How to shape a ‘perfect kid’?

Ever since my boy was born, I have always been inspired to raise a ‘perfect kid’ probably because I am a typical Virgo, sporadically pursuing perfectionism in my lifetime. I was once asked by my friend what I wanted my boy to achieve most. I gave a list of perfect qualities, that most parents wish for such as academic excellence, successful career, good health, independence, happy marriage etc. I wasn’t paying much attention to my friend’s question until I started to be annoyed when seeing that my boy was not willing to take up challenges, and giving lots of excuses. I was confused and puzzled, hoping to find out the reasons for my son’s behaviour. I started to observe closely his daily life, the way he talked and how he received information from people around him. By doing so, I found out something very interesting.

Like many parents, I always wanted my kid to be brave, respectful and outspoken. Yet, the outcome was the opposite. My son appeared to be so hesitant to try out something new and take up new challenges. He gave himself too many excuses for not doing so, saying that he wanted to observe a bit longer before actually trying, he didn’t find it interesting, or he wasn’t happy about the surroundings and the people around etc. It was a severe blow for me to review two major issues - whether I set a clear goal for raising my kid and come up with effective ways to actualise my goal.

Here I want to introduce reverse parenting – do the opposite of what you want your kids to achieve. For example, once parents have a determined goal to encourage your kids to be an independent kid, we should create chances for our kids to realise their independence by not offering too much assistance and giving frequent reminders to them. Yet, protective and compassionate parents always struggle to not hint at what their kids need to bring to class instead of having their kids learn a lesson. As time goes by, children will have heavy reliance on our assistance and hints.

As a result of my profession, I have lots of chances to meet troubled parents struggling to establish intimacy with their teenage kids. I have heard from a lot of parents moaning for not being respected, not being able to communicate with their kids etc. There are two kinds of parents who may come across this problem – the quiet parents who cannot
afford to spend quality time communicating with their children and those intimidating parents who talk too much, deterring their kids from sincere communication. By applying reverse parenting, parents should adopt open-mindedness when talking to their kids. It’s crucial to listen to what they want to say instead of the other way around – questioning for the only information we want or lecturing your kids what NOT to do etc. Kids do have a lot of interesting thoughts that you could never imagine. Listen to them with your heart and give positive responses to sustain the conversations. Your kids will always turn to you whatever happens.

How about the parents who want their kids to pursue may different sorts of achievements? It could also be a disaster if you simply expect to reap without sowing. Besides providing endless financial support, quality time should be well spent to walk with your kids on the bumpy path of life journey. Lots of parents do not realize how stressful for kids to face the severe competition for studies, awards and titles. Don’t get me wrong, I do believe moderate amount of pressure does help students grow healthily. Yet, helping your kids set attainable goals with understanding of their worries, giving them valuable advice and solving problems with them when conflict arises would also become great motivation for them to pursue success. You can never imagine how disastrous it will become when your kid is overwhelmed and tired of all these endless competition and he/she chooses to give up on everything.

Going back to my son’s case, after weeks of observation and communication, I found that something went extremely wrong when he was to take responsibility for his wrongdoings. By applying the theory I suggested, I once again set a clear goal for bringing up my child. I ended up choosing ‘independence’ above everything and I started to direct my goal by evaluating my parenting style. I found that my child tended to have so many excuses because he was usually covered up by many excuses given by the senior family members when he was in trouble. The way he was ‘rescued’ inspired him to give lots of excuses for not taking up new challenges. Of course, nurturing an independent kid lies on lots of contributing factors. I shouldn’t be simply creating thousands of opportunities for him to venture beyond his comfort zone. But quite contrary, it would be more appropriate to let
him know his surroundings are safe in the first place and his parents are always behind him. Gradually, parents can help build up his confidence by setting attainable goals with him. By taking steps to achieve his goal, he will want more and in the end, volunteer to explore the world under his curiosity.

My son no longer gives us any excuses when he is in the football court and I believe it takes steps to influence a life.

*Writer: Carol Chung*

*Fung Chak Sum Brandon (NBP)*