PARENTING: 4 Ways to Help Your Children Run Their Own Minds

The four techniques all require a good spirit, a good attitude to work. Sarcasm or any demeaning wording will cause the techniques to backfire. If your mood is poor, then save these strategies until you can do them with positive intention. Remember, children easily read your feelings and intention.

1. **EXAMPLE:** Provide a good working example. And while providing the good example, speak out loud what you are doing.

Examples: "I am going to my bedroom to lay out my clothes for tomorrow." "I am going to check the cupboards to see if we have enough fixings for lunch tomorrow." "I am making a checklist for what I have to get done tomorrow." "I am using the dictionary to see if I used that word correctly." "I am researching that in the encyclopedia because I want to have my facts straight before I talk to them."

Since all humans learn by seeing others in action, example is very powerful. "Monkey see monkey do" is perhaps the single greatest conditioning factor in human life. Yes, positive role-models are often the most beneficial part of a child's life.

2. **QUESTION:** Ask thought provoking questions. Ask open-ended and general questions that get the child to think about what they are doing and how it is working. Remember, they only have to answer the questions to themselves and NOT you. Please make that fact clear: "Do you mind if I ask you a few questions to help you solve or cope with your problems?" "Please know that you can keep and often should keep the answers to yourself."

"How does thinking that way make you feel?" "Are you trying or are things just flowing for you?" "Is that way working for you?" "Are you meeting your higher or best goals by doing that?" "What are you willing to do to make things easier for yourself?" "What are you willing to do to remove some of the obstacles to your making things work smoothly?" "How can you use your negative emotions or stress to do better instead of worse?" "What are you thinking that is preventing you from fixing your problems?" "What are you thinking that is preventing you from accepting and coping with your unfixable problems?" "What thinking do you need to change to do better?" "What will you tell yourself to do better?" "How is your thinking making your problems worse?" "How is your thinking keeping you from problem-solving or coping?" "What are you sacrificing to keep your problems and is it really worth it?" "Are you relating to your problems or life as victim and then expecting life NOT to relate back as perpetrator?" "How will you better relate to your problems or life?" "How will you change your thinking for the better so that your life is better?" "How will you change your dance for the better?"

3. **SUGGESTION:** Talk about what they are doing wrong either as if it is you doing it wrong or someone else. This is a form of vicarious learning for the child.

Suggestion can take the form of storytelling: "I once knew a child who made things hard for themselves by …" It can also take the form of just talking out loud about what you need to do to make things work as if you were the child: "Let's see I am NOT focused so I better plan and prioritize and think about what I am doing." "I am procrastinating because I am overwhelming myself, so I better break this task into small pieces and do one piece at a time."

This technique works because it allows the child NOT to feel attacked and so wind up acting defensive instead of understanding. The suggestion technique makes it NOT about the child allowing them to have perspective and to relate it to themselves in a non-threatening way.

4. **BELIEF:** Believe in the child. Believe in the child's desire to succeed and be social. Encourage the child that you know they want to make their life and relationships work. This single principle has been the successful driving force of many programs that helped children as long as they had this principle, for example, Summerhill (English school) and Boys Town (1938 movie).

The child can sense who believes in them. Expect the good and bring out the good. Expect the bad and bring out the bad. The same child in one environment (for example, school) may do well while in another co-occurring environment (for example, home) may do poorly.