

What kids don't learn in school about REAL Life

By Craig Miller

1. Life is not fair! Ever hear that statement from your youth? Get use to it. The average teenager uses the phrase "It's not fair" 86 times a day!

It seems the more parents try to be fair to their kids, the more life seems to be not fair. The best thing that parents can do is simply have a conversation with their kids about what is not fair and then compare what they believe is not fair with what they believe is fair. And if they will listen, share some of your real life stories when life was really not fair.

2. The real world won't care as much about your self-esteem as much as your school does. This may come as a shock.

When children feel "forced" to do something that is good for them, it is hard to see what is good. Some of the best things a parent can do is ask about school during dinner time (dinner is one of the best times to talk together) and become involved with school functions. Children will often become more interested in something when their parents show an interest in it too.

3. Sorry, you won't make \$40,000.00 a year right out of high school. And you won't be a vice president or own a BMW, either. In fact, flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. You may even have to wear a uniform that doesn't have a designer label. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping. *They called it opportunity.* Plus, life is not divided into semesters. And you don't get summers off (unless you work for a school system). Not even spring break. You are expected to show up every day for eight hours, and you don't get a new life every ten weeks!

Parents, as your youth grows, having a conversation about their expectations and interest in future occupations can be very helpful. Do not tell your youth what they should not do; instead talk about what opportunities may be available with what they want to do. To assist with future goals there are questionnaires often offered by high school or college academic counselors that highlight personal interests.

4. As you get older, you cannot continually blame your parents if you mess up. You're responsible for what you do with the decisions you make. This is the flip side of your kids saying, "It's my life", "You're not my boss," and "Stop telling me what to do."

Parents need to remember that youth are in the period of life where they want and think they are old enough to make their own decisions. However, they make decisions out of the maturity level they are living in. As your children mess up, remember they are in a learning curve, just like we all are at any age. Have a conversation with your kids about what just happened and what are the options to make a positive change.

Parents, do you notice the ways I mentioned to make a difference with your kids is to have a conversation? Having a conversation is part of having a relationship with them. If you do not have regular conversations with your children you will struggle in your relationship and become more frustrated when you find out things that you could have learned before it happened. You do not have to struggle and worry over what happens with your children as much as you may think. You have the ability to create, maintain, and improve the relationship; that is your job as a parent. Unfortunately, parents often blame children for not communicating when it is really the parent that is expected to teach the child how to communicate and have a relationship. Even if you or your kids did not learn how to do these things in school, keep initiating times to talk and grow closer as a family. What you learn and share with others will last a life time.

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