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Students Failed in High Pressure Educational System

Former Yale Professor and Founder of Rehabilitation Center Find Parallel Parenting Problems Leading to Addictions and Failures

Los Angeles, CA- "We are producing students with more and more academic skill, and fewer and fewer life skills," says William Deresiewicz, author of *Excellent Sheep*. The former professor and member of Yale's admission committee told a group of parents and concerned residents gathered at Beit T'Shuvah that our academic system needs to change drastically in order to help parents steer young minds and souls back in the right direction. "College students have empty and unguided ambition," said Deresiewicz. "That's because the current system is forcing a child to choose between fulfillment and success, and it shouldn't be either way."

Beit T'Shuvah is a treatment and recovery center for addicts. Founder Harriet Rossetto invited Deresiewicz to speak because of how much his book reflected what she sees from the young addicts she treats. "When I read the book, everything that Bill was saying resonated with what we see around here and what we're working against," said Rossetto. "The idea that kids at elite schools are showing symptomatology of people in rehab is eye opening."

Following his book signing of *Excellent Sheep, The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* author William Deresiewicz talked about how parents can work towards a better future for their children.

The solution, according to Deresiewicz, is first to acknowledge to the systemic academic problem and then to respond. He suggests a better free public education that is well-funded as well as free college. As for parental responsibility, that starts early in a child's life. "We need to help children learn how to make choices and more importantly, we must allow our children to fail," said Deresiewicz. Rossetto added, "When parents don't allow a child to learn from their own mistakes, their actions lead not only to a failure to launch but sadly often to self demoralization, addiction and abuse."

Youth Services Director at Beit T'Shuvah, Doug Rosen, does preventative outreach in schools throughout the Los Angeles area and says parents are focusing on the wrong milestones. "I see kids whose entire identity to themselves and to their parents is based on the external appearance of academic success," says Rosen. "Instead of buying into the over-scheduled, achievement-based system and judging our kids based on what the system says they should be, we need to accept and support who they are in their soul."

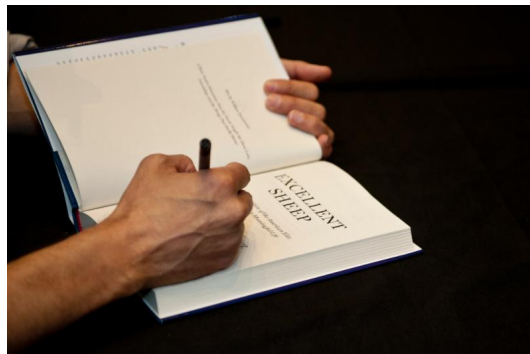
One of the fundamental lessons at Beit T'Shuvah is that perfection does not exist, and that recognizing your imperfections is an important step in self acceptance. Deresiewicz says most of

the students he ran into in Yale are also suffering from addiction, "high achievement addiction." "Having good grades is an obsession," he explained. "These students are under severe mental distress and because of their risk aversion and high skills they've become very good at hiding that distress." Rossetto and Deresiewicz agree that risk and failure is an essential part of development, so over praising and over saving is under serving this generation.

"Every day we work with young adults who feel unimportant and often they are high performing students from very successful families," said Rossetto. "Bill's book 'Excellent Sheep' focuses in on the problem, one we feel our approach can solve. We need to recognize the autonomy of our children and encourage them to make their own decisions, even when they seem wrong to us."

[Please click here to download pictures from the event in full resolution:](#)

Photographer credit is Laurel Johnson.





About Beit T'Shuvah (Bate-t'shoo-vah)

Beit T'Shuvah is a nonprofit treatment center and education institution dedicated to guiding individuals and families toward a path of living well in order to recover from addiction. T'Shuvah translates to repentance and return. Beit means house. Beit T'Shuvah = The House of Return.

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