

INSIGHTS

Are you asking your kids to step up?



We do a lot for our kids, because we love them and often they need us. But we forget that one of the best things we can do for our kids is to help them learn to do for themselves and for others.

Do you ask your kids to do chores, to help out on a regular basis? You would be surprised how many parents – who were raised doing chores – don’t ask the same of their kids. If you do give them chores, do you sometimes go behind them and redo the work when they’re done? Don’t! If it’s not done right, get your child to fix it.

When I ask why parents don’t give chores or why they don’t challenge their kids with hard things – and I do, all over the world – parents tell me it’s because kids are too... busy! They’re working their tails off on classwork, teams, clubs, groups, trying to excel at 100 different things! So adults are willing to take on every other responsibility in their lives in order to facilitate these goals. And it’s hurting kids.

We drive them everywhere. We type their work, do their research and try to buy them anything they or we think might possibly increase their success. We solve every problem and bulldoze over every potential obstacle. And kids accept this as the natural order of things. We are stepping in front of our kids, when in fact we should be stepping *back* and allowing our kids to step up.

It sounds like tough love, but it’s not. This is parenting. This is making sure that our kids, in just a few short years, don’t still need us to do everything for them. Our kids know that we are expert problem-solvers. Now it’s their turn to step up and learn to help themselves and others.

So how can we let kids step up? Here are a few tips you can try right now with kids of any age.

1. When your child or teen comes to you with a problem, don’t fix it. Say “You’re a good problem-solver. What do you think?” And then listen to the answer.
2. Expect them to fail, and talk about what they’ll do when (not if) that happens.
3. Give them tasks to do that help the whole family (not only themselves) and make sure they do them, until it’s done well. Be patient, but firm.

It’s crucial that you take a step back and let your kids make mistakes and learn from their experiences. You aren’t going to be there in adulthood to clear the obstacles they face or solve the struggles. They eventually will have to make decisions and find solutions on their own and they will be ill-prepared if they weren’t allowed to make those mistakes under supervision while you’re right there to show empathy and give support!

You may be thinking “but what if there’s an emergency and I have to jump in?” Well, first define emergency. Two percent of the time, kids need an adult to jump in front of them and solve the problem. They need an adult to protect them from a life-threatening issue that overwhelms their internal resources such as when they experience bullying, mental health issues and eating disorders.

The other 98% percent of the time kids need a compassionate adult to take an interest, from a distance, without fixing anything. So step back so that a child or a young person can step up and handle problems and dilemmas themselves.



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Internationally respected parenting and youth development expert, Deborah Gilboa, MD, is the founder of [AskDoctorG.com](https://www.askdoctorg.com). Known as Dr. G, she is an industry leading speaker, author, social influencer, and media personality. Dr. G inspires audiences with relatable stories and tools to develop life skills in children, teens and young adults ages 2-22. Connect with Dr G on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or via [her website](#).