



Moms of Teens

Parenting > Training > Life Skills: Teaching the Excellence Edge

Life Skills: Teaching the Excellence Edge

One of your most important tasks as a mother is to teach your children skills that will help them excel in life. According to Vicki Caruana's book, *Giving Your Child the Excellence Edge*, moms play an integral part in determining if their children will succeed -- not only in school, but in their future careers and relationships as well.

Caruana provides ten key strategies to help your children lead productive, fulfilling lives.

Teach Your Children to Become Quality Producers

Quality involves taking a competency or skill and improving on it. Teach your kids the importance of doing above what is expected. For example, if a teacher requires the minimum of two pages for a report, your child should submit at least two and a half. Or if your child's weekly chore is to take out the kitchen garbage, encourage him to find other trash cans around the house that need emptying.

One family asks their children to give 110% in everything they do. When the kids rise to the occasion, and give that extra effort, the parents reward them. You can use the 110% example too. Draw a thermometer with percent increments marked down the side, one for 25%, 50%, 75% and 100%. Talk about what it means to perform at each level. Then, write in 110%, so they can clearly see that this means going above and beyond.

Teach Your Children to Become Independent Learners

Teach your children how to be self-directed and to think for themselves. Encourage them to set academic and personal goals and to monitor their own progress.

And, even though it can be hard to allow your children to fail, do not bail them out if they've forgotten to do a school project or paper, or if they've procrastinated until the last minute. They need to learn responsibility and the consequences for their inaction. The sooner they learn this lesson the better -- the consequences are much less significant at the elementary level than they are at the high school level, where grades can affect their ability to get into college.

Teach Your Children to Become Creative Thinkers

According to Caruana, "Creativity is the power of the imagination." Creative thinkers are able to define and solve a problem by evaluating choices and considering possible outcomes. Teach your children how to creatively solve problems by having them (1) define the problem, (2) evaluate the possible solutions, (3) develop a plan of action and (4) adjust the plan when necessary.

Teach Your Children to Become Critical Thinkers

Discernment and reasoning play a large part in critical thinking. One way to raise critical thinkers is to encourage your children to apply the scientific method to daily problems. For example, in determining the best way to walk to school, your kids would first state the question, form a hypothesis (i.e. Elm Street to Maple Street is best), test it through experimentation (timing how long that route takes) and then draw conclusions.

Teach Your Children to Become Information Managers

Children need to know how to find information for themselves, whether through a phone book, dictionary, encyclopedia or Internet. They also need to know how to evaluate, store and use this information. For example, if your child has multiple projects for school, he could use file folders to store his notes for each project.

Teach Your Children to Become Cooperative Learners

Cooperative learners participate in group learning experiences; are helpful to fellow students; can negotiate with a balance of assertiveness, consideration and flexibility; and show patience with those who do not learn as quickly as they do. Essentially, these students get along well with their fellow classmates. In your home, be sure to instill this important lesson by teaching and modeling respect for others.

Teach Your Children to Become Effective Communicators

Make sure your children understand the concept of tone, and that the way something is said can be just as important as what is said. A good communicator also focuses on respectful listening. Caruana suggests teaching your kids how to sit still and listen by having them listen to books on tape. Start at 5 minutes a day and gradually work up to 30 minutes per sitting.

Teach Your Children to Become Confident Leaders

Confident leaders know how to listen to the opinions of others, are comfortable in their leadership style and have a defined vision. Be sure to model good leadership in your home and always treat others with respect.

Teach Your Children to Become Efficient Time Managers

Help your children create a timeline with goals for completing tasks on time instead of waiting until the last minute. Teach your children the value of being prompt and set consequences if they run late for school. Use your children's chores to teach them about deadlines. And make sure your children are also effectively using their free time by engaging in a variety of activities (i.e. reading, playing outdoors) instead of just sitting in front of the television or computer.

Teach Your Children to Become Self-Assessors

Self-assessment skills will help your children know and improve on their weaknesses and build on their strengths. They may find journaling helpful in identifying which areas they are struggling with. Have occasional parent/child conferences during the school year to check on their progress and to help your children identify areas needing improvement.

This article is based on the book *Giving Your Child the Excellence Edge* by Vicki Caruana. [Click here to order this book from Amazon.com](#)

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