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Myth #1: You need to know more than your child to teach them

Many parents feel inadequate when it comes to helping their children with their schoolwork. Some parents comment that they have no education themselves and therefore feel ill equipped to help their child.

Many people think that to teach the child, we must ourselves know everything about everything, which of course is not possible for anyone. The problem is that we're still stuck in the old fashion model of teaching, in which education was about the teacher just loading information into the child.

More contemporary models of education argue that the best form of education is getting children to learn for themselves. The parent or teacher acts as a facilitator, challenging the child to read and understand things for themselves.

One of the best examples I have read about this is from an old book called "The Children on the Hill" by Michael Deakin, which details a family that produces 4 prodigies. The mother who oversees their education while they are young is not highly educated herself. Her approach is to allow her children to determine what they are interested in studying and her role is to provide them with the time and encouragement to pursue their own study and learning.

This reflects a child centered approach to teaching. Our role as parents is not limited to teaching them what we know. We should encourage them to learn beyond what we ourselves know.

Myth #2: The louder you shout the more likely your child will listen to you

Sometimes as parents we think that might makes right, that volume translates into compliance. So we try to out-shout our children to show them who the boss is.

The fact is that children may very well comply with our request when we shout at them, or frighten them into submission with our temper. So we win in the short term.

But in the long term this is poor strategy because our shouting have not changed our children's attitudes. That's what compliance is: when children do what we want them to without understanding why and without any change in the way they think or feel. This type of compliance is short term and will only occur when we're present.

A case in point: you can shout at your 7 year old for not cleaning up after they eat and for leaving a mess on the table. As a result, your child may do what you want on the spot. The problem is, they may not do it when you're not around and they may not understand why it is important to clean up after themselves.

A better approach will be to coolly and calmly sit down with them and explain why it is important to be considerate to others in the house and why it is important that all family members pull their weight when it comes to housework and how such responsible behavior will create a good impression on others. This way, the child understands, is persuaded to change their attitude and this will lead to a long term change in behavior.

Furthermore, shouting at our children models bad behavior. We send them the message that shouting is alright. It's the opposite of emotional intelligence.

Myth #3: Complimenting your child will lead to them being complacent and arrogant

This is a common myth especially among Asian parents. Some believe that being a very demanding parent that is never satisfied or happy with their children's achievements will spur the child to push themselves harder and achieve great things. "Compliment them and they will feel so good about themselves that they will have no motivation to work hard anymore" so goes this myth.

The truth is that there is plenty of evidence to suggest that when you compliment or praise your child for doing a good job, they will be even more motivated to work hard the next time. A child who receives honest positive feedback from his/her parents is more likely to develop a stable self esteem which is a springboard for further accomplishments.

It's true that if you make your children feel lousy about themselves all the time they may very well work harder for a while, but they will not enjoy their work and in the long term they will burn out. Besides, what's the point of getting our children to work hard when they cannot enjoy the fruits of their labor. I know many adults who are still trying (in vain) to make their parents proud of them. It's a sad and frustrating life to live.

Myth #4: Focus on your child's academic development and the other pieces will fall into place

Another popular myth is that if parents just ensure their children score straight A's in their exams, all the other areas of development will take care of themselves. It seems as though academic development is the only concern among some parents, as academic success is said to lead to a good career and financial security.

The truth is that to succeed in the world today, children need to develop strength in all areas of their life, including academically, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. Employers don't just want people who are "very smart", they want smart people who can also communicate well, work well with others, manage stress effectively and think creatively.

It used to be that intelligence was reflected in getting good results at school. However, in recent years, psychology has introduced the idea of multiple intelligence that include a variety of talents including linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, motor intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence.

This all points to the fact that as parents we need to encourage our children to develop and grow in many areas rather than just one. Just as much time should be spent encouraging our children to explore their creative talents, their sporting interests (which teaches them discipline and mental toughness) to spend time socializing with their friend, as we do their studies and homework.

This article on education and parenting ideas have been published in the Parenthood magazine between 2008 - 2010