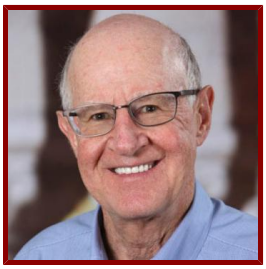
Stanford



William Damon

Professor of Education, Emeritus

Continuing Studies

Curriculum Vitae available Online

CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Admin. Support**

  Elayne P Weissler-Martello

  Email elayne@stanford.edu

Bio

BIO

William Damon is Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University and former Senior Fellow, by courtesy, at the Hoover Institution. He is one of the world's leading researchers on human development across the lifespan, and he has pioneered the scientific study of how purpose in life develops. Damon is author of The Path to Purpose; Greater Expectations (winner of the Parent's Choice Book Award); Some Do Care: Lives of Moral Commitment (with Anne Colby); Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet; and A Round of Golf with my Father: The New Psychology of Exploring your Past to Make Peace with your Present. Damon's work in recent years includes a study of the development of purpose in adulthood and a study of purpose in American higher education. Damon has been elected to membership in the National Academy of Education and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

CURRENT ROLE AT STANFORD

Professor of Education, Emeritus

Mentor, Distinguished Careers Institute

Fall 2026 CSP course PSY 104, Stanford Continuing Studies

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, (1999-2026)
- Professor of Education, Stanford Graduate School of Education, (1997-2026)
- Director, Stanford Center on Adolescence, (1997-2025)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2014 -)
- Fellow, American Educational Research Association (2007 -)
- Fellow, National Academy of Education (2004 -)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2014 - present)
- Elected Member, National Academy of Education (2000 - present)

- University Professor, Brown University (1996 - 1998)
- The Mittlemann Family Director, Center for the Study of Human Development (1992 - 1998)
- Professor of Education, Brown University (1989 - 1998)
- Chair of Education, Brown University (1989 - 1992)
- Chair of Education, Clark University (1988 - 1989)
- Dean of the Graduate School, Clark University (1983 - 1987)
- Professor of Psychology, Clark University (1982 - 1989)
- Associate Professor of Psychology, Clark University (1978 - 1982)
- Assistant Professor of Psychology, Clark University (1973 - 1978)

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- PhD, University of California, Berkeley , Developmental Psychology (1973)
- BA, Harvard University (1967)

LINKS

- Stanford Center on Adolescence: http://coa.stanford.edu

Research & Scholarship

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Child and Adolescent Development
- Cognitive Development
- Curriculum Studies & Design
- Higher Education
- Moral, Character, and Purpose Development
- Postsecondary Access
- Social-Emotional Learning

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Dr. Damon studies the development of purpose throughout the lifespan. Recently he has conducted a study on the development of purpose during the college years. In addition, he has conducted research on how professionals can do work that is at the same time masterful and highly purposeful. Damon has written several books on purpose and character development, and he has been the editor-in-chief of New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development and The Handbook of Child Psychology. Damon's research has led to widely-recognized educational methods at the secondary, higher-education, and professional levels.

PROJECTS

- Handbook of Child Psychology, 1998, 2006 editions
- The Thriving Indicators Project - The John Templeton Foundation

Teaching

COURSES

2025-26

- Social, Emotional, and Personality Development: EDUC 365 (Win)

- The Development of Purpose Across the Lifespan: EDUC 471 (Spr)

2024-25

- Social, Emotional, and Personality Development: EDUC 365 (Win)
- The Development of Purpose Across the Lifespan: EDUC 471 (Spr)

2023-24

- Social, Emotional, and Personality Development: EDUC 365 (Win)
- The Development of Purpose Across the Lifespan: EDUC 471 (Spr)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)

Ma Cherrysse Ulsa, Lillian Wolfe

Doctoral Dissertation Co-Advisor (AC)

Brendan Fereday, Yue Jia

Doctoral (Program)

Brendan Fereday, Yue Jia, Lillian Wolfe

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **The Psychology of Purpose: A Comprehensive Approach** *REVIEW OF GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY*
  Damon, W.
  2025
- **Purpose development in the context of higher education** *APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL SCIENCE*
  Damon, W., Malin, H., Colby, A.
  2024
- **Family purpose: an empirical investigation of collective purpose (SEPT, 10.1080/17439760.2023.2254738, 2023)** *JOURNAL OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY*
  Bronk, K., Liechtenstein, H., El Sehity, T., Mitchell, C., Postlewaite, E., Colby, A., Damon, W., Swanson, Z.
  2024
- **Scientific and Ethical Mandates in the Study of Purpose** *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*
  Bronk, K., Damon, W.
  2022; 66 (3): 219-221
- **EDUCATION FOR A PURPOSEFUL LIFE** *EDUCATION*
  Damon, W., Colby, A.
  edited by Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M.
  2022: 181-193
- **A Round of Golf with my Father: The New Psychology of Exploring your Past to Make Peace with your Present**
  Damon, W.
  Templeton Press.2021
- **They do care: An interview with William Damon and Anne Colby on moral development** *JOURNAL OF MORAL EDUCATION*
  Damon, W., Colby, A., King, P.
  2018; 47 (4): 383–96
- **Purpose and Character Development in Early Adolescence.** *Journal of youth and adolescence*
  Malin, H., Liauw, I., Damon, W.

2017

- **Why a True Account of Human Development Requires Exemplar Research** *EXEMPLAR METHODS AND RESEARCH: STRATEGIES FOR INVESTIGATION*
  Damon, W., Colby, A.
  2013; 142: 13-25
- **The path to purpose: How young people find their calling in life**
  Damon, W.
  Simon and Schuster.2009
- **Family purpose: an empirical investigation of collective purpose** *JOURNAL OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY*
  Bronk, K., Mitchell, C., Postlewaite, E., Colby, A., Damon, W., Swanson, Z.
  2023
- **Civic Purpose: An Integrated Construct for Understanding Civic Development in Adolescence** *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*
  Malin, H., Ballard, P. J., Damon, W.
  2015; 58 (2): 103-130
- **Motivations for Civic Participation Among Diverse Youth: More Similarities than Differences** *RESEARCH IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*
  Ballard, P. J., Malin, H., Porter, T. J., Colby, A., Damon, W.
  2015; 12 (1-2): 63-83
- **Diverse Routes to Civic Participation Across Ages and Cultures: An Introduction INTRODUCTION** *RESEARCH IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*
  Ballard, P. J., Pavlova, M. K., Silbereisen, R. K., Damon, W.
  2015; 12 (1-2): 1–9
- **Entrepreneurship in young adults: Initial findings from the young entrepreneurs study** *JOURNAL OF APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY*
  Geldhof, G. J., Malin, H., Johnson, S. K., Porter, T., Bronk, K. C., Weiner, M. B., Agans, J. P., Mueller, M. K., Hunt, D., Colby, A., Lerner, R. M., Damon, W.
  2014; 35 (5): 410-421
- **Fostering Youth Entrepreneurship: Preliminary Findings From the Young Entrepreneurs Study** *JOURNAL OF RESEARCH ON ADOLESCENCE*
  Geldhof, G. J., Porter, T., Weiner, M. B., Malin, H., Bronk, K. C., Agans, J. P., Mueller, M., Damon, W., Lerner, R. M.
  2014; 24 (3): 431-446
- **Failing Liberty 101** *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*
  Damon, W.
  2012; 69 (7): 22-26
- **Introduction to the Special Issue on American Identity** *APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL SCIENCE*
  Damon, W.
  2011; 15 (2): 51-53
- **The Bridge to Character** *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*
  Damon, W.
  2010; 67 (5): 36-39
- **The why question: Teachers can instill a sense of purpose** *Education Next*
  Damon, W.
  2009; 9 (3): 84-85
- **The moral - How do we help students understand that academic excellence can get them where they want to go?** *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*
  Damon, W.
  2008; 66 (2): 8-?
- **Good work: When excellence and ethics meet**
  Gardner, H. E., Csikszentmihalyi, M., Damon, W.

Basic Books.2008

- **Education and the path to purpose** *Independent School Magazine*
  Damon, W.
  2008; 68 (1): 61-64
- **The Moral North Star.** *Educational Leadership*
  Damon, W.
  2008; 66 (2): 8-13
- **Dispositions and teacher assessment the need for a more rigorous definition** *JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION*
  Damon, W.
  2007; 58 (5): 365-369
- **Taking ultimate responsibility** *Responsibility at work: How leading professionals act (or don't act) responsibly*
  Damon, W., Bronk, K. C.
  2007: 21-42
- **Taking philanthropy seriously: Beyond noble intentions to responsible giving**
  Damon, W., Verducci, S.
  Indiana University Press.2006
- **Handbook of child psychology, social, emotional, and personality development**
  Damon, W., Lerner, R. M., Eisenberg, N.
  John Wiley & Sons.2006
- **Looking back, for a change: a story of directions in child and adolescent development.** *New directions for child and adolescent development*
  Damon, W.
  2005: 15-19
- **Passion & mastery in balance: toward good work in the professions** *DAEDALUS*
  Damon, W., Colby, A., Bronk, K., Ehrlich, T.
  2005; 134 (3): 27-35
- **What is positive youth development?** *Conference on Positive Development - Realizing the Potential of Youth*
  Damon, W.
  SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC.2004: 13–24
- **The moral development children** *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*
  Damon, W.
  1999; 281 (2): 72-78
- **Political development for a democratic future: A commentary** *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES*
  Damon, W.
  1998; 54 (3): 621-627