

Resilience and Adaptation

As the new term unfolds we are always amazed at how well our young people are able to adapt to their new and ever changing environment. In last week's article we talked about change and resilience and the things that enhance our capacity to adjust to change so that it becomes a vehicle for learning and the building of confidence and self-esteem. Helping children to acknowledge and articulate their feelings, with the help of emotion coaching if necessary, is an important component of adjustment.

We all want our children to thrive at school. Some of us have had a wonderful experience at school and want the same for our children. A negative school experience has others wanting something very different for their children.

Whether we like it or not our children want to be like us; certainly during the primary school years. Although this coin can flip during high school where the opposite seems true, but don't be fooled. They are still looking, listening and taking cues from you. One of our major recurrent themes is "model the behaviour and attitudes you want to see in your children". So we would like you to consider the following questions.

How do you talk about your work day when you are at home?

Do you like and respect your boss? Do you voice your opinion in front of your children?

How do you speak about your work colleagues and clients in front of your children?

Good relationships during transition and change are crucial. Modelling how to forge and maintain healthy relationships is paramount. Your children don't need you to be their adult friend. They need you to be strong, trusted mentors.

What do you tell your children about your experience of school? Do you talk about school in a positive and interesting way? Of course school is different now in so many ways, but fundamentally it is the same; attendance is mandatory, teaching, learning and assessment take place; friendships are forged; new skills mastered. Maturing children look for relevance to their learning. How you present your opinion of what happens at school does affect how they view it. For example: Are you enthusiastic and positive about school camp, or do you tell your daughter how much you hated it? (Tacitly giving her permission to hate it too). When she complains about a difficult subject do you say "You're just like me, I hated it to."? How do you answer the question "What am I ever going to need to know this for?"

Do not underestimate the power of your own attitude. Be enthusiastic about school and the new experiences being offered. Rather than telling an anxious child that you will miss them while they are at school, be positive and excited about your day at work, thus indirectly sowing the seeds of enthusiasm in your child. Plan to share stories at the end of the day. "I can't wait to hear about your day at school?" "I'll want to know the funniest thing that happens."

Being positive and constructive is a deterrent to disengagement from school, which can begin as early as late primary school. One orientation session or parent information night does not complete the transition. Transition is a process that takes time, encouragement and the development of new skills on several levels; emotional, social and cognitive. One of the biggest mistakes we make in our attempts to ease transition for our children is to try to do too much for them.

One of the most important developmental tasks for children is learning how to take responsibility for their decisions, actions and subsequent consequences. Stripping responsibility from young people has been shown to increase anxiety and confusion, and decrease motivation. Provide your child with age appropriate levels of responsibility and increase these each year. Be positive and excited about learning. Provide learning experiences, promote goal setting, open communication and self-efficacy at home and this will have a follow on effect at school.

We all have the same end goal; responsible, resilient, and motivated young people. As always we are happy to be contacted anytime at school if you have any concerns.

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