



Are Your Efforts to Keep Your Children Happy Setting Them Up for Later Difficulty?

As parents, most of us want to do everything in our power to give our kids a happy childhood. But sometimes our best intentions can backfire. If we're doing too much to make life easy for our children, we might deprive them of a chance to build the skills they will need to navigate life's ups and downs.

I. Underlying issues

- Strapped for time, we often feel guilty and compensate by doing everything (or buying everything) our child wants, thinking that is how to "love" a child
- We often focus on keeping our child happy in the moment rather than looking at the long-term goal of raising our child to become a competent, caring adult

II. Staying focused on that long-term goal and giving our children what they really need, rather than what just feels good in the moment

- Give children a platform for independence
This means teaching children specific skills and supporting and encouraging them as they try them out. Whether it's learning to zip their own jacket, make their own lunch, or figure out how to resolve a conflict with a friend, children need parents to guide and coach them but not to do the task for the child. Our long-term goal as parents is to work ourselves out of a job by preparing our children to navigate life with confidence.
- Allow children to experience the consequences of their actions
For example, if children don't do their homework, they don't get the credit. If they don't get their dirty soccer uniform in the hamper, it doesn't get washed before the next game. If they treat you disrespectfully, you don't feel like driving them and their friend to the mall. If they spend their allowance on candy, they don't have money to go to the movie with a friend. Avoid being a "curling parent" who sweeps away every obstacle to a child's short-term happiness!
- Maintain your own strong identity beyond that of "parent"
Moms especially may fall into a pattern of being martyrs, sacrificing their own needs and interests to cater to their children. Certainly parenting does involve some sacrifice and it's important to be there to provide love and support at every stage of your child's life. But too much sacrifice will give your children a sense of entitlement. Parents and children both benefit when parents set an example of living life fully, maintaining healthy habits, a strong friendship network, and a love of lifelong learning.