

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

. . . on Parental Pressure

By Bill Welker, EdD

It is easy for us to say that children today “have more than we ever dreamed of having.” However, they also inherited some negative off-springs of today’s highly competitive society. The pressures of the modern world are more than many children can endure with the advent of increased teenage suicides.

Without question, most of the stress that our children face comes from adults. We expect our children to excel in everything, both in and out of the school environment. The question we, as parents, must ask ourselves this: *Does our society allow children to enjoy childhood before pushing them into adult roles?*

Unfortunately, our society does not. Thus, we often expect them to be little adults early in their lives.

Nobody can dispute that our technological, fast-paced world has put much pressure on our children. Then there is the pressure of succeeding in schools. Now many if not all states require academic assessment of all children at the end of the year. There is much pressure placed on the teachers to achieve “student-learning” goals. Off course, that pressure trickles down to the students, including kids in the elementary level.

Parents from all walks of life are concerned about their children’s friends and social groups, or lack of either. Furthermore, they have plans for their children’s futures, which often make it hard for their children to live for today – and enjoy their youth. Finally, many young people experience the unnoticed strain of

obligations to their parents – or promises to follow their parents’ professional career.

Let us also not forget the fundamental pressures of family life. For example, unemployed parents, separated and/or divorced parents, sibling rivalries and brothers/sisters who are achieving on a higher level all compound the pressures on contemporary youths.

So, what can we do as parents to help lessen these internal and external pressures placed on our children? First, we must re-evaluate our cultural attitudes – especially those dealing with failure. Second, we need to assist a child who needs help in a personal predicament that may be hard for him or her to understand or cope with. Finally, we must attempt to convert any failure into an opportunity for our children to better evaluate their situation. Often, it simply means helping them to focus or redirect their thoughts on more appropriate or realistic goals.

In practice, we need to offer each child caring concern. We should always give each child love, compassion, and a sense of possessing something about which he or she can feel important. This can be accomplished by stressing characteristics that are likely to develop into individual strengths. Then growth is likely to continue in a positive direction.

As parents, you need no fancy equipment or education to do these things. It doesn’t take training or experience with children to be a successful parent. The key is common sense when dealing with all your child’s successes and failures. Most importantly, let them know that it’s “OK” to fail because that’s how we learn.

My older brother and I were blessed with loving, caring parents. Our mother taught us about God and our father taught us about life. If there was pressure in our home, it involved only doing the best that we could do. If we did our best – pass or fail, win or lose – Mom and Dad supported us to the fullest.

Now your challenge as parents in this modern world is to help your children develop into happy and effective adults in this society. You must view schools as not just institutions of learning, but also as havens of wholesome social development. You must work hand in hand with teachers to see to it that your children experience success and gain positive self-concepts. Undue pressure has no place in this scheme.

It all boils down to your attitudes concerning the progress of your children in school and life. How you handle their triumphs and defeats has a lot to do with their emotional development. Never forget that some children need more patience and understanding than others. In such cases, compassionate nurture, not pressure, is the essential component.

Please do not misunderstand me. You must have expectations for your children. If you expect nothing from them, that, more than likely, is what you will get. However, the important ingredient is having the wisdom to ask the question: What are reasonable expectations for each of my children?

Remember, in subtle ways, every child is uniquely different. Thus, you must have an awareness of such contrasts in character and personality when setting goals for your children.

In closing, you must constantly evaluate your motives when raising your children. Sometimes, in our eagerness, we push our children toward unrealistic

goals. Goals we have manufactured, forgetting the realistic capabilities of our children. This is when our children begin to feel the pressure. Do note; childhood pressure can include the slightest gesture or comment, such as: “Your brother can do it. Why can’t you?”

Do not fall into that trap!

Parent Proverb

“Speak when you are angry, and you’ll make the best speech you’ll ever regret.”

- L. J. Peter

Next Month’s Column: “Parents and Sportsmanship”

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