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Julayne Virgil, CEO of Girls Inc. of Alameda County, explains how giving youth the chance to challenge themselves and societal assumptions prepares them to take "positive risks" later in life when the stakes are higher. She shares a story of taking girls camping and how it's the type of experience that could give them the courage to face fears like going off to college when they get older.



Transcript

- There's something that we call intentional and compensatory, and what that really means is, thinking about what doesn't exist already, and that's really an important part of innovation.. What doesn't exist, what gap is there that needs to be filled, what need is there, and as we think about some of the programs that I've discussed, they really are intentional, thinking about the opportunities that girls don't have, they're compensatory, they're trying to make up for that gap that girls don't have.. And so that's a phrase that we talk about a lot.. What's intentional and compensatory, what are the things that girls are not experiencing that they need to experience? So we had spring break in Oakland a couple weeks ago, and we took the girls camping.. Overnight, they had to pitch their own tents, and build their own fires, and for the majority of the group, I think there were about 12 girls in this group, 11 of them had never been camping before.. So you can say, okay, camping's an experience, you know, why is this important? Well, it's important because in order to encourage someone to take positive risks, they have to have had examples of taking positive risks in their life before, you don't wanna wait until it's the big, big positive risk that's really scary, and say, go for it, and they've never done that before.. Right, so a lot of our girls, they're the first generation to go to college, well, if they've never taken a positive risk before they head off to college, you don't wanna wait until they're graduated, they've got their bags and you're saying, okay, go off onto that college campus, you got this.. Think about how you might have felt going off to college, right, it's scary.. There's a lot of changes, and we really want the girls to be prepared, we want them to have something to dig deep down and say, okay, you know what, I pitched a tent before, and I didn't know how to do that, and we figured it out, and we slept under the tent.. So, I can figure this out too..

I built a fire, I'd never built a fire before, in fact, I thought they were crazy when they told me we were gonna be building fires.. But we built fires, and we stayed warm, we had s'mores, too, so I can do this.. So we really wanna give them a lot of experiences where they have an opportunity to build those positive risks, and that goes into that intentional and compensatory, so what aren't, what experiences aren't they getting right now? And also, because they're girls, some of them are still getting the message that, oh, you know what, you're too pretty to camp, don't get dirty.. Right, so you can get dirty, you'll be okay, you won't break, it'll be good.. And you'll actually learn something as a result...