The Peak Performing Student

Following article written by Jan McNamara, Student Counsellor Middle School/Senior School, Keilor Campus

We all want our sons and daughters to achieve to the best of their ability and also to settle in well at the start of the new school year. Last week I was involved in two information sessions that I thought shared very important messages for parents and students.

At the Year 5 Parent Information Night I shared that the latest research is indicating that one of the main keys to helping students cope with challenges is HAVING or DEVELOPING a positive attitude or way of thinking. It is important that you as parents also model a confident mindset. For example, reassuring your children that starting Middle School might seem a little overwhelming to begin with, but it will improve!

It is also important that they learn to ask for help and to develop self help skills. Tell them that everyone has to do that when they start somewhere new. You might even share some stories of your own about how you have coped starting somewhere new or taking on a new challenge. Also “don’t love your kids ‘helplessly’”... children will become more resourceful and resilient if they are given some responsibility. As Michael Grose says, “Never regularly do for a child what they can do for themselves”.

This also means giving children a chance to resolve their own problems, which you can help them with, by listening and suggesting ideas.

The age between 10 and 14 is a particularly needy time. Friendships become complex and the challenges of school can overwhelm children. They benefit from a lot from late afternoon chats with a parent. Mornings can be too rushed for the types of conversations they need.
We all want our children to be happy and successful and the latest research from psychologist Angela Duckworth has found that **character not cognitive ability is the single most reliable determinant of how a person’s life will turn out**. The character traits for success are **persistence, self control and conscientiousness**. These traits are forged under hardship and duress. Michael Grose states, "**Encouraging kids to step out of their comfort zones and take learning and social risks is one of the great challenges for modern parents. It’s critical that we challenge children and young people to attempt activities where failure is a real option. Overcoming setbacks and pushing through difficulties is how character is formed**".

All this is easier said than done. It is hard to stand by and watch your children struggle with friendships and possibly their schooling, but if they know you are there to listen and guide and if you model these character traits yourself by encouraging them to persist and seek help and support, they will get there in the end and be far stronger for the experience.

The **Year 12 ‘Ready, Set...VCE’ day** at RMIT had Elevate, a group of high achieving university students, sharing key messages around the **3 key beliefs of the peak performing student**. They told students that:

1. **Natural talent is not important**;
2. **It is never too late**; and
3. **A growth mindset – small changes will equal positive results**.

The peak performing student underpins their study techniques with belief, goals, planning (how you are going to go about your goals step by step) and finally hard work.

Good luck with the year ahead and if you would like further information on this topic, see the links below:

https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit


www.elevateeducation.com