

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR
LUTHERAN SCHOOL
PRESENTS:
PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC
Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

The Gift of Struggle

Are we stealing from our children? Despite our best intentions, we may be robbing them of the opportunity to struggle, leaving them vulnerable to under-achievement and suicide.

Schools today face an epidemic of underachievers, yet these children believe with all their hearts that they are incapable of doing the work asked of them. They say school is boring, irrelevant, or too hard. They may seem confused, under constant stress, or incapable of doing more.

Well-meaning friends may suggest that parents be more understanding, more supportive or more helpful with studies. Sometimes these tips are helpful, but often they are the worst possible advice.

Mom and Dad “To-the-Rescue”

These same children may have similar problems when it comes to doing tasks at home. They have learned at an early age that adults will rescue them when the going gets tough. Children quickly become addicted to adult help and begin to believe the adults’ unstated message that they can succeed only with assistance.

Underachievers often have parents who had to struggle when they were children. They grew up to say, “I don’t want my kids to struggle like I did. They deserve better.” Their children live in a home where struggle is an enemy rather than an opportunity.

The problem was less severe years ago. Parents preoccupied with the Depression, World War II, and scratching out a living, gave their kids tasks that forced

them to help the family. Struggling at home prepared children to struggle at school.

Today’s underachievers believe failure is too painful. Yet recent studies demonstrate children denied the opportunity to struggle during their early years are at high risk for suicide. They are unable to see themselves solving problems.

Solutions

The answer is to give children responsibilities. Children need jobs to do around the house, and they need parents who consider this a top priority. The most effective way to do this is to say to your children, “There’s no hurry on the chores. I just want them done before your next meal.” Missing a meal is momentarily unpleasant, but avoiding a struggle hurts self-concept in the long run.

I was recently asked if chores should be assigned to a teenager who has a lot of studying, many school responsibilities, and a part-time job. Teenagers become experts at believing they have more important things to do than chores. They even decide that studying is more important. My answer was, “Absolutely! Chores come first. Say to your youngster, “I hope you get your chores done fast enough so the rest of your activities won’t suffer.”

Sylvia B. Rimm, Ph.D., author of the *Underachievement Syndrome*, says many learning problems at school are cured when children are given chores at home. One of her 12 tips for helping underachievers: “Children feel more tension when they are worrying about their work than when they are doing their work.”

Struggle Produces S-T-R-E-T-C-H-I-N-G AND GROWING