

Parents, It's Time To Stop Undermining Our Kids' Teachers

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I am the father of three children, a son (age eight) and two daughters (ages seven and four). My wife is a school teacher who has taught elementary-aged children for the last 15 years. Since my wife is a teacher, I have spent countless hours listening to teachers tell their stories. This has caused me to recognize some things I would like to share with my fellow parents.

We are doing a huge disservice to our kids. We are raising a generation of children who are going to be incapable of succeeding in the modern era. They are being taught to be egocentric and to give up, often before even trying.

In this post I want to recount a number of lessons I have gleaned from contact with so many teachers over these last years.

Parents, you are not your child's best friend, you are their parent

If I only get one point across to my fellow parents in this post it is that you are not your child's friend, you are their parent. Your job is to instill good behaviours and morals and enforce the rules. Too many parents I meet think that they are supposed to be their child's best friend first, and parent second.

That is a mistake. A best friend is a person who supports you in good times and bad but does not hold you accountable for your actions or discipline you. That is why we have parents.

Parents, learned helplessness is your fault, not your child's

If there is one true failing that our generation of parents have instilled in our children it is learned helplessness, which is simply the knowledge that if they say "I can't do something" their parent

will complete the task for them. In doing so, we are raising a generation of kids who either give up after one try or don't even try in the first place.

Failure is part of growing up and kids need to learn to fail, then pick themselves up, brush themselves off and try again. They need to figure out how to follow instructions and they need to figure out what steps to take when they are not given instructions but simply a task to accomplish.

Show your kids how to do something (or give them the instructions), then step back and let them try themselves. Sure they will do it less efficiently than you might, but that is part of growing up. They will get better if given the chance, but if they are never given the chance they will never learn.

There is nothing that frustrates a teacher more than a child who won't even try to complete a task, yet that is what they see every day because too many helicopter parents do all the hard things for their kids leaving their children incapable, ill-equipped or unwilling to try and figure out how to accomplish tasks on their own.

Parents, you must advocate for your kids but you must also support your child's teacher

A lot of parents have been taught that it is their job to advocate for their kids. That is absolutely true. But remember, advocating for your child should not take away from your responsibility to support your child's teacher. Supporting your child's teacher means listening to them and acknowledging what they say about your child because, believe it or not, your child may behave differently out of your presence than they do in it.

Many parents also seem to miss the fact that teachers are professionals. Just because everyone has gone to school does not mean everyone is an expert in teaching. When you contradict or question your child's teacher in front of your child, you are telling your child that the teacher's authority is not to be respected.

When a teacher tells you about something, don't turn to your child and ask if what their teacher is saying is true. You may think you are involving your child in the discussion, but what you have actually done is to question that teacher's reliability to their face. Think of it from the teacher's perspective. You have essentially told them that you won't believe what they just told you until your child confirms it.

Parents, your child's teacher cannot replace your role in your child's education

A lot of parents have been incorrectly led to believe that teachers can teach their kids all the life lessons they need in school. As parents we are the people responsible for instilling good and respectful behaviours in our children, not schools.

A lot of parents also say "I'll leave that for my kid's teacher to cover." Well, think of the numbers. Your child's teacher is with them for about seven hours a day, five days a week, for

about 30 weeks a year. That is not enough time to teach them how to behave on top of teaching them the curriculum.

Your job as a parent is to set an example and teach your children the important lessons of life. Your child's teachers can supplement your lessons, but you are the ones who your kids will imitate, so give them something good to imitate.

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