Education Support

American Dance

Allowing Defeat

by Joyce E. Pennington

In observing the trends of today's youth and their parents, I have found that over the past ten years a trend has formed. Some parents have a true 'phobia' of allowing their children to experience disappointment or defeat in any form. Instead of scolding a small child for doing something wrong, the parent will just "distract" the child with a toy or treat and never correct them. If the tears ever come, the parent becomes almost desperate to avoid the child's disappointment.

As the child is older and goes into high school programs and activities, some parents have accelerated this method to the point where the teachers and administrators are "always wrong" and the child is "always right." Instead of helping the child as they are hoping to do, the damage begins to multiply and life skills are tossed out the window. By the time they go away to college or seek a career, and they realize they are not in control of the situation, they are ready to quit and try something else. I have observed this exact situation when my oldest son went to the University of Texas. His roommate was a successful student in high school as senior class President, as well as graduating cum laude. When he arrived at UT, he was helpless in that his mother had always done everything for him including cooking, washing clothes and buying any necessities. After three weeks of not waking up for classes, he cried to my son to "please throw cold water on me to make me get up!". He had no furniture in his room and did not know how to go out and look for it because he had never had to do anything for himself. By the end of the semester, he had dropped out of school and went back home. The next semester he registered at SMU and lived at home. He graduated with honors in three years, only because his mother would wake him every morning for classes, iron his clothes and cook for him. Even though he was a brilliant young man, he was helpless to function without someone else's help.

As a parent, it is so difficult to see our children disappointed. We know that we have the control to put them in a 'glass cage' and shield them from so much. Unfortunately, we are not helping them with the life skill values that they so desperately need. What is more valuable to our children is learning how to cope, make adjustments

and compromises. Learn how to be a 'team player' and sacrifice so that the group does better. They need to realize that not everything is always equal and if it is unequal, it is not necessarily unfair. It is LIFE. I am sure that we could trace many of today's divorces to young couples that are faced with compromise and adjustments and have never had to experience these when they were young. Students today are anxious to have restrictions and guidelines for their lives. It is a challenge that they can meet and learn.

As a parent and educator, I challenge the parents of today to re-evaluate their approach to their children NOW, before it is too late. Help them to cope with adversity by allowing them to problem solve with you. Teach them that not always do things work out as planned. Encourage them to set short term and long term goals and know that they are not always automatically achieved. Remind them that when "God closes a door, He opens a window." There will always be something good for everyone who is honest, works hard and treats everyone with fairness and respect. As teachers and educators, we need to emphasize these same values to our students and try not to make them 'robots' who cannot make their own wise decisions. These are the values that will make it a better world for all.