroll in schools where they feel a strong and stable sense of belonging and community support.

Our objective is to instill in young adults the knowledge that excellent educational experiences are easily accessible, very affordable and extremely rewarding. Opportunities for higher education abound. Ongoing guidance, academic supports, as well as financial assistance, are readily available for emerging young adults from all backgrounds. In a vibrant campus community, students develop an internally defined sense of self and this prepares them personally and intellectually for lifelong learning.

The Character Strengths Cultivated in **ABOUT ME** are as follows:

- Love of Learning: Learning the truth about ability and accomplishment, surrounding oneself with a group with similar beliefs and values, seeking academic challenges and thriving on them
- Creativity: Realizing that you have creative DNA
- Curiosity: Taking an interest in exploring and discovering
- Perseverance: Learning to persist in attaining goals in spite of obstacles or setbacks
- Love: Learning to love oneself in spite of oneself
- Kindness: Finding ways to treat oneself with care and compassion
- Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of oneself and others; knowing what to do in different situations
- Fairness: Not letting personal feelings bias decisions
- Self-Regulation: Regulating how one thinks, feels and acts
- Zest: Approaching life and learning with genuine joy
- Gratitude: Being aware and thankful for the good things that happen
- Humor: Cultivating one's own playfulness and collecting humor

## WINNING FRIENDSHIPS

**A group of Princeton University classmates stands arm in arm as President Shirley M. Tilghman officially confers their degrees in Latin.**



photo by Denis Applewhite

*Be careful the friends you choose for you will become like them. - W. Clement Stone*

*Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend. – Albert Camus*

*The glory of friendship is not in the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is in the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him. – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*I get by with a little help from my friends. - John Lennon*



Gritgeneration.com encourages young people to create a close network of friends and peers. These friends lend legitimacy to young adults ideas and goals, as well as provide the social support to help attain them. In high school, adolescents and emerging young adults tend to live up to, or down to, the goals and academic motivation within their immediate social circles. We encourage them to broaden these circles, to collaborate with others, to act ethically and wisely, and to seek friends who hold high life aspirations.

Androgynous hipsters, hip indies, indie artists, artistic punks, punk rockers, rocking minimalists, minimalistic lesbians, built athletes, athletic preps, preppy overachievers, overachieving naturalists, natural beauties, beautiful minds, mindless egos, egoistic super humans, super humanistic philosophers, philosophizing sophomores, sophomoric humorists – every friendship is based on one's personal identity and choice.

We promote college because it is an environment populated with emerging young adults on the brink of self-discovery. For four years, young adults are exposed to diverse thinkers and scholarship. They learn to walk in other people's shoes through classes, professors and the openness of the campus environment. Take a group of emerging young adults, put them in the same place for two years or four years where they must study, laugh and play together, and they discover their passions and share them together. The bonds of lifelong friendships naturally form.

The Character Strengths developed in **WINNING FRIENDSHIPS** are as follows:

- Honesty: Speaking the truth and acting with sincerity in all relationships.
- Kindness: Doing favors and good deeds for others, helping friends and peers.
- Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feeling of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different situations and knowing what makes other people tick.
- Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to friends; doing one's share
- Collective Learning: Solving problems in engaged learning groups
- Collective Play: Engaging in recreational and team sports
- Fairness: Not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
- Bravery: Speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition
- Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than others
- Zest: Approaching friends and life with excitement and joy

## MODERN ROMANCE



photo by Patrick Demarchelier

*Much love much trial, but what an utter desert is life without it. – Charles Darwin*

*To love is to suffer. To avoid suffering one must not love. But then one suffers from not loving. Therefore to love is to suffer, not to love is to suffer. To suffer is to suffer. To be happy is to love. To be happy then is to suffer. But suffering makes one unhappy. Therefore, to be unhappy one must love, or love to suffer, or suffer from too much happiness. I hope you're getting this down. – Woody Allen*



photo by Mario Testino

While emerging young adults may find information on birth control and sage advice on the benefits of knowing how to correctly “put on” a condom, what they don’t find is a guidebook on lust and love. There are so many misconceptions, about the lines between lust and love. In other words, what’s a hook up anyway, just a one-time thing, or the real thing? It’s clear that teens really want to hook up. And they do.

More than one half of many non-dating sexual adolescents and emerging young adults have the same hopes and expectations from “hook ups” as do adolescents and emerging young adults involved in romantic relationships. Amongst females surveyed from the age of 18-24 who had their first sexual experience before age 20, 41% of them really wanted it to happen then. The percent of boys who had sex before age 20 and really wanted it to happen at the time was 63%. The percent of never-married teenagers between the ages of 15-19 who have had intercourse at least once was 43%.

Far too often adolescents and emerging young adults leap into intimate encounters with great expectations for a romantic relationship only to realize that a hook up is, well, just a hook up. Researchers know that intense changes occur in the nature of intimate relationships by age 17.

These changes are a function of age and maturity. Romantic relationships at one point (adolescence) often are hook-ups that emerge from lust, whereas romantic relationships at a different time-point (emerging adulthood) are more likely to flourish into significant relationships that involve love, trust and respect. If young adults want love, we might encourage them to wait.

By their late teens, most emerging young adults are able to enter into intimate relationships. Emerging young adults (ages 17-25) have a much more positive first experience because they know themselves better, trust their partner, and have established a network of social supports including their family to whom they can turn. If the relationship ends, both men and women feel less guilt, anxiety and regret.

Sex is a wonderful extension of the playfulness and adventure, kindness and reciprocity that increases in saliency with age. The longing glances lead to introspective conversations. Two people who have no secrets from each other have very open and honest talks where they lay bare their fragile souls. Hopes for the future, aspirations and birth control are part of the dialogues. Passionate love increases with age and so do breakups. However, as young adults grow older, they become increasingly more resilient.

We believe an interesting approach to sexual education is based on character strengths. By creating strength building exercises and activities that promote healthy, responsible and compassionate choices and strategies to use when faced with temptations, distractions, and frustrations, adolescents and young adults can figure a lot out for themselves.

The Character Strengths developed in **MODERN ROMANCE** are as follows:

- Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated
- Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions
- Social Intelligence: Being aware of one's motives and feelings and the motives and feelings of another
- Self- Regulation: Regulating what one feels and does
- Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the person in one's life
- Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks
- Teamwork: Working as a member of a team to better one another
- Forgiveness: Accepting the shortcomings of another; giving a partner a second chance, not being vengeful
- Zest: Sharing excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly
- Humor: Playfulness; bringing a smile to another person

# OCCUPY NATURE



photo by Arthur Elgort

*If everything had already been done, there would be nothing left for young people to accomplish. There are always going to be people who run faster, jump higher, dive deeper, and come up drier. – Darrell Royal*

*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy. - John Muir, on the importance of Natural Parks*

*What would the world be, once bereft  
Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,  
O let them be left, wildness and wet;  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet. – George Manley Hopkins*

*You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf – John Kabot-Zinn*



photo by Ben Moon

“Taking to the streets” or the ocean changes a young person’s world, adds new dimension to the quest for adventure and a healthy life. Just how far can the human body be pushed? Just what are the limits? What can young adults’ bodies actually do?

We believe they certainly can dive deep and climb high. With newer technology to maximize safety in adventure sports, we believe everyone can push their physical boundaries in positively focused fun, where artistic expression and inclusiveness of others rule. We offer sublime film footage and images of action sports in order to inspire adolescents and emerging young adults to get chin deep in powder, discover a mountain to climb or waves to tackle. Windsurfing, surfing, whitewater kayaking, snowboarding, extreme skiing, Eco-challenge, climbing, mountain biking, skateboarding, running and biking the streets are fresh, thrilling and challenging activities.

Physical fitness in an uncontrived atmosphere of adventure and play allows emerging young adults the opportunities to develop, expand and refine their abilities. Occupying nature increases young adults self-confidence, establishes health behaviors and decreases anxiety and depression. Surmounting manageable “unknowns” in nature gives adolescents and emerging young adults the strength to surmount future unknowns in life. Peak experiences provide moments of transcendent joy, beauty and peace. Adolescents and emerging young adults return from nature with a renewed sense that the world is alive, whole, enchanting and meaningful. Research links learning, creating, and producing to positive and direct experience with nature.

**Healthy and sustainable eating is also a key component of Occupy Nature.**

The Character Strengths developed in **OCCUPY NATURE** are as follows:

- Creativity: Finding self-expression in nature
- Curiosity: Discovering fascination in environments that are engaging
- Love of Learning: Mastering new skills in outdoor sports and cooking
- Teamwork: Creating a sense of community and intimacy with a group
- Prudence: Not taking undo risks – on the ski slope or in the kitchen
- Humility: Allowing nature to offer humility
- Perseverance: Taking pleasure in surmounting new challenges
- Zest: Discovering the sense of feeling alive
- Gratitude: Being grateful for living in the moment
- Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Experiencing the beauty of nature in a deeply moving way
- Spirituality: Knowing where one fits in the larger scheme of a meaningful life

## WEATHERING STORMS

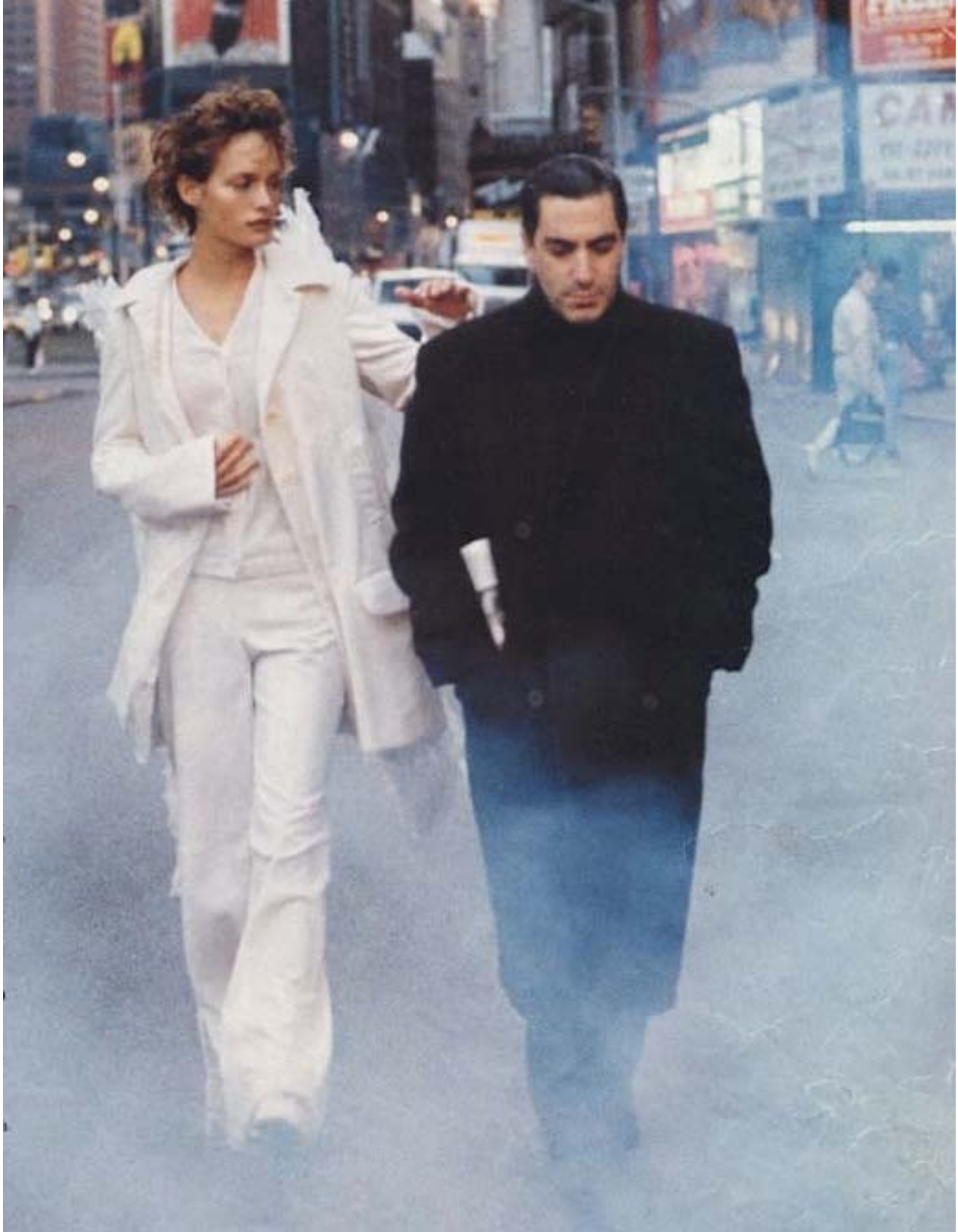


photo by Peter Lindbergh

*Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is perhaps, the end of the beginning. Winston Churchill*



photo by Peter Lindbergh

*If the sky above you  
Grows dark and full of clouds  
And that old north wind begins to blow  
Keep you head together  
And call my name out loud  
Soon you'll hear me knocking at you door*

*You just call out my name  
And you know wherever I am  
I'll come running to see you again  
Winter, spring, summer or fall  
All you have to do is call  
And I'll be there – Carole King*

Reinventing the world in the aftermath of periods of true trauma and stress is a journey. Yet, more and more literature reveals that life sprouts and grows in remarkable, transformative ways from a diversity of incidents of trauma and stress - including illness, sexual assault, military combat and terrorist attacks.

Despite the variety of traumatic events, resilience in many adolescents and young adults emerges, and they grow in self-perception, in their relationships and in their priorities. When they realize their numerous strengths, young adults often discover a profound sense of self

and the confidence that accompanies self-discovery. Healthy relationships strengthen as young adults realize the unexpected tenderness and the moral force of family and friends. They realize they can alter their priorities and view life's greater possibilities.

Researchers believe that those who find a sense of existential or spiritual mooring or draw something true and hopeful out of the horror and grief, view their new surroundings with inspiration despite disturbing memories. They successfully achieve a broadening outlook that is quite a life force.

### **The Words To Say It**

*I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see, and what it means. What I want and what I fear. - Joan Didion*

To escape from the evocative shadows, the inner life of ghosts that brush their wings over young peoples' faces, we believe one can never underestimate the powerful and transformative force of narrative. Simply finding the words to say it and write or disclose the event or events on paper allows the mind to help identify confusion and make sense of the chaos involved in the memories. The connection between saying the words and processing the events seems to uniquely allow the mind to cross paths with events that during waking hours are kept at a great and wary distance. The mind literally stops playing mind games. Memories can bring great sadness, but the emotional torture subsides.

The Character Strengths developed in **WEATHERING STORMS** are as follows:

- Bravery: Not shrinking from a challenge or difficulty; acting on convictions
- Creativity: Thinking of novel ways to take on a new life
- Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and other people
- Perseverance: Persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles
- Kindness: Learning to treat oneself and others with grace
- Fairness: Treating oneself with dignity
- Forgiveness: Forgiving oneself
- Prudence: Not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
- Gratitude: Being aware and thankful of all the good things that happen
- Spirituality: Finding faith and purpose; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

## COLLECTIVE GRIT



photo by Arthur Elgort

*A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it. – Max Planck, German physicist*

*The earth couldn't afford to send recruiters or limos to your school. It sent you rain, sunsets, ripe cherries, night blooming jasmine, and that unbelievably cute person you are dating. Take the hint. And here's the deal: Forget that this task of planet saving is not possible in the time required. Don't be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done. – Paul Hawkins*

*A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.*  
- John Lennon

*Omni vivant, Omnia inter se connexa. – Cisero (trans. – Everything is alive; everything is interconnected.)*



photo by Arthur Elgort

On April 16, 2012 the first-ever White House Summit on Environmental Education was held in Washington at a time when our economy and our earth depend more than ever on environmental literacy. Richard Louv, the renowned environmentalist, author and educator gave the keynote address.

Richard Louv believes, "Nature doesn't seem to be getting the respect it deserves. This slippage goes beyond politics, to what appears to be fading cultural esteem for the natural world...Children know a lot about recycling and the Amazon rain forest, and that's good, but their connection to the nature in their own back yards lags, if it exists at all."

## **Recent polls indicate significant scientific and environmental ignorance.**

In July 2009, the Pew Organization revealed the following polling results:

- Compared with a decade ago, far fewer Americans today describe scientific advances as among the nation's most important achievements.
- A gigantic gap exists between scientists and the public on climate change. 84% of U.S. scientists think humans are warming the planet by burning fossil fuels versus 49% of the public.

Americans continue to marginalize science and the scientific community at a time when scientific solutions are desperately needed. The human health consequences of global environmental change are enormous. Our health depends ultimately on the health of its species and on the balance of its ecosystems.

As doctors and researchers, we feel deep concern that climate instability and changing weather patterns threaten our health and the vitality of our life-support systems. A wealth of research indicates that mental and physical health is directly linked to positive and meaningful experience of nature.

Gritgeneration.com provides many examples of emerging young adults who explore new entrepreneurial jobs in fields including engineering, biodiversity, ecosystems, climate, energy, public health and other research. Passionate, determined young adults are restoring grace, justice, and beauty to the world.

Eco-warriors, engineers, scientists, humanitarians, philanthropists and politicians - all young people need to be on the same team. This is the interdisciplinary nature of our world. Unrelated fields overlap, boundaries blur and practical solutions are needed. Together, with passion, optimism and determination, young people will lead our country into a new future.

Richard Louv ends his keynote address with optimism. "We all stand, in fact, on the threshold of a new world of potential businesses, careers, and roles: psychologists, educators, architects and health professionals who employ nature-based programs and biophilic design to increase health, learning and productivity... Here, as they say in corporate boardrooms, is the bottom line: We could be entering one of the most creative periods of human history precisely because of the environmental challenges we face," he concludes.

"The earth couldn't afford to send recruiters or limos to your school. It sent you rain, sunsets, ripe cherries, night blooming jasmine, and that unbelievably cute person you are dating. Take the hint. And here's the deal: Forget that this task of planet saving is not possible in the time required. Don't be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done," encourages Paul Hawkins. Paul Hawkins is a renowned entrepreneur, visionary environmental activist, and author of many books, most recently *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*.

Eco-warriors, engineers, scientists, humanitarians, philanthropists and politicians - all young people need to all be on the same team. This is the interdisciplinary nature of our world. Unrelated fields overlap, boundaries blur and practical solutions are needed. Together, with passion, optimism and determination, and resilience, young people will lead our country into a new future.

As an eminent contemporary scholar, Jon Kabot-Zinn, puts it so well, “It seems that the world is on fire and so are our hearts . . . How we manage to see ourselves and world at this juncture will make a huge difference in the way things unfold... The challenge is one of coming to our senses, both individually and as a species. But one thing is certain: This is a journey that we are all on, everybody on the planet; whether we like it or not... we are in an intimate relationship with the world in all our moments.”

### **Nature beckons you to be on her side.**

“You couldn’t ask for a better boss. The most unrealistic person in the world is the cynic, not the dreamer. Hope only makes sense when it doesn’t make sense to be hopeful. This is your century. Take it and run as if your life depends on it,” urges Paul Hawkins.

Often if an adolescent or emerging young adult wanders long enough in nature, he looks up and finds himself in a suddenly sacred place; under trees and vines that form a lattice roof, on a translucent slab of crystalline rock with the ocean’s lustrous indigo blue watching white capped waves pound the shore. Something enters this young person, seizes her to the core of her soul. Julia Butterfly, a young activist, fell in love with redwood trees and she sat in one redwood tree’s branches for two years to “speak out” against deforestation.

The Character Strengths developed in **COLLECTIVE GRIT** are as follows:

- Collective Creativity: Everyone needs to think outside the box
- Collective Curiosity: Openness to experience
- Collective Love of Learning: Scientists, engineers, architects, politicians, fisherman, musicians. All are needed to save our Planet.
- Collective Judgment: Thinking through things and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions
- Collective Bravery: Not shrinking from a threat, challenge or difficulty
- Collective Perseverance: Persisting in a course of actions despite the obstacles
- Collective Honesty: Speaking the truth and taking responsibility
- Collective Zest: Developing enthusiasm and energy
- Collective Love: Valuing ourselves, our connections with one another and nature
- Teamwork: Learning social responsibility, loyalty
- Collective Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done; organizing group activities and seeing them to their conclusion
- Collective Forgiveness: Finding compassion for our ancestors who failed to pay attention
- Collective Humility: We are all humbled by the importance of this shared goal
- Collective Appreciation of Excellence: Learning appreciate everyone’s contribution
- Collective Hope: Expecting the best future and working together with optimism
- Collective Humor: Seeing the light side of a dire situation (Humor helps)
- Collective Spirituality: Knowing where we all fit within the larger scheme