



# Relationships *The Adlerian Team*

## Growing Up Is So Hard To Do

By Susan Prosser

There is a world-wide phenomenon that parallels the Peter Pan principle – a growing number of young adults that don't want to grow up. In Britain they are calling them KIPPERS – Kids In Parent's Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings! This has been a trend over the last decade as young adults emerge with high expectations of what they want in life, without the confidence in themselves to create it.

As I watch the under-30-year-olds enter adulthood, I see them with skills and knowledge I never dreamt of when I was their age. They are computer savvy, they have a worldly sophistication due to the internet and media technologies and they have access to information at their finger tips. This is a generation that has been exposed to wars as they happen, to blatant sexuality in commercials and on the internet, to easy material access through instant credit and generous parents. However, many lack the confidence to manage it all. As parents it is our job to teach them the skills to manage as opposed to protecting them from the realities of the world.

In Jean Illsely-Clarke's new book (referenced below)", she outlines how the riches that we bestow upon our children do not necessarily meet their developmental needs, so that they therefore experience scarcity in the midst of plenty. When over-abundance is present in our homes we will know because instead of receiving appreciation we hear whining and more demands. This response needs to be seen as a red flag for parents to pull back and reevaluate the true needs of their children.

Along with the love and guidance we already give so diligently, it is wise to allow our children to struggle a bit with their decisions and problem solving. The struggle of life makes one want to try harder to overcome obstacles. When we are building muscles in the gym, the muscles will not strengthen without weight and resistance. In order to strengthen our self esteem we need that resistance. Self esteem is about skill development. It is about knowing and trusting that I have the skills and experience to manage life with competence and integrity when I face challenges.

When there is an overabundance we can become overwhelmed and passive about making smart choices. Our creative skills are not utilized when we do not have to problem-solve on our own. If we only have a few tools to do the job and the job is a matter of survival, figuring out how to use the tools strengthens our creativity and our confidence. When there is scarcity we are forced be creative. When you have everything you can sit back and let the world come to you. Challenge is what builds the muscles of life.

Here are some tips for parents of young children who want to avoid the KIPPER phenomena:

- Start giving your children chores at a very young age. Even a three year-old can feel good making a contribution to the family – from wiping spills to cleaning the mirrors, making a bed, or

anything else that gives them a sense of satisfaction. We all thrive on knowing we are making a difference in the world.

- Start giving an allowance at a young age and teaching your children how to manage money. If your 4 year old begs for candy and toys at the store you can simply ask him if he has enough money. This avoids the fight when you say no and more importantly it stops you from saying yes – remember, overindulgence teaches insatiability. Giving your child the opportunity to figure it out for himself will teach him to appreciate money and use it responsibly.
- In general, don't do for a child what the child can do for herself. Many of today's parents want to compensate for lack of time by getting things done quickly or by doing something for the child to make up for being busy in other ways. Both of these reasons rob your child of learning life skills which they need for the world. A child who learns she can manage self-care tasks feels she can rely on herself. A child who learns he makes a difference by contributing to the family learns he has a purpose for living.
- Children need to learn how to handle disappointment while they are young. We don't like to deny our children anything because we don't like to see them upset (or sometimes we just give in because it is easier). Remember, you are the teacher and you need to realize that you are constantly teaching your children about life. Pampering teaches them that they only have to complain and someone will rescue them. Indulgence teaches them that their needs are more important than anything or anyone else. Setting limits teaches them how to manage and how to keep their giving and receiving in a healthy balance.
- Always ask yourself – What am I teaching my child by the way I am handling things? What message am I sending that he will take with him into adulthood? What life skill am I teaching? How am I empowering her to manage the ups and downs of life? These questions will help you to keep the important developmental needs of your children in focus so that little indulgences become fun rather than debilitating.

An image that has always helped me is one of a toddler learning to walk - it is inspiring to watch a little one work so hard at the skill and seeing that each time an attempt is made the muscles and balance are stronger. If we were to do the work for the child not only would the skill be harder to master but the sheer joy and pride that the child experiences upon mastery would be absent. So dear parents stand back and let your children learn – it is the greatest gift of all.

References: Jean Illsely-Clarke "How Much Is Enough? Everything You Need to Know to Steer Clear of Overindulgence and Raise Likeable, Responsible, Respectful Children – from Toddlers to Teens"

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