



Don't Focus On Your Child's Happiness!

Many parents strive to have *happy* kids. In their efforts, they are loath to see their children upset and seem to do anything to allay the child's consternation. So, what child wants, child gets. Child doesn't want, child doesn't have to do.

There is a belief by these parents that their children will be naturally appreciative and hence will behave inordinately well. However, when their children do not behave as hoped or expected, the parents will admonish the child, advising of how well the child has it and hence should act more reasonably. Typically the child shrugs off the lecture and the parent feels more beholden to the child for upset caused by reasonable expectation and the parent winds up seeking to undo the child's distress by giving in to the greater demands of the child. A vicious cycle ensues and eventually the child acts with a tremendous sense of entitlement, is out of control and increasingly is doing less and less in terms of reasonable expectations such as helping around the house or taking care of school work. The child does what he or she wants and literally nothing else. The parent feels impotent – helpless to do anything about the situation.

In truth, in the pursuit of their child's happiness, parents forget to hold their child accountable to reasonable expectations. Rather than being concerned by the child's objections to reasonable expectations, the parents need to concentrate on helping the child learn to tolerate frustration and learn to delay gratification and most importantly, learn to be responsible.

Parents must understand that they cannot purchase their child's happiness and nor can or should they spare them from feelings of frustration. A child's frustration is the life lesson that they cannot get everything they want as they want it. Some things they may never have and other things they may have to plan for. Learning these lessons, the child learns that life does not revolve around just

themselves, but around others as well. Thus they learn to cooperate and get along with others in the pursuit of needs and wants. Further, the child learns that he or she cannot escape responsibilities and that the managing of responsibilities is tied to life's rewards.

If you really want your child to grow up happy, the best thing a parent can do is concentrate on supporting their child to act responsibly.

As your child is responsible in behaviour and responsible in taking care of chores, school work and activities, then the child develops skills and learns how to cope in the world. Further, this child stays out of trouble, cooperates with others and completes tasks in a timely fashion. This child gets to reap the rewards of their responsible behaviour. They learn to cope with frustration and plan for things or events of interest. They also learn to cope with not obtaining everything they may want or desire.

If your child learns this kind of responsibility, then your child can be truly happy. This is the kind of happiness that comes from cooperation with others, intact relationships and earning life rewards by one's reasonable actions.

So, don't focus on your child's happiness. Focus on helping your child become responsible and happiness will be the outcome.

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