Help Your Children Become Strong Adults—You’ll be Glad You Did

Below are some ideas to help parents achieve the goal of their children moving into adulthood with a mentally strong compass. Include the following ideas—beginning early in their lives so they become an automatic process for their future.

Reverse the tendency to feed into the, “It was all their fault attitude,” and teach them ways to accept defeat. Explain and model that rejection and failure are just a part of life. Help them learn ways to recognize what happened in a positive way, and give them guidance to learn from the experience.

Avoid taking the, “I’m such an insensitive parent” attitude, and be consistent in your parenting. Children who experience inconsistency may develop manipulative ways of dealing with problems. If you ground them, don’t relent—unless, of course, you were on your last nerve and made it a lifetime grounding—that should be re-evaluated.

Although your child is very special to you, try not to encourage him/her to be “the center of attention” because this can often put the child in a position of being so self-absorbed that it is impossible for him/her to value the strengths in his/her peers.

Keep lines straight regarding the manner of choices and avoid their taking “charge of you and the household.” Guide your children in the choices they make. This is true for determining what to eat, where to go, etc. These are decisions that must be made by the parents. Input from the children may be beneficial, but they should not control the family decision.

It is hard, but critical, that children “make mistakes” as making mistakes aids to understanding and learning to assess and re-invent. Avoid making it right by taking a forgotten lunch or last night’s homework to school rather than allowing the child to take the natural consequences for his/her actions. This method will more likely aid the child in being responsible for making sure all things are in order prior to leaving home.

Discipline and punishment “are not synonyms”; rather, they have totally different meanings. Punishment is a “suffering” for something done wrong. Discipline is a guide to helping the child understand where he/she may have gone wrong, and will more often than not help to change the behavior. Discipline can and should include natural consequences.

Avoid encouraging “perfection,” and allow children to take “responsibility,” as these are qualities that will aid them in their growth. Encourage children to be the best they can be. Perfection expectations are a strait road to anxiety. Additionally, children have to accept responsibility for their actions. If they are taught to accept responsibility for behaviors, they are more likely to choose wisely as they mature.

Pain and mixed emotions are “natural,” and parents must avoid taking charge of the outcomes. When feelings are hurt, children may have to review how they feel with a parent, but it is critical that they learn to accept the hurt and how they can deal with it. When children’s emotions seem to be sad or angry, it is not ordinarily a good idea to try to make them change with a funny story or to give them a special treat. The discomfort belongs to the child, who needs to learn how to respond responsibly to the emotions for themselves. Guidance is necessary, but taking over the responsibility by the parents may well be detrimental.

Keep your “values and norms” in an uppermost place by not allowing yourself and your children to get caught up on the world around them. There are hectic schedules and lots of distractions. However, it is important for children to learn the necessity of following through and accepting responsibility for their actions—school, family responsibilities, and other commitments.

Keep an open mind, it will be easier to employ these suggestions. It is most important that children are given tools to help them navigate the future situations they encounter. By helping them learn this during their formative years, chances are the transition will be successful.

Love Your Children by Teaching Them How to Respond to Challenge
My Friend Needs a Friend

I am feeling the hurt my friend is experiencing – her child is struggling with addiction, and she is unable to stop blaming herself. What can be done to help her understand the power of addiction and the fact that it is a disease that is not due to what she has done or not done? This is a troubling reality, and it should be understood that addiction knows no age, color, or economic class. It is a culprit that attacks people no matter what their individual circumstances might be. Searching for a way to address this need, I recalled a formula that I was taught in geometry class. All problems have a three-fold method to solving them. These are: Given, Required, and Solution. Let’s explore all three, and perhaps some ideas to assist and the help needed will come to mind.

GIVEN: The child is dealing with an addiction. As a result, the parents, family members, and close friends are also impacted by this dreadful disease. The addiction is the problem, and it is not a reflection on the parents and/or other family members. Additionally, as a friend, you want to be there for the troubled parent.

REQUIRED: To begin with, it is necessary to remember addiction is a disease, and it knows no boundaries. In order to be supportive, what can be done to help this parent come to grips with the situation?

SOLUTION: As that friend, remember, you are not the solution to the problem. You are, rather, one who wants to befriend your friend in need. This is not unlike grief – everyone handles it in a different way. Your friend may want to talk, cry, or be silent. Respect that coping method – it is not for you to judge if it is being handled correctly or not.

Be available to your friend. Let the talk flow from her. Whatever you do, don’t try to tell her how to handle it. She has already heard from everyone very authoritatively on that matter. If she needs to cry, help her do so. Have tissues at hand to help her flush out her hurt, anger, and frustration. If she wants to be silent, that is OK too – perhaps you might suggest taking a walk together, watching an old movie, or listening to her favorite music. Don’t interrupt her need to be quiet. It is frequently a way to cope with what is. Consider the fact that this is a loss, and it is subject to the grief that is associated with loss. What about bringing a specialty coffee or tea when you go to see her? If she is one who likes to read, a good book you have just read might give her a more relaxed sense of the world around her.

Along with ways you can help, remember, you should never lay out a plan – unless you are asked – to “get over” the feeling. Be there. Be supportive. Allow her to reestablish herself in a more relaxed mood.

Professional Help is available if she needs it. She can contact her Employee Assistance program if one is available to her. Encourage her to consider doing so. If that is not an option for her, direct her to the Al-Anon Hotline: 1-800-344-2666.

If you have questions, please call your EAP at Arbor Family Counseling (402)330-0960, or you can e-mail us at Arborfamilycounseling.com. Our goal is to assist our clients in any way we can, and we are here to serve you.

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