DO WE DO TOO MUCH FOR OUR CHILDREN INSTEAD OF TEACHING THEM LIFE SKILLS?

Ask yourself if as a parent you do too many things and solve too many problems for your kids that they are entirely capable of doing and solving themselves.

Being a good parent does require that we stay actively involved in our children’s life. But when we deprive our children of responsibility by attempting to smooth their journey through life, we are not doing our kids a favor. Instead, we are bringing them up to avoid taking personal responsibility and to expect that others will take care of things for them. Our parental responsibility requires that we teach our children the skills to independently manage life’s problems and obstacles.

The future is unpredictable, and only a parent can be trusted to prepare their children for it. Everything learned early on in life will affect your child’s future success. This is why kids need to learn how to think for themselves, to take responsibility for their actions and choices, and to solve problems and deal with obstacles.

How do we teach our children these important life skills? Parents have to play the role of coach and teacher, not of doer or fixer. When an opportunity arises, teach your child how to do a task, patiently coaching them through the learning process. This method of parenting is the best way to help your child cultivate their problem-solving skills and experience responsibility.

Kids that do not learn to think for themselves, but instead rely on their parents to do it for them, are more likely as teens to follow their peers into disastrous and harmful choices. Teaching them to carefully consider the choices before them will help them develop the skills they need to face and overcome new tasks and challenging obstacles in the future.

Kids have to understand that there are consequences to every choice they make, and they have to learn to accept the consequences of their choices. Learning to take responsibility for the actions one takes requires being given opportunities to make low-risk choices and experience the resulting consequences. After seeing the results of their choice, ask them what they thought of that choice. It is essential that your children are “learning from their mistakes.”

From a young age, kids have to be given the opportunity to solve their own low-risk problems. Otherwise, they will lose out on the chance to nurture an important life skill, and as adults will be utterly unprepared to deal with problems of much higher risk. If your child has never tried new or difficult things, they will not know where to start when confronting an obstacle. And if they have never failed at anything, they won’t know how to pick themselves up and try again. Challenges and setbacks are a part of life, and it is absolutely important that parents teach their children how to manage them.
Furthermore, facing challenges is a great way for kids to grow and mature. It is not easy to see your kids go through difficult times, but giving them this opportunity to fix things is absolutely vital to their personal growth. Teach and coach them through the difficulties, while letting them discover their own capabilities. Learning to manage obstacles and setbacks at a young age will make your children stronger and prepare them for the future.

In contrast, interfering with the learning process runs the risk of stunting your child’s growth and preventing them from developing the courage and experience they need to try new and difficult things. Every time a child successfully overcomes a new problem on their own that at first seems insurmountable, they gain an enormous amount of strength, courage, and confidence from that experience. They now go through life self-assured; when contemplating life’s future obstacles, they will say to themselves “I can take the next thing that comes along.”

It is the difficult twists and turns in life that often teach us the most about how strong we really are. For this reason, it is important that you allow your children to come up with their own solutions so they can discover their capabilities and learn to be resilient in the face of adversity. Confronting their own problems will allow your children to learn from their mistakes, and overcoming those problems will make them stronger and more capable. Experience and the learning that comes from it are essential to becoming a responsible and capable adult.

At some point in their life, your child will ask you for advice on whatever problem they are facing at the moment. It is very important that you let them know that there are infinite solutions to any problem, and that solving problems is simply a matter of taking methodical steps. Learning to solve a problem takes time and practice, but solving a problem is nothing more than a routine process: identification of all the options, consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of each option, and finally taking decisive action. Remind your child that for life’s most challenging obstacles there will be no correct path, only proper deliberation.

By nurturing these life skills in your children, you will equip them with the preparation they need to deal with life’s most pressing obstacles such as peer pressure, homework and exam difficulties, as well as college and career challenges. A parent’s most important responsibility is to educate their children, this includes the duty to help their children learn to think for themselves, to take responsibility for the actions and choices, and how to deal with life’s many difficult obstacles, and not to do or fix things for them. It is definitely tough work, but you can and must do it.

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” This saying means the following: It is more worthwhile to teach someone to do something than to do it for them.

If you need help in how to put this advice into practice, meet with your child’s school counselor and/or teacher.