



Episode #234

**College Admissions Coach David Marcus on the Path
to University in the Covid-19 Pandemic**

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Debbie: Hello, David, welcome to the podcast.

Mark: Thank you so much, Debbie.

Debbie: This is such a timely conversation that we're having. Because we're going to be talking about college admissions and what that all looks like in this crazy landscape that we're in. But before we get into all of that, you know, I've already read your formal bio, could you take just a few minutes and tell us a little bit more about who you are kind of in the world and the lens through which we're going to be having this conversation?

Mark: Sure, I'll give you the summary that I give to parents, because otherwise I would wander on too long. I am an education consultant. I help kids get into college, kids from all abilities, all backgrounds, not just a type a 4.2 students. And I just emerged, because for many years, I was a journalist writing about education in Florida, in Texas, in New York and elsewhere. And also the controversial US News Magazine, which does rankings. And then I wrote a book called Acceptance. It's a book about an amazing counselor at a public school, helping a huge variety of kids get into colleges, but more important, find out who they are, and what their dreams are, where they want to go and what they want to be. And that's kind of my philosophy. I work with just a few students a year, and I do some pro bono work too. And I try to just help students in eighth ninth 10th 11th 12th grade and figure out what's best for them, do they want to go to college at all, should it be a two year college, a four year college and why?

Debbie: So in terms of right now, in this moment of time, you know, I think we're living through such a change in education, everything's having to be reimaged. What does education look like? How can kids really thrive, and especially within the differently wired community, we've been pushing for expanded parameters of what an education looks like for many years, and I feel like this is an opportunity for us. And so I'm wondering within the college process, what is your big thinking around COVID? And college? And should we be reimaging what all of this looks like right now?

Mark: This pandemic is completely up ending, higher education. And the changes are profound. We don't even know what all of them will be. It's making us rethink how kids apply to college, it's making us rethink whether they go to college right after high school, it's making us rethink a lot of things for differently wired kids to about how to let them challenge themselves and show off their great assets, their great personalities, their great intellects. In high school, it's really wonderful in some ways, because it's unshackling kids from standardized tests that have been really difficult for differently wired kids. But it's also really scary, too, because we don't know if kids go to school for four years and stay on campus for four years. So I can unpack that a lot. But I just want to tell you that it's just phenomenal change, and some good and some very, very, very frightening.

Debbie: Yeah, I would love it if we could go deeper into all of that. I mean, there's so many pieces right now. So many unknowns, let's even start with testing and not COVID testing, but testing to get into colleges. I know that right now, as you and I are recording this, it is the end of October SATs were last week, and they're rescheduling more for January. And a lot of people were like, do these even matter anymore colleges are changing what they require. So let's talk about the landscape of what, what matters anymore in terms of testing, and that application process.

Mark: Sure, and let me let me step back for a second because I should explain this. I have worked with kids, as I said, from all kinds of backgrounds and all kinds of interests as they apply to college and grad school. But I have a different kind of expertise, which is that I have kids of my own. And one of them was just not a good test taker. He may have dyslexia, dysgraphia, some ADHD, a wonderful, amazing kid, but the college application process in high school itself was really difficult. He went to college, and he just decided it wasn't for him and he took a break and he's working and thriving. And so as much as I, you know, I went to an Ivy League school I taught at another Ivy League college. I love all that stuff. I'm very cognizant, very understanding this whole crazy type of route is not for everybody, and especially in a pandemic. Now, on the other hand, I have a daughter, who is thriving in Boston at Northeastern University. She's just dazzling. I think she's doing great work academically from what I see. And she's done internships and she's just on fire. And both these kids are as different as they are doing their thing. So I always feel like I should clarify that and I never say that But I'm saying to your yours because I've heard your podcast and I want your listeners, I want them to know that I'm not coming from some sort of elite, you know, you can only you have to go to one of the top 30 window decal schools in America. So that said, let's talk for a second about differently wired kids. This is really the advantage to differently wired kids, because hundreds of colleges are not going to require the ACT and SAT in the next year. You can't safely take them. And so that's changed things. And that opens up all kinds of paths. Also, many, many, many colleges I've talked to around this country are admitting a lot more students than they normally would, from sort of, you know, let's say be students, because all sudden, all these international kids who flocked to American colleges are not coming either. They don't their parents don't want them here. Because this country is so mangled and mismanaged a pandemic problem, or they're worried about transportation, they're worried about getting kicked out of class, they're worried about having to pay a lot of money, and then zoom. So for kids who are wired differently, there's a huge opening, as tragic as this situation is nationwide. What it means is that there are gonna be a lot more colleges, they're gonna look seriously at kids who normally are in, you know, a year or two ago, just wouldn't have attracted attention from admissions offices.

Debbie: Yeah, I mean, I guess I've been reading about the international students not coming and how that's hurting colleges financially. But I didn't think about the fact that that's creating more room.

Mark: Well, think about I mean, it could be 20, 30, 35% of students aren't showing up, or they're not applying, that leaves a huge gap to open. And not to mention that

the number, there's a demographic shift. So there are fewer college-age students in this country now than there have been in the last few years, that's not really a big deal, but two factors. So I think it's a, it's a chance for students who had some issues in high school to really set their sights high, but also to set their sights reasonably and think, do I want to go to college next year, if I'm a 12th grader, now, if I'm a senior now, maybe I should take a gap year and let this this horrible, Covid-19 situation settle down. And I think that's something that parents that I meet with, are not talking about and should talk about?

Debbie: Yeah, I will just say that having a high schooler, you know, in the bedroom next door to my office right now, you know, in 10th grade, but just the idea of talking about college right now is not, it's just not on the radar, because I know that he and many of his peers just feel like they're losing a year of their life, you know, and so the thought of skipping over this when maybe they want to have this year of high school feel, or get that back, like the thought of skipping over that is really unattractive. And so I've had that conversation like, Hey, there is no timeline here. There's no expectation that you have to go to schools, you know, the year after you can take a gap year. And so we have had those conversations. But let's talk a little bit about that gap year, like what are you seeing in the families you consult with? And how might that really benefit especially differently wired kids in this time?

Mark: Well, let's talk about that. I, for years, I've been an advocate of gap years, and nobody, very few parents want to hear about it. And my own daughter who I thought it would be safer to travel or work or do something differently after high school a few years ago, I understand that she wanted to sort of keep up with her peers, she didn't want to take a year off. And then everybody's graduating or having a great time or whatever, and do that. But now, I'm finding her parents a little bit more amenable to talk to me about it. Of course, like everything else in life gap years have gotten complicated. Just a year ago, I talked to some kids about the fact that they could work, they could study, they could take Khan Academy classes for free. They could be waiters in restaurants, they could, there's all kinds of things that are incredibly important ways to grow up a gap year to me, just want to make that clear, is not sitting on your parents couch and eating Reese's Pieces. It's not just kind of goofing off and being on a screen all day playing games. But a gap year is a chance to grow intellectually to give back to do something important in many countries. Do military service or public service or not go to college right away. That's something that you know, unfortunately, the United States is almost being pushed into by the pandemic but it is a good thing to think about. And so there are still it's much more difficult to even volunteer to do things but I've heard about kids who are tutoring on zoom. You know, kids who are little children who are stuck at home and maybe have Wi Fi problems and don't have parental resource dog money. And some high school kids or some gaffers are doing that this year. They're volunteering and political campaigns, even though that means wearing a mask, even though that means sometimes doing it by zoom. There are for creative, driven, interesting kid, there are still alternatives to do their things to do in a gap year. And what it means is you grew up more, and there are studies that show that gap year kids who wait a year or so to go to college, have a much better completion rate in four years when they

do get to college. And that's especially especially important for the kind of kids we're talking about. Who, frankly, because of the way that the brain is, they could benefit from a year or so extra, of growing up, maturing or challenging themselves. And also from breaking from the rigor and the structure of high school classes. And just having a chance to explore and think when the best things you can do in a gap year, is do an apprenticeship or do an internship or shadow somebody, again, a normal gap here and say, Hey, you know what I don't like I thought, I want to be an architect, I thought I want to be a pediatrician, I don't really like that's not what I want to do. That's a great thing to know what you don't want to do, what you do want to do.

Debbie: I'm wondering what advice you give to parents who are open to this idea of a gap year. And we also know that so many kids are their motivation is really in the toilet right now. Because, you know, so many kids, especially differently wired kids who are deep thinkers are having existential crises. And it's really hard to feel excited about the future. So is there a way that you work with families or with these teens to help them utilize that time or make a plan where they aren't sitting on their parents couch, but rather, you know, they can at least make some progression towards their goals?

Mark: It's a really, really difficult question. And I've heard some of your podcast with Dr. Sharon Saline and other people talking about ADHD, and so forth. And I keep thinking, what what happens to these kids after a year, a year and a half of being of not being him have normal lives to sort of get into classes and push themselves and try some clubs and try some extracurricular things that from high school in high school there are ultimately more rewarding to them than standard classes, actually. So I don't want to make light of it. And what I think is that we as parents have to be even more understanding, we have to ask questions, and not judge, not listening, not lecture. And so we have to say, you know, this is 10th grade, 11th grade, these are, I think, important, and often wonderful years of your life. What do you want to do? What could we find that is rewarding for you, that pushes you to challenges you that engages you to get you off a screen, those are really difficult conversation to have, I can tell you that I have seen a bunch of kids since March, just volunteering with them, who are just, they're just dismayed. They're they're so I'm stuck and so sad, and so unmotivated. But the best thing I think we can do is, is figure out how often in this situation, what can you do to give back to others to help others to get out of your skin and out of your life. And there are things on Zoom. And more and more kids are finding, as I say ways to tutor other children on Zoom, or to get clubs going on zoom or to containers going on to drop off food based packages, I don't want to be naive about it, you have to these kids have to take care of their own mental health in their own things, too. But part of is to be out involved and engaged in virtually or in real life with a mask on. So I think it's a time that we as parents with aunts, and uncles and pods and friends, neighbors can help each other's kids. And it really does take a village. But I have seen some kids who were not great students, oddly enough. And they found that they didn't like being in school every day. And so in a hybrid situation, or studying from home. Strangely, they've actually kind of found independent studies to do they they've, they're taking us instead, they're suddenly in their cluster with free plus on Khan

Academy. They're not made to sit in a classroom for 42 minutes, and then another cluster for 42 minutes. And so they're actually kind of finding themselves in a weird way.

Debbie: Yeah, I mean, I've certainly heard that. And I've gotten that feedback that there are many differently wired kids who are actually thriving with remote learning because there were so many factors in a regular school environment that we're just regulating to them. And so that is that is an upside for some families. I'm wondering in terms of other things that parents can be focused on. I was just talking with A friend a few weeks ago, whose school is completely remote, I think their daughter is a senior. And these kids are really stressed out because they know this is a time when typically they would be engaged in a lot of things to put on their high school resume and to beef up their application. And the advice they got was, you know, take a knitting class on YouTube or, you know, find ways to do that from home. This particular student has a relative who lives in Costa Rica and made a plan for herself to go learn Spanish and stay with this and for a while, and I was like, that's a good person to have in Costa Rica. But I'm just wondering, what other advice do you have, you know, volunteer tutoring, over zoom, like any other ways that students who are in that junior senior year and looking for opportunities to make their applications look stronger?

Mark: Well, I want to talk about that first part of it, which is, I work with a lot of kids. And so I've worked over the years with kids and seniors in New York, DC, and LA and San Fran and Boston. And so much of that, in the past has been sort of resume padding, or thinking of what would impress colleges and kind of playing the game of it. Certainly some kids, it's a realistic, wonderful project who I know, but a lot of high school for, you know, for kids in middle class, upper middle class families is the sort of playing the game of getting into college. And so we can forget about that now. And I tell kids to think like entrepreneurs and entrepreneur thinks, what is the need? And how can I fill it, the need is not I want to get into Yale, I want to get Wesleyan, I want to get to Caltech, the need is that people are stuck at home, they're scared. So I've advised kids to think about finding a senior center or just an older relative or an older neighbor and reading to read a newspaper and hammer her every day, every afternoon for half an hour. Again, on by zoom, I should say. And then there are libraries in genealogical societies, all kinds of places that want kids to do research in their communities that need smart, 17 year olds to design websites, with information, you know, where you vote, how do you get a mask? What do you do if there's a storm, all those kinds of things, it means using your wiles and using your contacts and using your resources? And figuring out what can I do, this country is in a crisis. And the older folks got us in this situation, I won't go into my political views. But younger ones are going to have to help dig us out of it. So they can start at 14, 15, 16, 17 years old. And I just think again, what is the need? Is there a senior citizen center near me? Is there some? Or do I have a grandparent who just has a great story to tell? And I could listen to my grandmother talking about the 30s and 40s, and then transcribe it and then and then turn it into something work great grandma, that's an essay or that would live in my local library. This is a time to be incredibly innovative and creative. And it's possible. It's difficult, but it's possible.

Debbie: And I'm wondering, do you have any insight into what is happening on the other side of this? So within college admissions, like how are they navigating this process? have their values changed? I mean, their priorities change in terms of the way they're viewing applicants.

Mark: Oh, boy, well, I just was on this parents group for Northeastern University in Boston, where my daughter goes, I said, and the viciousness of parents of 12th graders and of college first year students toward the admissions offices toward the administration is really tough. I mean, I don't envy, you know, colleges are not, are so labor intensive. And so people-intensive, the good ones. And so it's not like a place to keep you can you know, if you can't get some you can't get, just choose your local store, you can get them online, that's fun. 30, something about that in person experience, colleges are hurting all over the country, I think dozens of colleges are gonna go under in the next couple of years because of the pandemic. Now they were struggling anyway, or they're having financial problems anyway, or they were sort of in the crosshairs anyway, but it's going to be tragic for them. And so one of the things you have to think about when you're applying is, is this college can be viable and sustainable in two or three or four years. But I have to hand it to the admissions people and the faculty, a lot of older faculty and professors, they have staff or clean rooms and stuff, they cannot endanger those people. And so they're in an impossible situation. What it means is they are more looking at broader and wider swaths of students because as I said, they're not getting international students because a lot of students are deferring after admissions. They have dorms to fill their classrooms to fill in the cases where they have first year second year students or some combination of all students, but they were not prepared for this. You know, none of us was but the colleges especially where kids go off. They want to be social and you can't blame them. That's you don't go to college to sit in your room and get temperature checks and COVID tests all the time. But college is really wrestling with this. So as much as it pains me to say, I've told people who have a first year student who's a sophomore in college, who have a high school senior, forget about it, just do anything possible, defer and do do whatever you can, it's productive and interesting and challenges your brain and helps people and just wait a year or two and see what happens in this country, will there be a vaccine? Will things settle down? Because I understand that young people in general stay healthy at this covid time. But you can't count on that. And you can't risk your relatives and other people around you? And is it the people who clean the colleges and who have the sort of the first responder are the important jobs that nobody talks about? So that's, that's my way of saying the colleges are in a very difficult position. Everybody kind of wants to dump on them and blame them. I've had parents who complain to me that colleges aren't giving tours on the campuses. They can't, they can't. There's so many problems as somebody gets sick. Given that tour, somebody gets sick. Have you taken that tour? Are there legal implications for them? It breaks my heart as well as moral implications.

Debbie: Well, it's just such a complicated time, isn't it? I mean, my heart just goes out for those students who are, who feel like their lives are on hold and who kind of want to launch in that way and it's just not available.

- Mark: Yeah, I'm so glad to be uplifting to your audience.
- Debbie: Yeah, way to bring us down. No, I mean, I also hear that there are opportunities here. And what I like about this is that, again, for differently wired kids, I believe, you know, so many of them, their timelines are different. And many of them could benefit from a little extra time, to mature to work on executive function, independence, and all of those things. Because we know statistically that a lot of differently wired kids end up dropping out before the first year before the end of freshman year.
- Mark: I can't tell you how many parents I've heard from in normal times, that is pre COVID times when a kid goes to school and gets into, you know, his or her dream school or a school that anyway, that seems good. And the supports turned out, they're not really there, or the kid doesn't want to convince them or the barista after the midterms, starts or by the holidays, travelstart. So this is a time for us to rethink all that you're so right. And now I'm going to contradict myself, because here I tell you that I help kids get to college. But I, first of all, a gap year is something very important. But I think not everybody needs to go to a four year college and this is a horrible time we're living in might make us rethink that might be a little bit less pressure, it might be sort of more socially acceptable to get certified in coding or get none to get a degree but get specialty and something in six months, or a year or two to go to community colleges to the four year college that your sibling went to. So you know, I want to look at the bright side, which is increasingly difficult as I look at the COVID statistics in this country. But the bright side is that we have not reimaged education in this country. And I'm talking about, again, the middle and upper middle class, often, but also for poor kids, we have not dignified them and said, Maybe we should have a gap year of working or getting money or getting maturity is a great thing for everybody. And so I think we should face that we have this opportunity now to really rethink post secondary education.
- Debbie: Yeah, I mean, one of my biggest tenets is this idea that we need to question everything that we thought we knew about parenting, certainly when we discover our child is a typical, but that includes, you know, we may just go into this assuming our kid is going to college. That's what we do in our family, if that is something or maybe it's aspirational, like my child is going to be the first in this family to go to college. So we may just push ahead with that belief without ever stopping and thinking, Wait a minute, does this make sense? This is the right thing for my child. And especially now. Yeah, I do think it is. It's a huge opportunity to just start getting curious about what else might be true about.
- Mark: Right now, I'll say a couple of things that work for this kind of kid though, if they do go to college, which is what I'm seeing now. So let's say you're differently wired and you just you're not good at sitting in his seat hour after hour. You're not going to study in library 12 in the library till two in the morning, and producing a long paper or doing a long lab report. Because of COVID the hybrid situation in a college if you're let's assume that kids are safe I'm not going to go into you know, the jpms and not party and all this stuff. Let's assume the kid is

safe on campus somewhere. This means there are a lot of students and a lot of people and a lot of high school teachers and others who have time who want money who want to help serve on to help volunteer or make money, they can be really wonderful tutors and guides and mentors, there are professors who have fewer students in their class, the new normal professors and their grad assistants can really help us to, again, it might be, you know, from 10 feet away, or it might be on zoom, there are fewer, you know, big fraternity events and football things and some stuff that some of our kids sometimes kind of get lost in. And it's a little bit more individualistic right now, which is sad. But that's how it is so that the kid who's not good at kind of balancing going to football games and go to parties and going, they actually have a little bit more time, a fewer distractions and more time to focus on studying and self improvement and things like that, you know, getting just getting their study habits up. And then I often recommend in normal times for parents of these kids that they get an executive function coach or someone like that off the grounds at college, or someone in the support team on the couch to really help the kid. And again, I found that a lot of these kids don't really want to meet face to face. Well, that's a that's very zoomable right now FaceTime, or whatever it may be. So the kids who do go to school, who in the past, maybe were just a little bit overwhelmed by the sort of the forum and the hubbub of it all, this could actually help them in a strange way, because it's just the fewer kids on campus, your distractions.

Debbie: Yeah, my GPA at the end of my freshman year of college would have been much, much different. Had I been going to school in a pandemic, because grades and scores were at the bottom of my list of priorities for sure.

Mark: Yeah, I dreamed of getting into a certain college, I won't mention I've never been to New Haven, Connecticut. And I was not a good test taker. And my lack of good test taking probably was a reason that was impossible for me. And so now, you have kids who are smart, and they're interesting, but they're just not cookie cutter kids. And the tests are off the table. Most of the time, almost every college in America realizes that you can't go safely to take an ACT or an SAT test, they can't demand it from you or the AP test. So I'll mention one other thing, which is that makes the holistic admissions process that makes other things more important to not looking test, taking rigorous classes, whatever you can see, it's reasonable for you, and doing well at them, getting to know your high school teachers, maybe on zoom, because you can't do in person, but doing some having some extra questions for them go into their office hours, again, by zoom. And then when you apply to college doing an essay that's really really interesting and really genuine, they're going to take on more importance. Because you don't have a full activity sheet. You can't be the kicker for your football team. You can't be starting a club and having 15 Kids join it. So those are things to think about to strategically against. It's not playing the game, but it's just being realistic about what you can do, what you can't do, and how you can be your best self in a really naughty time.

Debbie: And when I just ask briefly, how students can best identify the colleges, that would be a good fit for who they are. Because I think, you know, many of us have this idea. Or kids might think I really want to go to x, y, and z school, but it's not

actually not that it's not realistic, but it's not actually a good match for who they are as learners. So how do they suss that out?

Mark: Right. Well, you mentioned my book acceptance because Acceptance about this wonderful counselor. His whole thing is, even though he's in the suburbs in New York with a lot of pressure, his whole thing is not about the brand. It's about the fit. It's not about what decal, you're going to put on your back window of your car. It's about you finding it, this college is for you. Yes, that's much more difficult now, because you can't go to a campus and have an overnight in some cases, you can't even go to a campus and talk to people you can just skirt around there. But kids now have so many more options than they did 25 years ago to find out about colleges without spending a lot of time. Yes. And the playing field has been leveled. I should say. It used to be just a couple years ago, a year ago that wealthy people would take private planes to visit colleges in some extreme cases, or they do a grand tour all over the country. And if you didn't have parents who could take off time, didn't have money for hotels and visits. You know, you really were just events. We're all in that situation right now. So I urge kids to go visit some campuses near them or work that they can get to even though there might not be a lot of students there. Just to get a feel you want suburban campus. You want a big campus, you want small campus, you want an urban campus, you're not gonna get the whole experience. I I understand that. But this is some schools not even worrying about the name of the school. But just to get a sense of it. Do you want to be close to home or far away from home? Does the pandemic change any of that? And then, yes, you can't talk to admissions people on campuses, you can't do a tour of most campuses right now. But there are videos, and of course, their sales piece, but they'll give you an idea of the place. But more importantly, through social media, through all those platforms, students can reach out to somebody they knew a couple years ago from school from Camp from working from something and say, hey, how do you like it at Brandeis? or What is it? What is your feeling about Wash U? Or do you think I'd be happy? is Santa Barbara going to college there? And you as parents can also ask anybody, you know, from synagogues and churches and all kinds of things. We have to be much more networked and ask people if you can. A lot of colleges have a place where you can ask kids online questions about things. Other kids who volunteer tend to be really rah rah kids, a lot of times, they'll be honest, you can say, Tell me what you don't like about it? Or I'm really shy, how do you think I'd fit in at Michigan State. And through those ways kids are communicating any way you can find an inordinate amount of information and some reality checks. No, it's not the same as staying on campus for 24 hours. But that's just not going to be possible for a while. So it's really important to suss out to get a sense of fit, and it can be done, but it's just much pickier and much more subtle to visit. But it's also much more open to everybody, no matter their income or their parents ability to get away from work.

Debbie: Yeah, it's so interesting. I mean, as we're talking, yeah, there's a bit of doom and gloom here. But I feel like there are also lots of really interesting benefits for our kids in particular, if we kind of reframe this whole conversation. So for parents who are listening to this who've got kids in high school, this is a conversation that they are having with their partner, or friends, and are feeling stress around

the whole college process for their child. What's one, I mean, you shared so many great insights. But one thing you just hope they take from this to keep in mind as they navigate this journey?

Mark: Well, I think in regular non pandemic times, there's a feeling that, you know, we can really decide, as students or as parents, you know, we our kids going to go and we're our kids and get into and how are kids going to do. And amid this tragic situation we live in, and we're learning that there're parts of our lives are out of control. And you don't know if your kid's gonna go to high school, next month, day after day, or one day, a week, or three days a week. And you don't know if the college that your kid is really interested in is going to be, you know, having classes a year from now, so or two years from now. So it's out of our hands. So I think the best thing we can do is encourage our kids to be their real selves in high school, and not to sort of groom themselves for what they think an admissions person would do with what some kids do, frankly, some parents do. And to have genuine conversations with their parents not always talking about college, because that's a bad thing. But do I want to go right now? Are there some other courses I can take on Saturdays or nights, just as I am learning at Columbia at Stanford, some free courses or some credit courses? Just to see what I like about college, Julian from a screen? And can I really think about, you know, this, not the craziness of, you know, I'm gonna join the Key Club because it looks good on my resume, but who am I? What do I want to be? And how can I, these terrible times be innovative and help other people and do things? So I think the reality is we were sort of tamping down our expectations and that might be ultimately a really positive thing for parents or for kids. Hmm.

Debbie: So good. Thank you. Thank you so much. This has been really informative and it gives us some things to think about and just take a deep breath right now. So I really appreciate that and I would love it if you could just share you know, you talked about your book *Acceptance* let parents know where else they can connect with you.

Mark: Sure, I'll do that. And the easiest way is my website marcuscoach.com Marcus is my last name. That's the best way. I do a little bit social media but I I really, I have a day job and I just do this for fun, you know a little bit this coaching kids helping pro bono and then taking a couple of paid kids here. My book is *Acceptance*. And I should mention to you, Debbie, the first book I wrote was really from my heart, and it's called *What it Takes to Pull Me Through*. It's just a book about struggling teenagers who get sent away from home, and they were amazing, amazing teachers, and they just kind of figured out who they are and what they're all about. And there are many that went on to really thrive afterwards. But maybe, you know, doing the sort of the high school game, the high school playing high school wasn't really their thing. And they're creative and fun and interesting and different. And so I watched them. And then that informed me when I wrote *acceptance*, which is about, you know, wide range of kids working with a counselor to get into school. But I didn't get any more important points, yet. I forgot them. Hmm, I hope I hope this helped. Because sometime I'll come and give you my top 10 pointers for kids that we're talking about, sort of pointing their way again, their way through high school and going

to college and succeeding in college or whatever they do. But again, I think, I think this is a tough time for us to think that those kids and their creativity and their kind of personal skills or whatever they bring to the table. And so let them be who they are, because we're in a pandemic. And that's how I like it.

Debbie: Yeah. Well, thank you so much. And listeners, as always, I will include links on the show notes to David's website, and to both of his books and I will now I really want to go read *What it Takes to Pull Me Through*, but thank you so much. And yeah, we'll have to do a follow up conversation because I think there's a lot more to be said on this topic, but I really appreciate everything you shared today.

Mark: I love it. I really enjoy your podcast. Thank you so much.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- David Marcus' website
- *Acceptance: A Legendary Guidance Counselor Helps Seven Kids Find the Right Colleges—and Find Themselves* by David Marcus
- *What It Takes To Pull Me Through: Four Troubled Teenagers And Fourteen Months That Transformed Them* by David Marcus

