

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

How to Give Your Kids an Unfair Advantage-Part II

In Part I we explored the advantage children gain by being given the opportunity to struggle. In this article we'll explore specific techniques that parents can use to give their children a head start in life.

Give chores - Regardless of what your children say about chores being unfair or that none of their friends have to do chores, children need to contribute to the welfare of the family.

To get your children performing their chores, begin by spending a couple of weeks listing all the jobs that have to be done for the family to survive. This list should include all the jobs parents usually do, as well as the things children need their parents to do for them. Have your kids select the jobs they think they would most like to do. In the event they don't like any of the jobs, have them choose the ones they hate the least.

A proven technique for getting children to do their chores is to say, "There is no hurry each day to do the jobs. Just be sure they are done before the end of the day." Do not remind them about the chores. If the jobs are not done by the end of the day, say nothing and let the kids go to bed. Let them sleep for 30 to 45 minutes and then wake them up, reminding them that the end of the day is near and they are to get up and finish their work. Don't take "no" for an answer.

Provide matching funds - Kids are bombarded with media advertisements about their need for material things. It is tempting to give them all you can as a show of love. It may also be tempting to say, "You don't need those things." Both of these responses rob the child of a chance to struggle.

Times when children ask you to buy something are opportunities to provide success through struggle. This is the time for the parent to implement "matching funds." Tommy

announces, "I really need those basketball shoes. All the other kids have them and they're only \$125."

The wise parent responds, "You ought to have them. I can't wait to see how you look in them. I'll contribute \$35. As soon as you earn the rest, you'll have those shoes."

Child: "But it's not fair. The other kids' parents buy them."

Parent: "I know. It's rough living the way we do. Let me know when you're ready for the \$35."

Tommy will wear those new shoes with greater pride once he has struggled to earn them.

Your value system should dictate the amount you provide each time. Sometimes you contribute 75%, sometimes 10%, and sometimes you might even contribute 90%. There is no firm rule. And remember that a gift once in a while doesn't hurt a thing.

Don't pay for good grades or punish for bad grades - As long as children have others who will worry about their problems, they don't worry about them. It's as if they say, "My parents have that worry well in hand. No sense in both of us worrying about it." Parents who offer to pay for good grades, or punish for bad ones, are taking over too much of the worry about grades. This also raises the odds the child will see achievement as something that is being coerced rather than offered.

Once a youngster sees grades as part of a power struggle, the issue is no longer the value of a good education, but who is going to win. A child in a power struggle can see only one choice: winning the power struggle. However, as long as a child has two choices, to succeed or not to succeed, there is still a good chance of success.

Children who earn what they get gradually learn self-respect, resourcefulness, the value of money, and most importantly, that problems are solved through struggle.