

WORK THOUGHTS

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Loving Work

When a young person demonstrates a remarkable work ethic, adult observers often get a sense of satisfaction and feel encouraged about America's future. "Thank goodness these young folks are learning how to work!" they say. And just exactly how does that happen...young folks mastering the work ethic?

Just for fun, I'd like to study the work habits of adults who as children had to make their beds everyday. Assuming that a researcher could accurately get that kind of information, the results might be interesting. In teaching any daily chore to a young person, however, there are certain strategies that do indeed, foster an admirable work ethic. Here are a few.

1. Coach; don't judge. The art of coaching has certainly evolved over the past decade. No longer is the Bobby Knight style of intimidation considered the premiere method for motivating excellence. Whether practicing how to make a bed or learning how to execute the perfect jump shot, successful coaches get on the *same side* and encourage better results, rather than getting on the opposite side and criticizing.

2. Set high expectations. Recent research on what prevents drug abuse and other unwanted behaviors in teens suggests that parents' healthy expectations play a more influential role that was previously believed. Likewise, learning how to work smart has much to do with the healthy expectations parents set forth in the early years of development. Children as young as two can learn to perform simple chores, which in turn give them a true sense of belonging and the foundation for high self-esteem, a necessary component of high performance in the world of work.

3. Allow the tough lessons. Perhaps the best teacher here is the opportunity to develop resilience through disappointment. Most of us know people who have failed to negotiate the loss of a promotion, an election, or even their child's baseball game. Protecting children from loss by manipulating results or denying participation in competitive activities for fear of loss prevents the growth of resilience. Coping skills, so valued in the work place, are borne out of experiences of loss and recovery.

4. Introduce role models. A vivid childhood memory involving an admired adult and his or her work can motivate a young person all the way through college! Ask friends how they chose their profession, who motivated them, and so on. Time and again, stories come back involving role models who demonstrated excellence or enthusiasm about their work. I was fortunate to have several women in my family who joined the work force before it was fashionable. One close relative stepped in and ran her deceased husband's business with finesse and creativity, successfully enlarging and establishing the company as her own in a short time. I never knew her to be scared or intimidated by the responsibilities once shouldered by men, and her enthusiasm for work was contagious!

How about you? How are you influencing the next generation of workers? For more information about developing a healthy work ethic in young people, call **Performance** Employee Assistance and Business Services at 337-436-9533.



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