

December 14, 2011

Notes: Coffee with Counselor, Denise Uhl
Topic: "The Conscientious Child"

Per Mrs. Viotti, this topic is continuing our conversation following The Race To Nowhere. Many children are perfectionists and are putting their own stressors on themselves. Denise is going to give us guidance in raising these children.

"The Conscientious Child" – words are powerful ... rather than labeling these children in a negative way, let's use language that is positive. Tools today will be for this child, not other personality types (i.e. Procrastinator).

Anxiety for this child might start as soon as when school starts.

The key is to empower children to do their own "work" and to learn to help themselves through their anxiety. Start by talking them through an anxious experience after they have gone through it. What was that like for you? Was it as bad as you thought? Scale of 1-5: Before? After? Most likely less after...so how can we go into that experience again at a lower anxiety level? Examples: flu shots, dental visits

How do we teach the Conscientious Child to fail successfully?

In life, people will fail far more than they succeed. We need to teach them to be kinder to themselves when mistakes/failures happen. Allow them the room to fail, parents! There are always teaching moments in the world around us. When watching sports, seeing a mistake during the national anthem...use those as opportunities to say, "Hey, look at them, they are OK. That was probably hard, but they are back and OK!" Use example of pitchers' ERA's and batters' batting averages --- lots of failures even in a pro baseball all star!

Stanford is adding a resiliency curriculum because children do not know how to get a poor grade (i.e. An A- or B!!). Can you as a parent let them get a B and be OK? They will watch your cues.

For younger children, they do not have the full language capacity to talk through "failures." Give young ones a cue to remind them that it is OK when something does not go their way. For example, snapping their fingers. They can do these themselves as a reminder during a time of need.

A suggestion: Mental Health Morning

This is your child's permission to say, "uncle!" Denise gives her daughters 2 mental health mornings a year to decide if they would like to go to school at recess. It cannot be a test day or an important day for mom/dad. For the Conscientious Child, they know there is a break out there if/when they need it. Mom and Dad, it is important to show this by example, too. Give yourself a mental health break, too!

Shift from the RESULT to the PROCESS

The value is in the experience! Kids will say, "Why should I talk to the teacher if it's not going to change anything?" Kids must practice advocating for themselves and speaking to adults. How will they ever be able to tell their boss that they are the

best person for the promotion or deserve a raise? They can practice with coaches, too. "What more do you need to see from me to get more playing time?" Some children might actually take themselves out of life experiences because they are afraid of the outcome or afraid to fail. Parents, lead by example! Try snowboarding, ice skating, climbing – don't just sit and watch!

Depression/Suicide

What can we do? Children need someone to talk to. Who are the kids able to talk to?

Survey of our 8th Grade:

50% Students talk to Mom

25% Students talk to Dad

29% Students talk to Neither Mom or Dad

8% Students talk to Teachers

32% Students said they have no other adult beyond parents to talk to

**** Note, students were able to check more than one answer, therefore, totals do not equal 100%**

Who is another adult you trust? You have to have someone beyond you that is in your child's daily life. Adults in your child's life should match your family's message and values. Tap into the market of talking to teachers. Talk to your child about someone that "gets them." It is critical that your child has another adult to go to if they need help.

Another fabulous result of the 8th Grade survey:

96% Students believe that their relationship with God is very important or somewhat important. WOW! We should all be proud of the values children are leaving St. Matthew's with!!

8th Grade Survey: Stressors (Results in order of popularity of answer)

Boys:

School workload

High school stress

Peer pressure

- fitting in
- doing stuff they don't want to

Girls

Friends (highest percentage by far)

Peer pressure

Grades

School workload

High school stress

Denise is having follow up meetings with 8th grade to talk through dealing with stressors and moving into high school.

Lecture ended with dynamic discussion with the group of parents in attendance, Denise Uhl and Nancy Arnett.