

## Over-involvement

Parents are understandably eager to see their children succeed, But when that eagerness turns into anxiety, parents may overload their children. Many parents seem to think that it is normal, even advisable to teach their children that winning is everything. There are many parents who are too busy with their own careers and they believe that they are working to ensure their children's happiness-but they may very well be doing the opposite.

Dr. Judith Paphazy describes parents who both work and from good socio – economic backgrounds often buy their way out of being parents. The children often pay a high price. Although they may have material luxuries, they lack the most essential ingredients of good childhood, parental time and love. Without guidance, without discipline and without direction, children can be severely affected.

When a two-parent family suddenly becomes a one-parent family, whether through death, separation or divorce, children often suffer emotionally. Of course, many single parent families manage well, but in some, they are rushed through childhood. A good childhood depends to a large extent on good parenting.

Good parenting involves:

- Commit time to your children
- Listen to them
- Give them sound advice
- Empathize with them
- Share their joys and sorrows
- Be a true friend without relinquishing your authority as a parent.

A very important aspect of good parenting is to pace your children. Set a pace that is right for your child. Do not let your child's life become so harried, so regimented that all of the youthful fun is squeezed out. The fact that over-involved parents can cause problems for their children is well-known. Now, research shows that parents can drive their children nuts.

Parents who base their own self-worth on their children's accomplishments as measured by their answers to such questions, " My son's failure can make me feel ashamed," have worse mental health issues than parents who accept their children's failure as part of the learning process in their overall development.

Over-involved parents report more sadness, crying and negative beliefs about themselves. When are parents over-involved?

Parents are over-involved when they -:

- ✓ Take over homework or a project because they feel that the child is not doing it right
- ✓ Take over the project so that the child can score higher marks for the basic reason of competing with other children.
- ✓ Ignore a child's own interests and insist on certain activities for their own benefit.
- ✓ Yell and criticize their child, coach, referee or teacher
- ✓ Always blame someone else for their child's failure
- ✓ Consistently step in to solve every issue with friends, teachers etc.

- ✓ Expect perfection from the child.
- ✓ Constantly intervenes in every child-related activity.
- ✓ Are nervous and hyper towards the child's success or failure.
- ✓ Invade the child's privacy or space – always are present in the child's environment and not allowing the child to become independent.

## How can over-involvement hurt children?

No one is suggesting that parents shouldn't be supportive, encouraging and active in their child's life – numerous studies have shown children who are emotionally connected to their parents do better in school and make good life choices, such as avoiding drugs. But over-involved parents – even with the best intentions – often fail to consider the long-term effects of always intruding in a child's life.

Consider the following:

- Sometimes, if parents are very involved but find that their child is still not performing in school, it could be because of the involvement. Sometimes, if the parents take a hands-off approach and be supportive and encouraging rather than critical and controlling, the child's performance might improve. When parents offer encouragement and support, children's grades get better.
- High achievers do well regardless of parents' responses. Such children are self-motivated and parents are best advised to take a couple of steps back and allow the child to continue.
- Parents shouldn't help unless the child asks for help. Now, if a child is having difficulty, a good parent would know how to make himself/herself available to the child and offer assistance in a very diplomatic way. In other words, do not impose yourself on the child – wait to be asked and if the invitation is not forthcoming from the child, involve yourself in a very subtle way.
- Parents shouldn't give their children answers to problems. Instead, sit with them and help them through the problem by asking relevant, probing questions. Let the child answer and guide the child as he/she answers. This process is longer but much more rewarding. If you simply give the answer or the solution to the problem, you are not helping the child in the long-run.
- The more you step in, the more your child becomes dependent on you for the next time. Parents cannot constantly rescue children from every mistake. Children must slip and stumble in life. Remember, the more skills in problem solving that you help your child to acquire will put him in a better position to handle situations when you are not there. At school, many of the child's problems can and will be solved by the child himself. There is no need for parents to intervene. If situations require the intervention of an adult, the teacher is there.
- Parents who are in close contact with the teachers (as they should be) will often be informed by the teacher.
- Young children will attempt to please their parents, then burn out and 'just throw you over' when they are old enough to assert their independence. Do not make decisions for your child – instead, help them through the decision-making process.

- Parents might get A Pluses but aren't really teaching life lessons. Make your child an inspired son or daughter. He/She must be inspired to do what is right and not do it because Mommy says so.
- The consequences can and will eventually stretch into relationships and future workplaces. When children grow up, they rebel against authority or always want someone else to make their decisions. Neither attitude wins points with bosses or spouses.

## **Ten (10) Rules for Raising Children**

- (1) It is proper for you to say "No" to your child. Saying 'no' does not mean that you love your child less. Some parents begin from infancy to give the child everything that he wants. In this way, he will grow up to believe that the world owes him a living. If you continue to say 'yes' to everything, it will be impossible for your child to accept 'no' as an answer.
- (2) Correct him as soon as he displays any form of unacceptable behaviour. For instance, when he picks up bad words, do not laugh at him. This will make him think that he is cute. It will also encourage him to pick up other bad words and phrases that will later cause much embarrassment to you and the family.
- (3) Spiritual training is absolutely essential in the upbringing of a child. Do not wait until he is an adult to 'decide for himself.' Provide the environment and the opportunity for your child to be involved in spiritual training. All religions uphold the principles of truth, honesty and respect – all traditional values that we want to inculcate in our youngsters.
- (4) If the child does something that is wrong, do not hesitate to let him know that it is wrong. Some parents are of the impression that such corrections develop a guilt complex. This leads a child to believe that if ever someone corrects him, he is being wrongfully persecuted. Instead, let him know that there are opposites in the world – good & bad; right & wrong; respect & disrespect. Teach him the difference and help him to make the right choices. Remember, failure leads to success – it's ok to make a mistake – it's critical to repeat it.
- (5) Instill a sense of order in your child. The world is generally an orderly place and if he is to be a citizen of the world, then, he too, must develop a sense of orderliness. Do not pick up things that he leaves lying around – shoes, books, and clothes. Do not do everything for him so that he will become an expert in throwing all responsibilities to others. Maturity brings responsibility.
- (6) Monitor what he reads, the music that he listens to and the websites that he visits. Do not let his mind feast on the garbage that is presented through these avenues. It is common now to hear music filled with obscenities and websites that are riddled with nudity. You need to be vigilant with these issues. Obviously there is a concern about privacy and confidentiality, but a good parent monitors what his child sees, hears or reads without violating the privacy of the child.
- (7) Parents must avoid quarrelling in the presence of the child. There must be times when parents disagree with each other and sometimes these disagreements can end up in a heated discussion or quarrel. Responsible parents usually have these discussions in private and the child should not witness such occurrences. Failure in this regard makes the child feel that all problems are resolved through quarrels and he too might grow up with the same mentality. Just aside, I wish to suggest that parents, as mature adults, must learn that quarrelling only makes

things worse – avoid quarrels – act as mature, responsible adults and rationalize each disagreement by weighing the pros and cons against each other.

- (8) Give a child an allowance suitable to his age and needs. Do not simply give the child huge amounts of money so that he appears to be more privileged than the other children in his group. He can also be taught to earn any extra money he desires – do extra chores around the house. Many parents say that they must give their child everything that they didn't have as children. But it must be noted that if everything is given so easily, then most of what is received is never appreciated. Another point here is that when do we stop giving? This position that some parents take teaches the child that everything is accessible and when the time comes and the parents can't give the child what he wants, then the child feels that he has been cheated. Give- but give appropriately.
- (9) Monitor closely what he eats and drinks. Medical research is now showing that childhood obesity is quickly becoming a killer. How can we profess to love our children by seeking the best education for them, by giving them a safe and secure environment and by ensuring that all their needs are met but we are slowly killing them by the things we give them to eat. Do not satisfy every craving for food and drink.
- (10) Do not always take his side against neighbours, teachers and other responsible adults. Do not make your child believe that these adults are all prejudiced against him. A parent must know that at times, different people will observe things about your child that you may have not noticed yourself. Listen – listen attentively and if the points raised by other adults sound reasonable, act on them – in the interest of your child. For instance, a teacher spends a lot of time with your child and that teacher will come to know things about your child that you as the parent will never know. You need to hear from your child's teacher and you need to work with your child's teacher for his improvement. No one – absolutely no one is perfect. We all make mistakes and in many cases, if these errors are discovered in time, they are corrected, ultimately making a better child.

**There is no greater gift one human being can give another than the opportunity to grow and learn in a loving and nurturing learning environment.**

**A school is a building that has four walls and a tomorrow inside.**

**Education is the knowledge of how to use the whole of oneself.**

**One mother achieves more than a hundred teachers.**