

Personal Responsibility

Raising kids with personal responsibility is one of the best qualities they can learn to ensure a happy adult life. It cannot be given to them, but you can help them learn personal responsibility by being there for them, yet not being there for them. What do I mean by this? Well, being there for them to bail them out, give them excuses, or solve their problems is not being there for them as a great parent. But being there for them to help them develop their reasoning skills, working with them to solve their own problems and helping them look for things they can change is REALLY BEING THERE FOR THEM.

Here's an example of how you can help your kids improve their personal responsibility. One of your child's teachers is disappointed with the effort your child gave on an essay she wrote, the teacher points out that she's not meeting the standards and he believes has not shown enough time and effort. Your child is pretty upset that her teacher pointed out that she may have fallen short on her effort. Now she's home from school and crying about how she feels. She is mad at her teacher for making her feel this way. You also start feeling upset that someone made your little girl cry (Reminder: There may be some over-reaction by your child here). She didn't have much time to work on the essay but thinks she spent enough time on it and believes she gave it a good effort. What can you do?

You want to try to fix things for your daughter. You think: maybe I'll talk to the teacher so he knows that this type of thing upsets her; maybe I'll email the principal to put in a complaint about this teacher and the way he comes across to kids; maybe I'll tell my child that it's ok, I know you worked hard on this and he's probably just picking on you.

The first thing all parents should realize is that you will be the dumping ground for a lot of your child's negative emotional feelings. How you react here will increase the need for them to come to you or will decrease/maintain that need. Sometimes they just need to air their emotions to you, and after they do, they feel better; yet you are now the one upset. Be aware that this is sometimes what is happening and think of their emotions and upset nature as being a heavy bag of potatoes that they are carrying around, and as soon as they unload them on you, they feel relieved; but you're left holding the bag.

So I recommend talking to them and trying (albeit extremely difficult to do) to take emotions out of it. Instead, talk to your child about the effort put in on her side. Could she have spent more time on the essay? Could she have worked a little harder? Did she really not have enough time or is that an excuse because of less than excellent time management skills? Did she have distractions in the room when she was working on this essay? What can she change so next time she avoids this situation? Empowering your child with steps she could take to improve a future situation is allowing your child to grow as a person and become a responsible adult.

Working on increasing one's own personal responsibility can never start too early. Teach your kids young and give them a great life skill that will ensure that your child's future is successful and happy. How can I be so sure? Because they will take personal responsibility for making sure it happens.