

# Episode 38 - Jaclyn Corley

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## SPEAKERS

Jaclyn Corley, Moira McCullough

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Moira McCullough 00:00

Welcome to the College Scoops podcast. I'm your host, Moira McCullough. And today we are talking with Jaclyn Corley on topics to avoid in a college essay.



Jaclyn Corley 00:10

This is an opportunity for your team to slow down and say Who am I? And how can I share that? How can I communicate with that to somebody who has not met me, and that is one of the most powerful tools I think you can give and leave your team before they make a decision that's going to impact the rest of their lives.



Moira McCullough 00:35

This is the College Scoops podcast and I'm your host Moira McCullough, we focus on everything college related from the admissions process to where to eat, stay and explore on and round campuses. Our guests include founders, educators, authors and experts in the college space. Join us as these experts share their knowledge, experiences and lessons learned to help you have stress free, informative and tasty college journeys. Whether it's your first or last child going to college, or you're just interested in going to a college town for a game or male, we've got you covered. If you haven't already, please subscribe to the College Scoops podcast to get the inside scoop and everything college related. And leave

us a review. And thanks to all of our sponsors partners in the entire College Scoops Ambassador team for helping us bring valuable content to our community. If you would like to support college skips as a sponsor, please head over to [patreon@patreon.com/collegescoops](mailto:patreon@patreon.com/collegescoops) and sign up as a sustaining listener, insider or Deluxe sponsor. We have exclusive benefits for our members free ebooks and even a College Scoops care package. Jaclyn Corley, aka The College Essay Captain, helps college applicants learn to write outstanding college essays while enjoying the process. Her signature methodology simplifies the writing process so teams find clarity, confidence and ease as they authentically share their personal stories with admissions teams. Jackie, thank you for coming on the College Scoops podcast today.

**J** Jaclyn Corley 02:08  
Oh, you're so welcome. It's a pleasure to be here.

**M** Moira McCullough 02:11  
We asked you on the podcast to share your expertise on topics to avoid in college essays. We talked so much about how to write an essay and the structure and the strategies of it. But I loved when you suggested topics to avoid, because we've run into that all the time. And you probably get that question asked by your clients all the time. So I'd love you to first introduce yourself and tell us a little bit how you started the college as a captain, and then we'll get into the topic of today.

**J** Jaclyn Corley 02:38  
Perfect. I love that. Yes. So my name is Jaclyn Corley, and I'm the founder of The College Essay Captain. What I do is I coach competitive college and career applicants to help them put together their their application documents in a way that helps them to stand out. Because a lot of college applicants and career applicants simply it's the first time writing these documents, and your resume and your cover letter is what is your first impression. These application essays are one of your first impressions and they matter. And it becomes difficult when this is the first time you've ever had to do it or ever had to learn to do it. So that's really where I come in. And in addition to working with these applicants, I'm a hypnotherapist and an NLP practitioner. NLP is neuro linguistic programming, it's a really long winded term for how does your mind, the neuro process, use language linguistics to produce results. So what I study is how does your mind work with your mind instead of against it to produce results. And so I bring this into coaching with applicants. And it makes an such a big difference how applicants talk to themselves

about applying. So what I noticed with my students, and I'll share that how I started this, what I noticed with my students, is that how they were talking to themselves about applying was directly related to the results they were getting reading these essays. If they thought to themselves, I can't do this, I'm not good enough. They were writing essays that were not good enough that they couldn't do. And so I incorporate this in with coaching career and college applicants, because you bring you with you wherever you go. So if you're going in with limiting beliefs, you're going to keep those so I work with them before they even get in the door to believe in themselves to empower themselves and to be able to share something of value to know they have value first to then share it. So that's how I operate with what I do is really helping people to communicate their value. And to have that other person when they're reading your documents feel connected to you.

M

Moira McCullough 04:57

Boy, I could have used that way back when I could still use you right now. Because I think our inner voice is our biggest barrier or challenge, whether you are writing, talking conducting business or going to school, I find that my inner voice is always judgmental. And I defeat myself before I even get started with the process. Right?

J

Jaclyn Corley 05:19

That's what I do. So it's the Trojan horse of college essays. I'm doing mindset coaching for applicants and career applicants too so that they can actually produce the results that they deserve, and that they know how to operate, how to how to think differently about these essays so that they can actually do them. And you asked me about how I started the college essay captain, and it's a really interesting story, because it fell into my lap, where this was what I was supposed to do. I started as a 12th grade English teacher, and I was fresh out of graduate school, and I wanted to do real world writing. I wanted to teach them how to write resumes, and cover letters and application fees. And I realized I had to learn to do those things first. And in addition to that, my first year teaching, and I'm sure you remember this, we got hit with Hurricane Sandy, I was in school for about four weeks. We didn't really even get off to the right foot, like on the right start with my students. And then we got hit with a hurricane. So for those of you who are in the north east, what ultimately happened was power was knocked out. We were out of power for weeks and out of school. And some of my students were displeased. They didn't have computers, they didn't have ability to do any homework. Some of them lost their homes. And then we got back and college applications were due. So I put on my 'I got to figure this out hat' and I borrowed a cramped desk in the corner of an office and work. I said, I am making myself available. I will be here early. I will be here late. I will be here during lunch. You can come to me on all my off periods. I will work with you with your application and we'll

figure this out. And because I got to work with them and listen to their stories, I started to notice that a lot of applicants were so overwhelmed with what was going on at home and in the world. They were completely intimidated by writing these application essays. Number one, because they didn't know how to do it. They never learned it's not the type of writing you're used to in school. And number two, what happened was they were thinking I'm not good enough. There's nothing interesting for me to say anything that I could come up with has already been done before. And I was listening to my students who have 4.0's and running every club, talk to themselves as though they weren't good enough. And they couldn't write these essays when they're in that space. When I started to address that and combine that with writing strategies (I was researching them on my own time - what was actually working and why were these model essays), dissecting them and giving those students an approach that actually was simplified and working with mindset, the quality of their essays skyrocketed so much that year. My school then created a position for me in the counseling department to work one-on-one with these applicants for the next several years. And so I had this incredibly unique opportunity to work with hundreds of applicants and start to fine tune an approach that was working, that was also empowering them. And when I started to see the breakthroughs, the tears of not frustration, but wow, I can't believe I did this. They're getting full body chills from what they were able to create and admissions officers calling our school and saying, 'please tell the student to keep writing'. That's when I decided I want to do this for more students, not just the small group, but I want to be able to help more people. And that's where I started The College Essay Captain.

M

Moira McCullough 08:59

So isn't that interesting? We're talking about I remember Hurricane Sandy vividly. That was October. We didn't have power for two weeks in New Jersey. And as you said, many people lost their homes. And you're working with seniors in high school, the most stressful year anyways, and fall semester. How rewarding that was for you to help these students. I love when you talk about the mindset, it's hard enough to go in during a normal year to kind of like brag about yourself and figure out what am I going to talk about, how am I going to stand out in my essay, and then to go through something that was so traumatizing for many students. And we're doing dealing with that now actually again. Just trying to work with these students and get them to work with themselves instead of against themselves. And how you must have looked at these students and felt so just so happy that you were able to make a connection. Your school recognized it and the joy you must have received from being able to help them. And then to create this new program at a school and say, okay, I did on a small scale, but how do I now roll that out to help more and more students?



Jaclyn Corley 10:09

Right? It's been a journey. It's so rewarding, because some applicants, a lot of applicants look at it and families too, as this hoop to jump through. I said one more thing that we have to do for the admissions process. And I, because I've seen the results that these students have been able to produce where they were at one point in time saying, I'm not a writer, I can't do this. There's nothing interesting to I own myself. And I can share this with somebody and I mean it and get that result, I see breakthroughs. And so when I share that with families, I say this is an opportunity for your team to slow down and say, Who am I? And how can I share that? How can I communicate with that to somebody who has not met me, and that is one of the most powerful tools, I think you can give and leave your team before they make a decision that's going to impact the rest of their lives.



Moira McCullough 11:04

Students are wondering how can I stand out and my essay and then going through something so traumatizing for so many people, and we're dealing with that right now with COVID. Just trying to work with these students to get them to step away and focus on what they want to accomplish and convey it in their essays is really challenging. Walk us through the next couple of stages or framework, a strategy that you have and use with students.



Jaclyn Corley 11:32

Right. So the first thing that I do when any of any applicant goes to one of my programs is, I have a digital program called College Essay Playbook. And the very first module is all about mindset - about how to really be mindful and aware of your thoughts. And to start to notice when you're doing self-sabotage. When you're saying something that's not true to yourself. And I notice it because it doesn't feel good in my body. If you say a thought that isn't really true, ultimately, I'm a loser, you'll feel it. So you know, oh, that's not actually true, because I feel it. And then work them work with them on mindset and give them some information. What we'll talk about today is that's the clarity. So what topics should you choose? How do you pick a good topic? What is admission are these application essays all about? Which topics should you avoid and then I walk them through the writing strategies. So when you take a look at model essay's that worked, they break it down into here's step-by-step, what this person is doing from start to finish. And here's how you can model it. So for those math, science students who say they're not creative, I've created formulas for them to follow. So they can take their ideas and actually have a structure that simplifies the process.

**M****Moira McCullough** 12:47

So that's so helpful, because as you said, once you work on the mindset, it's confidence building, having your mind work with you, not against you. Don't be so judgmental, that you are just starting off behind the starting line, as you say, and working with students who say that writing is not their forte. They sometimes set themselves up for failure, but you're trying to give them the confidence and self esteem to write and write well trust themselves.

**J****Jaclyn Corley** 13:15

I look at it as a funnel - you have a funnel of creative ideas. If you look at someone like JK Rowling, who wrote Harry Potter, she said it fell into her head. When your mind is open, and you're not having all this inner chatter and self talk that's negative, you actually open up to creative ideas. So you can go for a walk and have a creative idea. But if you're talking to yourself, like this is a closed funnel, you can't. There's nothing that can get through. And it's it's really interesting to having the belief. I'm more of a math/science person. What I asked them, Is this your first time writing college essay? They say yes. I said, so is it reasonable that you don't know how to do this yet? And they say, Yes. Would it be also reasonable if you had a process to learn how to do it to make it easier? Same way you took the LSAT, or same way you study for AP exam? Oh, yeah, that makes sense. And it just breaks apart the belief that they should already know how to do this.

**M****Moira McCullough** 14:07

But you help them with a framework, a structure, they can work through a process to get that point where as you said, all of a sudden, it's so much easier to write, because you have the right mindset confidence. And you're in a position to explore and be creative and come up with some great stories and ideas of how to express themselves. So when they come to you, and they do this brainstorming, and they have an idea of certain topics. I think one of the things you and I talked about, they might not be the topics one would want to use for a college essay. And when we talked about oh, there are there are those great topics. And as you said from the beginning, there are some unique topics like sand, Hurricane Sandy or COVID. I bet so many kids wanted to write about because of the fact that they were impacted by it. Are there certain topics you would say okay, let's not focus on that for the future. ticular essay? And if so, what are they?

**J****Jaclyn Corley** 15:03

Yes, let's dive into that. So great topic because I find that some people skip over this. And

you end up writing an essay that, like you said, if it was Hurricane Sandy, there's a big event that happened right now everyone in the world is dealing with COVID. They actually added a portion to the application where you could say how it was affected by it. So they're not interested in reading essays that everyone else could write too. So you want to share it in a separate way and the way I explain this to applicants is I use a stoplight. So you have your red light topics. Then you have your yellow light topics. And red light topics means don't do it. Stop - don't go there. And then we have yellow light topics, which I say slow down and think about this. Make a decision - you might be able to go hit the gas and go through this or you might want to stop. And I'll share with you some of those topics. And then you have green light topics which we're not going to really go over today. But I can share with you how you can take a yellow light topic and make a decision of whether or not it's red or it's green. Okay, so the first thing is red light topics. And since application essays are personal narratives, they're personal. They're stories and personal stories, there is a line in the sand where we get to personal, there's a line that we have to draw. And a lot of applicants don't necessarily know that line, because it's the first time they're writing for this audience before. So I recommend avoiding topics completely, that make an admissions officer question whether or not you will be able to perform well academically, mentally, emotionally, or socially at their school. So for example, I've since I've worked with a few hundred applicants, I've heard it all and that you'd be surprised at the stories you wouldn't put them two and two together. But some applicants have overcome things like an eating disorder, or an addiction, or they've had bad behavior in the past where they've thought about it, and they chose differently. Maybe they got in trouble. Or some students are living with anxiety or depression or mental illness, sometimes gut health issues that really impact their ability to learn and perform and feel good in their bodies. And what I hear from applicants is that their intention for sharing these very personal stories is often that they want admissions officers to know that they've overcome something challenging. And that's amazing, right, it's a great quality to be able to take something that was really difficult at a young age and come out on the other side of it, or that they're currently experiencing something challenging, and they're working through it. Why I create created the red light topic is this. If it's not done so strategically, well that you are so hyper aware of how it could be read by someone else, the admission officer might have a question about well, will college be too stressful for them? Will the new environment have them go back into an addiction? Because they don't want that they want you to be healthy and happy? And will anxiety get the better of them? And they drop out? Will the things that they're dealing with mentally be too much for them? And so what ultimately happens is that that can leave them with this question. And what the only thing you want to leave them with when they're done reading your essay is yes, we love this person we relate to this person, because what ultimately they're looking for is can I put this person in a classroom that they're going to contribute to in a meaningful way? Will this person make a nice roommate, and they're looking to get to know you and your

character? So these big events might seem like a go to topic, like Hurricane Sandy or COVID. But they're not really telling you about sharing something authentic about yourself. You're sharing about an experience you went through and there's a difference.

M

Moira McCullough 19:01

So as you said, there are some topics that one would think oh my gosh, a student is saying I've overcome. I've overcome something. They're showing resilience. It shows grit, it shows determination to excel in difficult situations. So from the students perspective, I could see why they would say. Oh my gosh, this is such a great topic. Why? Why shouldn't I share that? I crushed it. I came out of this thing and I came out strong. But as you're saying, It's knowing your audience and knowing how that might resonate with that particular reader at that moment.

J

Jaclyn Corley 19:31

Yeah, it's really about being conscious enough and aware, because looking at too if you were applying for a job, you wouldn't necessarily talk about I overcame an addiction. Not that it wasn't an amazing thing. You might talk about it with your co workers when you get there, but you want to get in the door. The purpose is getting in the door. And so that's really where I say it takes so much awareness to be able to write in a way that there's no question and sincerely The first time writing this type of essay before, I don't recommend starting with the hardest thing to write about. And that being said, I think a lot of applicants, another red light topic is adding too much trying to tell your whole entire life story. And 650 words or detail every single thing you've ever been involved in, when the admissions officer already has your activity list. So keep in mind that you want the application essay or series of essays to really show something that they're not getting on the other parts of your application, it's the time for you to share about who you are rather than what you do. And that's where some applicants need some support and help with because no one's really asked them before, well, who are you they can share with you what they do, they can list off I'm a leader, I'm this this this? Who are you is a different question. And so they, they start to deflect with like, here's what happened to me. No, who are you? And so it's a, it's fascinating to watch. And so, I like to say you're sharing, you're not sharing the entire movie, you're sharing a scene that lets us know about your character. So one scene from your life, the more specific the scene, the better, because it makes it memorable for the reader. You want to make it memorable, and you want to make sure that they don't leave you don't leave them with a question.

**M****Moira McCullough** 21:22

And that's so challenging. Those are your red light topics. Can you walk us through the yellow? Have you heard about Anchor, it is the easiest way to make a podcast and it's free. You can use their own creation tools to record and edit your podcast right from your phone. Anchor will distribute your podcasts for you. So it can be heard on Spotify, Apple podcast, iTunes, and many more. You can make money from your podcast with no minimum listenership. If it sounds easy it is because it is here's how you do it. Download the free anchor app, or go to [anchor.fm](https://anchor.fm) to get started.

**J****Jaclyn Corley** 22:13

Okay, so the yellow light topics. These again are the ones that I recommend you slow down and think about do I stop or do I go. And there is a way to make them go topics or green light topics. Number one, and I think we mentioned this with something that's heavy, heavy traumatic events, which hurricanes, natural disasters, or a pandemic. I also include yellow light topics as death, losing a family member, divorce, and illness. And a lot of applicants have experienced something like this. And because it's an emotionally charged event, it becomes something that they really want to talk about. And the reason they want to talk about it, what I've seen is it's cathartic to talk about it. And sometimes this is their first opportunity to share in writing what they experienced. What happened a lot a few years ago, they had essay prompts for the common application. And a lot of applicants would write about their losing their grandparents. And unfortunately, what happened is a lot of teenagers, just because of the age started to lose their grandparents at that age. And it's most times their first experience with that. And so they want to write it. But what ultimately happens is the writing about the other person, or these circumstances or writing about the event experience, the divorce, the illness rather than about themselves. And so the admissions officer learns what happens but not who they are. However, there are ways to go about this in a way that's going to benefit your essay which is looking at the story within that. So for example, one applicant lost his mom when he was 11 or 12 years old. And he was talking to me about it. And I said so we want to make sure the story isn't about your mom, right? Because great essay to write will be about your mom, but we want you to get into college. So he came up with he goes, You know, I found a letter, I found a note I'd written to myself when I was like six or seven years old under my bed after my mom passed away. And it said if you grew up and you build cars, you will not build one per month. And he's like that note devastated me because I had no idea why I wrote it. And it hit him that he talked about the experience of what that note reminded him of. He's like, I'm actually happy I found it because I was going to school to go build cars. And here I was unable to actually do the thing because I was mad and so he used his essay as an opportunity to grow as a person to recognize that we have to let

things go. And we have to really be in the moment and be like, forgive people and move forward and be reflected on how he could use this to let things go really quickly and to value everyday moments. And it was a beautiful essay, because he didn't focus on the event, he focused on his growth.

**M** Moira McCullough 25:23

And that's a totally different type of essays you just said, and as a reader, the first one, it's okay, by the second one you just described, and what you would learn about that particular individual about that son about that student, and that person who overcame this particular situation is so much more impactful than the first essay example.

**J** Jaclyn Corley 25:45

It hits you in your soul. I help applicants with this. How to create, pick a time that makes that person connected to you on a deeper level where they can picture the story. This is where we talk about the mind where they can picture and hear and feel what you felt in that moment in time. So that they know, and they increase your neurons. And that's why people remember stories, rather than you just telling them about an event that happened.

**M** Moira McCullough 26:15

Exactly what is the event and when you're walking me through that I felt a connection. I was like, Oh my gosh, I totally want to read that again, tell me more. And you're right, going back to what you said before, it's who you are, not what you experience. So you need to give something more to the reader about who you are as a person and how you deal with life.

**J** Jaclyn Corley 26:37

And so I have a few more yellow light topics. Sports essays are really go to topic - sports essays and volunteer essays. And the reason is, because everyone experiences that in high school, you probably play some type of sport or volunteer. And so when you think of, well, what can I say about the first topic that probably pops up for most people. I can write about the sport, a player, or volunteering. And what happens is these essays have become overdone, and they also become cliché. So if I see that you're writing about sport, I automatically think you're gonna write about the winning goal. Learning to be part of a team - getting cut or losing a championship. I've read it, and it doesn't resonate with them anymore, because it happened. You have to look at it from an admissions officers

perspective. They've read hundreds, if not thousands of essays. So you want to make sure that you're not doing something that they've read 60 times for that week. And there are there are ways to go about this. So one way is one of the students I work with, he wrote a sports essay but I'm surprised. I'm like, Okay, all right. Let's see what you come up with. And he was so creative and thoughtful and different. So he wrote about what it's like to be the fan of a perpetually losing sports team. And it was brilliant. We learned what you can feel like when they're going to win, or how they lost and the ups and downs of what it's like to deal with life. And he made it as a metaphor for life of dealing with you have got to roll with the punches. You have got to keep going no matter what. And if you really think you're dedicated to something, you have got to continue to be dedicated to it. And someone else wrote about how watching sports was really the glue that held the fabric of his family together. So they always connected through sports. So even if they were in different parts of the country or they came together for sports there's ways to go about that. And with volunteering, a lot of times that goes to a go to topic that's cliché where it becomes they learned more from them than they did for me. And that just has been overdone. And sometimes I find applicants fall into the cedar complex. If they've gone to a country that is a little bit less developed than our own. They want to sometimes write a theoretical piece about solving the world's problems. And ultimately, what happens it comes across as a little bit entitled and lacks awareness of other people's cultures and values and perspectives. And so it just doesn't land for admissions teams. So I say if you can figure out a way to talk about something in it, find the story within the story, something different than go for it. But otherwise not, I make those red light topics.

M

Moira McCullough 29:17

I love that sports analogy one because I've been in that position many times a fan of a team that's been on the losing edge for so long. And I think that anyone reading that would be just able to connect and sympathize and say, Oh my gosh, I feel the same way. And that makes that particular experience different. I would also throw leadership in because so many students want to talk about leadership and leadership in terms of sports or volunteering. Those are topics as you said, that you would want to check out as a reader to make sure that there's something that differentiates that leadership experience from another

J

Jaclyn Corley 29:58

That's perfect What you just said there because, and I know this is a podcast but your body language. Again, I have it too. And that's what I do for a living, right. And I love reading these essays. But as soon as you start to write that I've already stopped listening before I started. And you can't do that, right? These people are reading dozens of essays a

day. So it's an awareness of audience. And you're basically telling the audience, when you write a different essay, I care about you. And I understand. And they connect to you, because you're actually saying, I care.

M

Moira McCullough 30:32

I love that because I know your time is very important right now, because you're reading thousands of essays. And to value that admissions readers time with an essay that makes them think or react to something that they're sharing, or challenged them to look at a situation from a different angle.

J

Jaclyn Corley 30:54

That's it. Make it an enjoyable experience, create a picture for them in their mind, so they can remember it later. And that goes to with the last yellow light topic is polarizing topics, like religion or politics, unless again, there's a deeper story. The reason behind that is again, from earlier, we said, you're going to be sharing a classroom with people who have different beliefs, you're going to be sharing, you could potentially be sharing a room with somebody who has a completely different background from you. And so that being said, we want to make sure that you can adapt and actually contribute. Rather than saying, I'm writing you're wrong. So if you're writing about a polarizing topic, like religion, or politics, there needs to be a deeper story. For example, I had an applicant write about write an essay about coming out in an ultra religious school. And he was so mindful not to look down upon anyone's beliefs, he did it so tactfully, he was like, I understand where they're coming from, because I grew up with it. And he was, he was impressed with how many people were supportive of him. He focused on his own experience, and his own growth and learning to find his voice in that environment, rather than talking about the religion, or the belief.

M

Moira McCullough 32:12

But as you said, that's a really hard task to accomplish. And one has to be really skilled writer, which not all students would be in a position to be able to accomplish. In a short timeframe, you're taking a gamble, it's one that you're either going to do really well at, or one that will not resonate well and will affect your readers perception of you, in hurt your chances of getting into that particular college.

J

Jaclyn Corley 32:43

What I recommend that applicants do if they're stuck on a topic where they say I have to write it, and it's one of those topics where you're like, I don't know if you should do that. I have them, especially death, because it becomes a eulogy. Actually, it stops becoming about the person, it's about the person writing it. And it's all about the other person. I say spend the evening write every single thing you've ever wanted to say to that person, I had a student who lost his best friend. And he very unfortunately, was the last person to talk to him, and they got a fight into a fight right before it happened. And he had to process that I said, you can't write a 650 word essay about the biggest event that ever happened in your life. So he went home and he wrote 15 pages, everything he wanted to say. And once it was out, once he got it all out and said everything you needed to say was cathartic for him. And he could start from looking at where's the story here? Once sometimes I find that they once they get it out, they no longer need to write about it.

M

Moira McCullough 33:41

Right. So almost as a coach, you're saying, All right, get it all out, do a free form type of writing style, write all that you want about that particular subject, and get it out of your system. And that's a form of healing or a way to process it. As you said, once you've done that, it's like, Okay, I'm good to go, you know, I can write about another topic that will be more meaningful and applicable to the college admissions process.

J

Jaclyn Corley 34:08

And you're right - it's awareness itself and awareness of other at the same time, it's being aware of how am I presenting myself? How am I showing up, and also aware of how the other person is reading it? One of the things I have applicants do at the very end is I go read line by line how someone could read it differently. Yeah, so line by line. Is there another thing another way someone could interpret this that you didn't mean? And that helps them to go? Oh, yeah, no, I didn't mean to come across that way. And it really starts, because that's a skill when you get into school into college, right? And it would be for looking for jobs, how can I value the other person's time and also see it from their perspective, so that I can maneuver through this process.

M

Moira McCullough 34:59

So that's the type of process that you take students through and work with them. And I keep on going back, you said it when we first talk, being self aware, you have to constantly bring that back. That's something put yourself in the reader shoes, how do you think they will react and respond? And is this in a way that you would want to be

considered for that particular? college? So talk to us a little bit, you have online programs, and you have webinars that you offer for students and families. Can you share a little bit about those particular programs?

J

Jaclyn Corley 35:32

So I have a different programs, I have a digital course called College Essay Playbook. And that's four modules condensed. It's all of the strategies on mindset on getting clarity. So how do you pick your essay topic, what our admissions officers are looking for? What are they looking for each of these prompts, and also the rating strategies. So how to tell a story how to be aware of each line by line, your hook your body paragraphs, I dissect the model essays that worked and created them into formulas. And the last module of that is going over really fine tuning what what are some of the winning qualities that essays have in common that you wouldn't know to think about? Because you're learning this for the first time. So College Essay Playbook was something I created to help my private coaching clients. So anyone who works with me one on one also goes to college essay playbook, because it completely cuts out that time period of writing drafts that just don't work. It explains everything in a really simple way so that applicants can feel - Oh, okay, that makes sense rather than how they were. They get a lot of information from their families that are misinformation simply because parents haven't had to write in this style for a very long period of time, if not ever, and the admissions process is so different. So I do that. You can find that on the [CollegeEssayCaptain.com](http://CollegeEssayCaptain.com). The link to College Essay Playbook and also different coaching programs. So I work one-on-one and coach applicants where with both mindset and writing strategies. I know if an applicant isn't coming up with a topic, it's not because they don't have a topic, it's because they feel stuck or overwhelmed or frustrated, and they're blocking it. Right. So that's really what I do is maneuver them out of these disempowered states that they have access to their genius.

M

Moira McCullough 37:22

And then the online programs, are they a specific timeframe? Are they a four week six week program, please share a little bit more information on that particular area of your expertise.

J

Jaclyn Corley 37:34

For College Essay Playbook, it's four weeks. It's four modules. I also release it at this point in time, I release all the modules at once, because they're not particularly long. And also,

for sake of time, I like you to be able to move through something at your own pace. So if four weeks is too long, because you have Estes do an eight weeks, then move a little bit quicker into that. So when you purchase that, you have access to it immediately. And you can go through it has brainstorming activities, mindset shift, even meditations and things to calm yourself and ground yourself and learn how to break from your heart inside of your head. And it's just really a powerful tool,

M

Moira McCullough 38:12

You're going to have to offer one for professionals.

J

Jaclyn Corley 38:15

Yes, right. Forget the college and career, it's almost like that can be applied to any aspect of life. If you had any tips for those particular high school students who are getting ready to write their essays, if you're stuck on picking a topic, it's not because you don't have the right topic. It's because you're stuck in a fearful state, or you're feeling overwhelmed. So my recommendation is the very first thing you do is to start to breathe, and breathe, really and ground yourself and feel like what are some things that you love about yourself and make a less to simplify that process, make a list of everything you really appreciate about yourself, ask other people and start to look at Okay, I like these three qualities about myself the most? All right, at what point in time, did I share all three of those qualities in one moment. And that helps them to start Oh, there are plenty of times that I've done that, okay. So make a list of that. And then start to run it through the are these topics I should avoid or these green light topics. And if it feels good, my recommendation, I'll leave this parting tip with that. The essay that you're supposed to write is the one that feels good to you to write. It will feel good. If you when I listened to applicant, the essay I have them pick is the one that they can talk fluently about forever. They'll start they'll get excited and they'll be kind of this happened and this happened this year, all these details. And they'll tell me how they felt and they thought about it. There's flow. If they're trying really hard to get this topic out and it's like they can't finish a paragraph. It's not the right topic. Some students get intimidated by looking at a model essay. That's so good. But the reality of it is that is a finished product. And I've seen applicants go from not being able to write like that to being able to write like that sometimes, literally overnight when they have an approach in the right mindset. Take the time to learn it, and you will exactly what you said. Some people don't believe me, unlike when, when you're writing about a topic you enjoy, and you're in flow, these essays are fun. And I hear that from a lot of students, especially the boys, they'll surely don't tell my mom, but this is fun. They like it because it's actually something that's meaningful and authentic.

**M****Moira McCullough 40:34**

So what do you wish you knew before you attended college?

**J****Jaclyn Corley 40:41**

Yes, like what do I wish I knew when I was there was emotional, having more emotional intelligence. Learning how to navigate stress. Learning how to create habits that actually fulfilled me. What I did -what actually did fulfill me, knowing these. Asking the right questions can really shift someone's life. So I realized I went through a lot of events and in my college experience that were traumatic, that were painful and lost a lot of family members. And I've used that now to go, oh, if I did, if that happened to me, it's happened to other people. And so how can I be a resource and support what I've learned so that other people can feel better while they're going through this college experience? And to ask that question, what do I wish I knew before attending college another part of that is, I really wish I knew had more financial literacy. I think that learning how to write application essays can then be used for scholarship essays. If you learn this skill, you are opening up opportunities to make hundreds of dollars an hour versus working a job for \$8 an hour and then having to pay thousands of dollars of student loans every month. So apply for scholarships, if there's someone listening, start, make it a job. You know, if you're a parent, pay your team 10 - 20 per application, do something to encourage them. I use my common application essay to win a scholarship at Burger King for \$1,000. I did zero extra work. And I got \$1,000. So if you plan ahead and do this the right way and learn the process of writing personal narrative, you were really expanding your ability to attract scholarship. I actually created a program in addition to this outside of the college essay realm, but I created a program called College Success Strategies which deals with the emotional, social, physical and mental wellness. So all of your mindset about setting up great habits, and learning financial literacy and things and things out. Everything that I wish I knew in college, was I created this other program to help college students with that because I knew when I went to college, how to perform well academically, I got straight A's. I was at the top of everything, everything else, every other area of my life. I didn't have a role model, or support. Or I knew how to make friends. But friendships that would last friendships that were valuable to me with people who are aligned with my vision for my life, rather than just the people I ended up connecting with because I lived with them.

**M****Moira McCullough 43:26**

Jaclyn, thank you so much for coming on our show you had so many helpful tips and I look forward to seeing your friendly face again. Thank you so much Jaclyn for joining us today to help educate us about establishing the right mindset to write a college essay and

the topics to avoid. Jaclyn uses NLP neuro linguistic programming techniques to work with our students on establishing a mindset that will help not hinder their ability to write. Keep in mind the importance of being self aware of how you come across in your essay and self aware of the reader and how they might interpret your essay. Knowing what topics fall into the red, yellow and green zone are important to think about. You can find all of our show notes and links to the helpful resources mentioned throughout our conversation on our website at [college scoops comm slash podcasts](http://collegescoops.com). You can learn more about Jaclyn and her website at [The College Essay Captain on Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). Please take a couple of minutes to rate review and subscribe to College Scoops. Thank you for listening to our College Scoops podcast. Our entire College Scoops team strives to make the college journey a little bit easier, less stressful, fun and tasty by sharing all the insights groups we have curated along the way. We would love to hear from you about topics to cover and your ideas and everything college related. Reach out to us at [collegescoops.com](http://collegescoops.com) or follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).