

Dear Class,

Contrary to what most people think, I believe this pandemic is really good for your kids. Yep I said it, this pandemic is really good for your kids. No I'm not crazy, I haven't lost my mind. Ok well maybe this pandemic isn't really good for your kids, but it can be an unparalleled opportunity to teach your children essential life skills. Essential life skills that under normal circumstances you probably would not be able to teach them. Let me tell you about the theory that underlies such a bold statement as the pandemic being good for your kids.

In a nutshell, the [research](#) is really clear, a great way for children to learn to be resilient is to let them [struggle](#) and teach them the skills necessary to resolve the struggle. Notice I say **teach them the skills to resolve the struggle**. I don't say solve their problems or keep them away from the struggle. Too many [parents](#) believe they are doing their children a service by making their lives easy. Making your children's life easy is doing them NO service at all. Actually, I believe that parents make their children's lives easy because it makes parents feel like better parents and honestly is much easier than teaching them the skills necessary to deal with difficulty. Besides the fact that the anxiety a parent feels watching their children struggle can be very painful and uncomfortable. So parents tend to avoid/ not let their children struggle. And that's a real shame.

Think about it. Our job as parents is to prepare our kids for adult life. Who in adult life will be exempt from struggle? I know I wasn't, nor have my kids been. If we keep our kids away from struggle and adversity we are not doing our jobs - we are [not preparing](#) our kids for adult life. We are not giving them the skills necessary to deal effectively with what life will inevitably bring their way. What better place to learn how to effectively struggle than in the safety of one's own home. What better place to try and fail and try again than in the safety of our home. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying make your children's lives miserable so they can learn to be resilient.

What I am saying is, given the circumstances, take advantage to teach your kids that there will be adversity in life and how to [deal](#) with it. What does this look like? First, tune into what you tell yourself when you face difficulties. Then, tune into what you are telling yourself when you see your kids having a hard time. Are you saying, "This is terrible, I need to do something, I have to make this better." Or are you saying, "I really wish this wasn't happening but let me help my child help themselves. This is a rich teaching moment." Remember having a sense of self-efficacy breeds [self-esteem](#). So don't do the work for your kids. Take advantage of this opportunity to be flexible and do things differently. Step back and assist your child while they do for themselves. Don't rob them of this opportunity to feel self-efficacious and increased self-esteem. I'm proposing stop doing for them and just be with them.

Take advantage to teach your kids to recognize their feelings and honor them and sit with them - it is alright to be upset, sad, mad, frustrated etc. It might not feel great but feelings are like the weather, they will come and go as long as they are

acknowledged. And the more comfortable we are with our feelings, the good, the bad and the ugly ones, the less we suffer. So take advantage to teach your kids how to effectively deal with their feelings. Take advantage to teach your kids to listen to their self-talk and [challenge it](#). Help your kids figure out what works for them once they've acknowledged their feelings and their self-talk. How can they effectively solve their problems?

Let me give you an example from my life. My younger son has been home from his PhD program since March. All of his highschool friends who live here work, so they are busy. He's bored. I feel really bad for him, it pains me to see him stuck in the house and bored. So... do I call his friends and make play dates (believe me the thought has gone through my mind), do I entertain him, does my husband entertain him? Obviously none of the above. When my son is bored, we talk about his feelings. We talk about what an odd time it is and how difficult it is to be away from his girlfriend and that it's unfortunate his friends are busy. We talk about how sad/depressing/upsetting it is to be bored. Then HE makes suggestions as to how HE can make this situation less bad. We talk about options. We talk about how he can be more effective with the online class he is taking. We talk about what he can do specifically to take full advantage of this class, which will make it more engaging. My son is 28, so obviously, I won't be doing for him, but if he hadn't learned while he was young how to effectively do for himself, then I still would be doing for him. Or... this time would be even harder than it naturally is, because he wouldn't know how to do for himself. My husband and I have always been available to him, but we don't do for him.

So... what does this look like in your lives. Well, for example, the next time your kids come crying to you that they are bored, you take a beat. You tune into what you are saying to yourself about this proclamation of boredom. You make sure that what you are telling yourself is accurate and realistic. If it isn't you challenge your self-talk. Then you do the same for your children. Then, depending on their age, you HELP them or have them make a list of things they can do when they're bored for example. Whatever works for them. Remember this is an opportunity to teach your kids self-efficacy. The point is - you are with them, available to them but do NOT do for them.

Wishing you the strength to teach your children life skills,
Susan

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