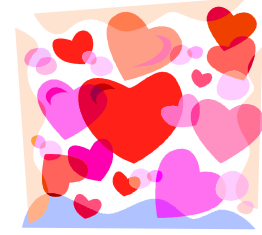




Counselor's Corner

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Excuses, Excuses, Excuses

There was an internet joke that went around a few years ago. It was produced by a few school staff members. It went something along the lines of:

To lie about why your child is absent- Press 1

To make excuses why your child did not do his homework- Press 2

To ask why you didn't receive information (which was in the newsletter) -Press 3

To demand a higher grade- Press 4

And so on.

Our society is focused on creating a perfect childhood for our kids. We don't want our children to struggle, face failure, or feel disappointment. When well-intentioned parents rescue and defend their children's mistakes, they rob their children of the opportunity to learn from a mistake, to become more responsible and respectful, and to learn that one can achieve goals through hard work. Think about the adult these children may grow up to be: adults that rely on others to solve their problems, adults that job hop because they can't cope with a little direction from a boss, adults that run from family because they can't cope with life's ups and downs, and adults that are unhappy because they are always blaming others for their unhappiness. It is difficult to hear negative things about your child. Yet, it is important to remember that children will make mistakes and lots of them. These mistakes are not necessarily a reflection of you as a parent, but may become a reflection of your parenting if they are regularly rescued from problems and not held accountable. Children need to learn from these mistakes so that they can learn to be responsible respectful adults who are prepared to succeed in the real world with ups and downs.

Teaching Your Child Responsibility and Problem-Solving Skills

When your children make a mistake, it is critical that you fight back the desire to defend your children and rescue them from the consequences. Allowing them to experience the discomfort of a consequence will give them the life experiences to make better decisions. When your children come to you with a problem, here are some steps to follow to help your child assume responsibility and ownership of the problem.

Consultant Problem Solving

Step 1: Empathy

"I'm sorry that happened." "I bet that was frustrating."

Benefit to child: They feel heard and supported by the adult.

Benefit to parent: It aligns them with their child.

Step 2: Send the Power Message

What are you going to do?

Benefit to child: It implies they are capable of solving the problem.

Benefit to parent: Transfers the problem to the child, so they take responsibility for their actions.

Step 3: Offer Choices

"Would you like to hear what other kids have tried?"

If your child cannot think of a solution, offer a variety of choices that range from bad to good, starting with the poor choices. Each time a choice is offered, go on to step four, forcing the child to state the consequence in his/her own words. This means that you will be going back and forth between steps three and four.

Benefit to child: Builds self-confidence by implying, "We trust your thinking abilities."

Benefit to parent: Offers the child an opportunity to learn from his/her own decisions and mistakes, instead of a parent structuring a "lesson."

Step 4: Have the Child State the Consequences

"And how will that work?"

Benefit to child: Child does the thinking.

Benefit to parent: Parent guides rather than solves.

Step 5: Give Permission for the Child to Either Solve the Problem or Not Solve the Problem

"Good luck, I hope it works out."

If the child is fortunate enough to make a poor choice, he/she may have a double learning experience.

Benefit to child: Child knows the choice and the consequence is up to him/her.

Benefit to parent: Transfers ultimate decision to the child.