

# Perseverance: Balancing Protection Versus Failure

By Cassie Rice

ONE OF TOUGHEST balancing acts parents face is when to protect versus when to let children risk failure. After all, how can children learn to persevere when faced with obstacles if they are not allowed to overcome adversity? On the other hand, children may become so overwhelmed that they just give up, and start to fear new situations. Here are some guidelines that can help parents, grandparents and other caregivers increase confidence and self-sufficiency among the children in their lives. And, that's a gift a child can never outgrow!

First, look for what would be the right level of challenge to teach a child to persevere. Consider the resources available to the child, what skills and abilities the child has, and how hard the child will have to work to turn a negative situation into a positive one. Imagine worst-case and best case outcomes, and weigh what the child can gain versus what he or she stands to lose.

Next, provide guidance to build the child's self-esteem. Let them make choices, but show them some different ways to work through the problem. Many parents mean well when they shelter their children by making choices or doing things for them, but that may leave the children more vulnerable when faced with challenges in the future. Determination, a strong work ethic, and resolve are good character-builders, and a little guidance can go a long way to build a child's self esteem.

Don't let excuses get in the way. Excuses are very prevalent in our society today, but when we're honest with ourselves it's easy to see that some excuses are simply avoidance. Help children make realistic goals, and then use your guidance to help them realize when they may be making excuses to avoid facing challenges. With your help, children can model your thought process and learn self-encouragement techniques - these are great life skills. Start teaching children early how to be self-sufficient

adults with the abilities to lead productive and successful lives.

If children bring up excuses, remember to listen instead of automatically dismissing them. Listening is key to working together. After listening, talk to the child about specific obstacles, and ways to get around them or change them. Ask what the child thinks, listen, and respond to what they are saying.

Looking back as an adult, I realize that my best learning experiences came from working hard to turn a negative situation into a positive one. Experiencing self-reliance and independence can be life-altering accomplishments in themselves! With your guidance and support, children can grow from adversity, and actually enjoy overcoming challenges.

Cassie Rice has been working with children and their parents for more than decade. She has received numerous awards and accolades; most recently US Gymnastics named Cassie the 2009 Regional Coach of the Year.