

You Raise Your Children to Leave



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The very best parenting advice I have ever received was simply the statement, "You raise them to leave." As an educator I am intimately aware of the concept of beginning with the end in mind, but it seems that far too often as parents we forget exactly what that end may be. I know that in the midst of trying to parent four children that I often need to take a step back and think about this simple statement before I respond because this is NOT my natural default mechanism when dealing with my own children.

The beauty and power of this statement is that no two people reading this need to have that same end in mind. Getting your children ready to leave may look much different in your mind's eye than it does in mine. This is where the strength of the concept comes from. This simply forces us to consider what it is that we want for our kids when we are making our parenting decisions.

What Are Your Dreams for Your Children?

For me, it is simple. When my children are ready to leave, I hope these things are true.

They are ready to be a contributor to society in some way.

They know what hard work is and are not afraid of it nor are they afraid of failing.

They have joy in the heart and fond memories of their childhood.

They know how to love and to be loved.

I did the above four in a way that they will choose to spend time with me whether that is still watching football together or coming home for Sunday dinners or some other iteration of simple quality time.

The bullets I listed above may seem like hopes that every parent would have. That may or may not be true. I can tell you in my experience as a professional coach to executives, an educator, and youth athletic coach that the behaviors I often see from the very best intentioned adults fall far from leading to any of these desired outcomes.

I will give one example from each of the roles I mentioned above and my guess is that you will see this as “typical” adult behavior and will also see how it does not necessarily align with any of the outcomes listed above.

Parenting Versus Working

As an executive coach one of the concepts most often discussed is work-life fit. Translation – how can I be an all-star professional while still being an amazing parent. What tends to be the default is that the parent has assigned themselves numerous responsibilities. THEY associate with high quality parenting. Oftentimes, the parent has NEVER checked in with the child to see if they would agree. This often leads to over-programming of our children and exhausted parents and children who seemingly pass by each other on the way to structured events. When there is time to actually connect both parties, both are too tired and either do not connect at all or treat each other as you would expect two exhausted humans to when interacting at the end of the day.

Grades Are Not Everything

As an educator I want all of our students to put forth their best effort and to leave our schools as a well-rounded individual. Nowhere in that statement did I say that they absolutely needed to earn a 4.0 in the most difficult classes in order to demonstrate this. *I am going to say something that may offend some of you and that is not the intent, but if it is true – please think about this when you are no longer upset.* Parents that are pushing their children to achieve perfect marks in school must make sure they are not doing so to satisfy their own ego and are doing so for their children's benefit. To explain, a student who gets a 3.8 but leaves school unafraid of taking risks and making mistakes and

with self-drive would be someone I am more interested in hiring or working with than someone who earned a 4.0 because they were incredibly pressured to do so at home.

Support the Coach

Likewise, as a youth athletic coach I often watch parents acting in a way to support their own ego more than to support their own kid. This manifests itself in a ton of ways, but let's look at the age-old example of high school playing time. If we are honestly operating from the paradigm of raising our kids to leave then would we bad-mouth the coach at home, on Facebook, and send them emails or would we teach our children how to handle this on their own? When taking a minute to begin with the end in mind, the path forward is extremely straightforward. When in the moment, it isn't.

Raise Kids to Leave

So, for extreme simplicity – if I had one bit of advice for parents, it would be to raise your kids to leave.

