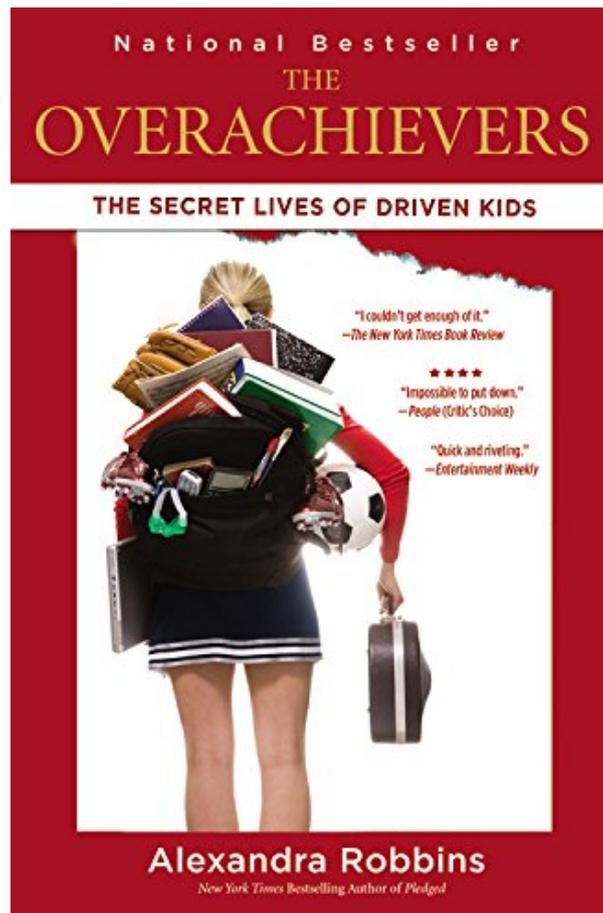


THE OVERACHIEVERS: THE SECRET LIVES OF DRIVEN KIDS BY ALEXANDRA ROBBINS



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THE
OVERACHIEVERS

THE SECRET LIVES OF DRIVEN KIDS



Alexandra Robbins

New York Times Bestselling Author of Pledged

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From Publishers Weekly

In this engrossing anthropological study of the cult of overachieving that is prevalent in many middle- and upper-class schools, Robbins (*Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities*) follows the lives of students from a Bethesda, Md., high school as they navigate the SAT and college application process. These students are obsessed with success, contending with illness, physical deterioration (senior Julie is losing hair over the pressure to get into Stanford), cheating (students sell a physics project to one another), obsessed parents (Frank's mother manages his time to the point of abuse) and emotional breakdowns. What matters to them is that all-important acceptance to the right name-brand school. "When teenagers inevitably look at themselves through the prism of our overachiever culture," Robbins writes, "they often come to the conclusion that no matter how much they achieve, it will never be enough." The portraits of the teens are compelling and make for an easy read. Robbins provides a series of critiques of the system, including college rankings, parental pressure, the meaninglessness of standardized testing and the push for A.P. classes. She ends with a call to action, giving suggestions on how to alleviate teens' stress and panic at how far behind they feel. (Aug.)

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Review

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"You can't just be the smartest. You have to be the most athletic, you have to be able to have the most fun, you have to be the prettiest, the best dressed, the nicest, the most wanted. You have to constantly be out on the town partying, and then you have to get straight As. And most of all, you have to appear to be happy." -- CJ, age seventeen High school isn't what it used to be. With record numbers of students competing fiercely to get into college, schools are no longer primarily places of learning. They're dog-eat-dog battlegrounds in which kids must set aside interests and passions in order to strategize over how to game the system. In this increasingly stressful environment, kids aren't defined by their character or hunger for knowledge, but by often arbitrary scores and statistics. In *The Overachievers*, journalist Alexandra Robbins delivers a poignant, funny, riveting narrative that explores how our high-stakes educational culture has spiraled out of control. During the year of her ten-year reunion, Robbins returns to her high school, where she follows students, including CJ and others:

- Julie, a track and academic star who is terrified she's making the wrong choices;
- "AP" Frank, who grapples with horrifying parental pressure to succeed;
- Taylor, a soccer and lacrosse captain whose ambition threatens her popular girl status;
- Sam, who worries his years of overachieving will be wasted if he doesn't attend a name-brand college;
- Audrey, who struggles with perfectionism; and
- The Stealth Overachiever, a mystery junior who flies under the radar.

Robbins tackles hard-hitting issues such as the student and teacher cheating epidemic, over-testing, sports rage, the black market for study drugs, and a college admissions process so cutthroat that some students are driven to depression and suicide because of a B. Even the earliest years of schooling have become insanely competitive, as Robbins learned when she gained unprecedented access into the inner workings of a prestigious Manhattan kindergarten admissions office. A compelling mix of fast-paced storytelling and engrossing investigative journalism, *The Overachievers* aims both to calm the admissions frenzy and to expose its escalating dangers.

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Features

- Great product!

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--The New York Times Book Review, * Editors' Choice

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75 of 80 people found the following review helpful.

I know this feeling -- I am right in the middle of this now

By Tim

Let me give a personal perspective on The Overachiever "phenomenon." I am about to start a year off before college because of the extreme mental and physical toll high school took on me.

I took on too much throughout high school because my father pushed me. I interned at a biotech company, I headed three clubs at school, I took a full load of AP classes, and I missed lunch each day. I routinely stayed up all night, or slept 2 or 3 hours, to fit it all in and maintain my grades.

Red Bull was my life. Coke didn't do it anymore. Neither did coffee.

And then one day I passed out in the hallway at my house, and wound up in the hospital for two weeks with an irregular heartbeat from all the caffeine. I was so worn out, so out of shape, such a mess.

And you know what my father's first reaction was? "You're never going to get into Harvard if you're in this hospital and missing all this school!" I kicked him out of the room and cried. I thought I was dying and he was worried about Harvard.

The stories in this book are very real, and very helpful. I thought I was the only one who went through this. And the characters' stories give me hope. Thank you for writing this.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

waste of time and wrong

By jkv

it is a very exaggerated and stereotypical vision. It uses anecdotal evidence to generalize, which is wrong. You don't draw conclusions on a population based on one anecdote. it also makes overachievers look sick and drive being the culprit rather than a quality. I don't think high achieving hurts kids, rather it's unhealthy competition that does. it's parents who use peer pressure, fear, and guilt to get their kids to do anything, from a toddler putting a coat when it's cold to getting into the right math class in high school. parents are the driving force of it. then kids start to resent their friends because of their own low self esteem and everyone starts to be hurtful rather than friendly and playful.

kids need meaningful relationships with their parents and friends. They then wish to achieve their own goals, sometimes this brings a great deal of achievement, the only true achievement. Learning is a joy and a gift. unhealthy competition and busy adults are the only cause of desperation. true truly high achievers are joyful fun people.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

... Shall Inherit the Earth because I'd read and really enjoyed Pledged. Both of these books

By Amanda

I purchased this book and the author's other book The Geeks Shall Inherit the Earth because I'd read and really enjoyed Pledged. Both of these books, in my opinion, are just okay. If you want to read, what I feel is her best book, take a look at Pledged.

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