

MAKE YOUR KID DO STUFF!

**How Parents
Build Excellence**

**Master
Adam Theros**



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Adam Theros

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To the parents who work hard to walk the path—
who see the dojang not just as a place of training,
but as a space where character takes root.

Your patience, your belief, your dedication, your efforts...
these are the true foundations of your student's black belt journey.

This is for you.

"We study Tang Soo Do. The way of Ryun Ma [repetition and polishing]. The effect of our art on our lives is not experienced in a few minutes of sporting fame, but on living and developing to be the best we can be. Don't just kick and punch in the dojang. Have a vision and a purpose; create the man or woman you really want to be."

— Grandmaster and Founder Jae Chul Shin

What Parents and Students Are Saying...

We love this martial arts academy! My son is thriving here. His self-discipline and ability to follow directions has improved drastically since putting him in the program. I highly recommend this as a healthy youth program!

Priscilla Huley

Really love how personal you guys are here! Immediately knowing kids' names! Love that. Makes a kid feel like they belong. And that's all that kids really want! A sense of belonging. I have yet to come across an instructor/staff member that I didn't absolutely love! They are all so great. Even the members themselves. Such a good group of people all around.

Amber Baum-Hall

The instructors are very good and work great with little ones. Feel my daughter has gained confidence in the short time she's been there.

Krista McCollum

My daughter has attended NWIMAA since August and we have seen such a difference in her. She is more confident and focused. She has goals and challenges to keep her engaged at karate, school, and home. The anti-bully material helped her at school, and we couldn't be prouder. We thought karate would be something that fizzled out quickly like other sports she tried, but she is committed. The teachers and staff go above and beyond to be attentive to everyone. We feel like we matter. I'm so glad we chose NWIMAA and we can't wait to see her go all the way.

Lydia Cruz-Martinez

We love NWIMAA. The karate training is just the tip of the iceberg for what the teach. Dedication, determination, focus, respect, and responsibility are just a few things my son has learned since joining. I would 100% recommend them to anyone who asks. I'm so glad we joined when we did!

Laura McMaken

Love this place, love the people. They helped both of my kids to grow mentally and emotionally. There's a lot of disappointment when I tell them we won't attend class that day and to play on their tablets instead. Both have found real friends across different age groups. My girl went from being upset and being bullied into a strong teenager (who of course struggles sometimes) that speaks up for the ones who can't or won't, also always protecting her little brother. He grew so much more confidence and came out of his shell to make friends without changing who he is. If you're looking for a place for your child to grow while being themselves, loved and accepted, than this is it!

Anna Gloeckner

This karate facility is great. They work with children and adults and also adults and children with disabilities. They are an excellent academy and really cares about the students. They are another family to me and my family. We all get along and if somethings happen, they work with you as best as they can. I love the karate facility and will continue to take my son there to finish his remaining belts.

Pamela Craft

My daughter has been attending since Feb 23. she loves it and is always excited to come. I can see lots of progress since she started. It's a positive vibe as a whole and I totally recommend it!

Kimberly Mosley

Absolutely an Amazing Martial Arts Studio! My son has been going here for over a year and he will be here for many years to come. They teach so much more than just Martial Arts. They teach patience, attitude, gratitude, respect for yourself and others, confidence and obedience among other things. They have many opportunities to get our kids involved with teaching and helping the community. Every instructor practices what they teach. I have 100% confidence in every Instructor teaching my son. They demand respect yet they show respect to every parent and student that walks in the door. Whether you are a child or an adult you will not regret the decision to go to NWIMMA!!!

Loretta Bolde

My daughter really enjoys the activities that the classes use to teach the fundamentals of Tang Soo Do. All of the instructors are very patient and are incredible with the kids. The instructors seem to be able to keep the kids focused even when their attention span starts to stray. The new complex is a great space. There is plenty of room for the kids to spread out and do their exercises. There is seating for the parents to watch. I highly recommend Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy!

John Pajak

This place is awesome! The teachers and staff are super helpful and knowledgeable. The 4 year old loves it and is excited to attend class. Very clean inside too!

Katharine Martinez

My granddaughter and I both attend classes here. It's a great school. We both love it. The instructors are very informative and helpful in making sure that everyone gets the material they go over during class I would recommend anyone interested in learning the art join.

Daniel Shaffer

I find them to be very caring about your success. Not only do they teach martial arts, they work with the children on life skills to help them through difficult times/situations. I searched many other schools prior to finding NWMAA and was impressed from the first phone conversation.

Carter Rickey

My son and daughter joined in May 2022. My son is 10 and is very shy and lacks confidence along with anxiety. He has also faced bullying. In the 9 months he has attended NWI martial Arts Academy and has become a confident less anxiety individual. This program has been THE BEST for my son, and he looks forward to every class. Master Theros and his staff keep the kids engaged, positive motivation and give them all equal attention. No pressure and a happy environment. My daughter who is 6 is also learning a relaxed structure and respect. Which is awesome for a sassy girl! Very pleased!

Lisa Schoon

Our son started at the age of 4 with challenges in listening, focusing and self-control. In just two short years, he became a black belt champion, ready to work hard, responsible and respectful! We are so grateful to NWIMAA for all the help in getting our son on track! Plus thank you for all the fun activities as well, teaching physical fitness is so important when they are young!

Rachel Perezchica

I have seen over the last couple of years just how much NWIMAA invests in continuing training for their staff, teachers and even for the volunteers and how lives are transformed through building confidence, respect, humility, strength, focus, and discipline. Shout out to Master Theros, Ms. Yothers, Mr. Mashburn, Mr. Blankenship, Mr. Pond, Mr. Theros, Ms. Lia, Ms. Tori. Thank you Thank you

Matthew Yoder

My daughter has been in karate since February. We signed up for the trial base. She has attended class since. Great customer service and support from each and every instructor. All the employees are always smiling and ready to answer any and all questions. They check in daily and periodically with you for your child's needs as well as mine. Very supportive academically. I would definitely recommend this school to everyone I know. I encourage you all to join the trial weeks.

Cyla Mitchell

My son Max is a very spirited individual. He started at NWIMAA when he was 3 going on 4. Within 6 months his behavior was improved, and he was given the tools to self-regulate. When he started Kindergarten, to say he had a tough start is an understatement. With communication with his instructors, Max was able to grow his self-regulation skills and anti-bullying techniques to be able to not only help him stop getting in trouble at school, alert an adult with those skills as well. As we entered the pandemic, NWIMAA was very dedicated to keeping students engaged from home. There were no laps in instruction. This helped my now 6-year-old's mind in check. My family is beyond grateful for the dedication of everyone at NWIMAA!

Brenda Cortez

UPDATE: My son has earned his Black Belt as of October 2018. So proud of him! The team at NWIMAA is the best! They are supportive, encouraging, motivating, and skilled. The new location is so bright and welcoming...classes now have more room to hone their skills. Highly recommend! My son has attended NWI Martial Arts Academy since it opened. He has learned so much and will achieve black belt status before becoming a teenager. Master Theros and his staff are caring and patient with students, both young and old. I highly recommend this studio!

Patty Rusin

This studio has been great for our kids! They've gone from "awkward and lost" during the first few classes to "confident" as they've learned several self-defense techniques such as blocks, punches and kicks as well as verbal techniques/responses for dealing with bullies. The instructors are patient and very good with kids, which has been awesome. The instructors are also good at striking that difficult balance between having fun with the students while still teaching the students discipline and respect for themselves and others. They also keep the students moving throughout the entire class time and encourage the kids to keep stretching and growing. I highly recommend signing up for the weekly 15 minute private lessons; they have been the key to helping our kids stay motivated. During these lessons, our children feel comfortable asking questions they wouldn't ask during class in front of all the other students and receive focused assistance, which helps them to understand the moves they will be learning in class that week. This has helped them to feel more confident in class, and therefore, they enjoy the group classes more. Highly Recommend!

Katy Freeman

I've been going here for a few months and my husband and stepdaughter have been going for over a year now. It's a great place. The instructors are all attentive, knowledgeable, caring people. I started classes as an adult and it's one of the best decisions I've made. It's always a positive atmosphere here. They teach a very well-rounded program including self-defense techniques, traditional forms, weapons, and everyday strategies for becoming a better person. They work very hard to make everyone feel included and they encourage students to always do their best. As a first-time student in my 30's, I've never felt singled out being in a class with 17-year-olds that are halfway to a black belt. They have students from all backgrounds and walls of life, and I think that's what makes this school so special. I'd give 100 stars if I could.

Victoria Walter

Some of the greatest instructors and great people. We've been going for over a year. My boys love it. My husband and I love being there too. This studio is open to all. My little guy started at age 4. He hasn't had the greatest attention. The instructors are kind and patient. We started with a \$20 2-week trial and haven't left. We received a uniform after 4 days we broke a board and got our first belt. On top of karate, we are all learning antibully techniques.

Anna Joy Berkowitch

My young son has been enrolled at NWIMAA. The instructors have a great kid's program. The focus isn't just on karate as a fighting system; they incorporate good behavior, verbal self-defense tactics, and discipline. I can't stress how important it is to have instructors that are able to gel with the kids and they all do a great job.

Dan Gin

Been taking class here since summer '19. I really enjoy the positive atmosphere and people. Everyone is very nice and will accommodate you, no matter what your skill level is... Children, and adults! Martial arts class is a great way to build self-confidence as well as discipline. I've tried a few different gyms in our area and this was my favorite because the staff is personable and the classes are a decent size, not too huge, so they can help you if needed. I needed to do something nice for myself. Best decision I made joining this school. It's really helped me with my anxiety and PTSD issues. You owe it to yourself! Check it out!

Cris Berkowitch

Since becoming a student my son has overcome being bullied. The instructors are wonderful and patient working with student of all abilities.

Cookie Garron

Our daughter loves NWIMAA! She has shown growth in confidence, leadership and discipline.

Tiffany Pajak

My kids have been coming here for 3 months. It is really helping my son with his focus and discipline. My daughter is learning how to stand up to bullies and have confidence in herself. Administration is very flexible and helpful. Highly recommended!

Matthew Carroll

My son had been going for over a year. The only sport he has wanted to stick with for longer than 1/2 a season. The instructors are great and cater amazingly to the different age groups. My son is looking forward to earning his black belt.

Dennise Ivey

This is a fantastic martial arts school that both my son and I attend. The skills he's learned, like focus and the importance of practicing to become better have been invaluable. The instructors are patient, positive and fun to work with.

Joseph Correa

Our Daughter has been attending Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy for the past 4 years. We have seen improvements in her confidence, leadership and desire to learn skills that she will use for a lifetime. The entire staff is concerned with the students' development. We are proud to be Parents of a student at Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy.

Joe Casner

I cannot say enough about this studio and their instructors! My son has been coming here for over 3 years and has learned so much. All the instructors go out of their way to teach and encourage! Check them out! You won't be disappointed!

Pamala Tucker

After visiting and speaking with several local martial art schools, we chose NWIMAA. We have been taking our 9-year-old to NWIMAA for two years. Under the leadership of Master Theros, he has steadily climbed the ladder of color belts and has achieved many medals in numerous tournaments. NWIMAA is a school of discipline, respect and provides an environment of self-worth and confidence. We made the right choice.

Michael Nees

Still a new member but highly impressed by their approach and genuine care for each individual child. Teaching the children not just a fight sport but focus a lot on discipline, respect and other character and life skills

Joeri Sneyders

I don't even have the words to express how amazing this place is. My kid is excited to go to camp and play, but he comes home talking about being confident and responsible. Once back home, he asks for jobs to help me out all because this place instills values into their campers beyond just physical strength and control. The physical karate lessons and structure is great, but the actual investment in shaping small humans is immeasurable. The staff is patient and kind, but firm in a way, kids need to develop their own healthy habits. We're so grateful to be a part of this place - even if only for the summer.

Ashli Cooper

I wish we had enrolled our daughter here 2-3 years ago when we first started talking about it. We ended up enrolling her about 4 months ago and it's unbelievable to watch how the instructors interact with the students. She is learning confidence and responsibility and she's making friends in the process. I can't say enough about them! She's also going to their summer camp and she comes home with all sorts of stories and she's exhausted from having so much fun!

Valerie Witt

Our 4-year-old son has been attending for roughly 2 months now and we are so grateful we found this place. The instructors are truly outstanding- not just skilled in martial arts but also in how they connect with the kids. Their approach is filled with positive reinforcement and they have an amazing ability to help kids stay focused while still having fun. One of the biggest highlights for us recently was the lightsaber seminar- our son had an absolute blast. It's clear the academy knows how to keep things exciting and engaging while still staying grounded in discipline and growth. In just a short time, our son has earned eight stripes on his belt through consistent attendance and completing chores at home, along with good behavior at school. He is so proud of himself and we've seen such a boost in his confidence because of it. This program is teaching him responsibility, dedication and self-discipline in a way that really sticks. We couldn't recommend Northwest Indiana martial arts academy more highly. It's more than just a martial arts school- they are helping these kids build character and they genuinely care about each child's journey.

Ryan Blanchard

I have been training here for 4 years and it feels like home. The instructors are amazing. They are great with kids of all ages. If you want a spoon full of kindness and fun, I suggest to try it out. If I could give this place more than 5 stars I would.

Nick Ferrara

Amazing staff all the way around. Has helped my son increase his self-confidence on many levels. I've noticed an improvement in his school work as well. Great place to bring your kids. There's a reason why they're so well-known and have such great ratings.

Sabrina Peña Figueroa

My children and I have enjoyed all of the classes we have been too. They learn more than self-defense here, they learn to listen, follow directions and be more responsible. The staff is amazing. They genuinely care for you and your family. We quickly felt like we became part of family and the kids were excited to go. During the classes they keep the kids distanced so I felt comfortable letting them be in an in-person class. Overall, I am so happy to have found this place. It has been nothing but a great experience with wonderful and fun people. I would absolutely recommend it to everyone!

Anna Jain

If I could leave 6 stars I would. We've only been attending NWIMAA for a few months but the facilities and staff have amazed us. All of the instructors are organized and super patient with the littles (mine is 9). They blend life skills and martial arts seamlessly, emphasizing on confidence and self-discipline/self-care. There was a day when I messed up the schedule after Christmas break and Master Adam Theros requested Mr. Garcia to give our son a 20-30 minute lesson for us making the trip. That speaks volumes about the values of the establishment and we are thankful for the changes we have seen in our son. We look forward to watching our dude grow and mature with them. Thank you so much!

Becca Davis

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How Parents Build Excellence

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Introduction—

SO I HAVE TO MAKE MY CHILD DO STUFF?

“I’ve found what makes children happy doesn’t always prepare them to be courageous, engaged adults.” – Brené Brown

As any parent who’s ever tried to get their kid to do something they don’t want to do could tell you, it’s always going to be an uphill battle. Kids are generally honest about their feelings, and if they really don’t like something, you’re going to know about it. The way they express themselves won’t always be pretty, but chances are they will keep it real, especially when they’re unhappy about whatever it is you’d like for them to do.

We want our kids to be successful, and part of being successful is taking care of things we’d rather not have to deal with. Whether it’s going to work on a day when you just don’t feel like it or having to tackle a project at work that you think is a waste of time, we all have to do stuff regardless of whether we want to or not. One responsibility of being a parent is teaching our children how to give their best in everything, even when they’d rather be playing a video game or reading a book.

Pushing your kids, when done thoughtfully and with care, can be an essential part of their growth and development. Encouraging children to step out of their comfort zones helps them build resilience and confidence. When parents set high expectations and support their children in reaching them, kids learn the value of hard work, perseverance, and dedication. This approach helps children develop a growth mindset, where they understand that their abilities can be developed through effort and learning. By gently pushing them to

overcome challenges, parents instill a sense of accomplishment and self-belief that is crucial for tackling future obstacles in life.

Moreover, pushing kids can help them discover their potential and passions. Often, children might not be aware of their capabilities or interests until they are encouraged to explore different activities and face new challenges. This gentle push can open doors to opportunities that they might have otherwise overlooked, leading to the development of new skills and talents. Additionally, it helps them build discipline and time-management skills as they learn to balance various responsibilities and activities. However, it is vital for parents to strike a balance between pushing and supporting, ensuring that their children feel encouraged rather than pressured. When done correctly, this approach fosters a healthy, driven, and well-rounded individual.

In my role as a martial arts school owner and instructor, I have seen martial arts create leaders and students who can communicate, have great discipline, and are happy. This is a huge return on the parents' investment of time and effort and a critical component in raising healthy, well-adjusted kids. In this book, I will examine the strategies and challenges of getting kids to do stuff. My goal is that, by the end of this book, you will be equipped with the tools you need to be a successful parent who is raising successful kids. Read on!

Chapter 1—

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SUCCESSFUL PARENT

“Children aren't coloring books. You don't get to fill them with your favorite colors.” – Khaled Hosseini

We only have so much time to prepare kids for life—from newborn to eighteen years old (sometimes a bit longer, but that’s a separate topic), and there are only so many hours in a day. If you think about all the vital things that a person needs to know going into adulthood, or at least know HOW to go about finding the information they need to solve a problem themselves, it’s easy to get overwhelmed.

As parents, our time is limited, and every activity our children participate in should deliver real, lasting value. What matters most isn’t vague ideas about creating a better world. It’s knowing our children are growing into a confident, capable, and kind people who can create their own success. That’s the real return on investment: raising kids who have the tools to thrive socially, emotionally, and in life.

To clarify, Return on Investment (ROI) is a business concept that compares the monetary value of an investment to its cost. ROI measures what you get back from your investment relative to its cost. It may seem strange to apply a business term to parenting, but when you look closely at it, ROI in this context is appropriate and useful. It's time to redirect our attention toward the ROI of our parenting efforts and make our children and their well-being the greatest investment in our lives. Here are some ways you can do that:

- **Time:** One of the most valuable investments parents can make is dedicating quality time to their children. Time is the currency of love, respect, and honor. By spending it wisely, parents can forge unbreakable bonds, engage in meaningful conversations, play together, and create lasting memories. Lead by example with how you choose to spend your time—with family. Remember, the moments you spend with your kids today become the foundations for their future.
- **Education:** Investing in your child's education is like planting a seed that grows into a magnificent tree. Experience in any form is an education. Encourage their appetite to learn, support their curiosities, and expose them to as many people, places, and things as possible. Do your best to provide them with the tools they need to succeed. By fostering a love for learning, you equip them with the lifelong ability to acquire knowledge, adapt to change, and navigate the complexities of the world.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence (EQ) is an essential attribute that contributes to success and happiness in life. Nurture your child's emotional well-being by teaching them empathy, gratitude, and self-worth. Help them become skilled in self-care and build healthy relationships. This investment will pay dividends in their well-being, relationships, careers, and quality of life.
- **Values and Character:** Instilling strong values and character traits in your children is a priceless investment. Your family's core values are their foundation for life. Live and lead with these: honesty, kindness, compassion, gratitude, and integrity. Empower them to embrace diversity and cultivate a sense of responsibility and accountability toward others and the world. By helping shape their character, you equip them with the tools to make wise choices, build meaningful connections, and lead a purposeful life.

- **Independence:** As parents, it's natural to want to protect our children from the world's challenges. However, it's equally important to empower them with independence. Encourage their autonomy, decision-making skills, and problem-solving abilities. Allow them to make mistakes—it is through failures and setbacks that they learn valuable life lessons and develop resilience. We grow and improve the most by adversity. This is how we evolve, adapt, and become competent in our independence.
- **Financial Literacy:** Teaching children about money and financial literacy is an investment that yields lifelong benefits. Equip them with the knowledge and skills to manage finances responsibly. Teach them about budgeting, saving, and investing. By doing so, you prepare them for a financially secure future and enable them to make informed decisions about their money.
- **Dream and Aspire:** Every child has dreams and aspirations, and it's essential for parents to nurture and support these desires. Encourage your children to explore their passions, set goals, and work diligently towards them. Be their biggest advocate and guide them through the ups and downs of their journey. By investing in their dreams, you empower them to achieve greatness.

Parenting is a journey that requires presence, patience, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to invest in your children's health and wholeness. While the returns may not be immediately tangible, the ROI in their personal development, education, character, and well-being are immeasurable. We have the incredible opportunity to shape the future through investing in our children. So, let's invest wisely, embrace the journey, and witness the remarkable returns that come with raising remarkable human beings.

We've all known parents who throw everything they've got at their child with little to no effect. Oftentimes, these parents aren't trying to

raise a healthy kid, but rather they see parenting as an opportunity to redo their childhood but with substantial improvements: “I played baseball when I was a kid, so my kid will play baseball and even get into the Major Leagues.” This tends to end in failure because one key aspect of parenting is missing—What kind of person is your child? What do they like to do? What are they good at?

Becoming a parent guarantees that you'll make mistakes. Unfortunately, kids don't come with detailed training manuals. You will say the wrong thing, make the wrong choice, and show up at the wrong time at least once in a while. It's unavoidable. You can also be assured there will be times when your child yells at you, laughs at you, and grows frustrated by you. All of these mistakes and reactions are par for the course.

That said, your goal shouldn't be to try and be a perfect parent—it's simply not achievable. Besides, you don't need to be perfect to be an effective parent. Your mistakes, mishaps, and blunders are all opportunities to teach your child valuable life lessons, like how to respond when mistakes are made or the most meaningful way to apologize when you mess up.

The most effective parents aim to raise a mentally strong, responsible child who will be equipped for the realities of adult life. Here are fourteen habits highly effective parents use to make that objective a reality:

1. Enforce the Rules

House rules and boundaries do more than keep you sane; they also help a developing child feel stable and secure. An effective parent is clear about what a child is and is not allowed to do, the chores that they're expected to complete, and how they should treat other people (and pets) in the home.

Of course, every child missteps here and there. After you've given your child instructions, use an *if...then* warning. Say, “If you don't put your toys away now, you won't be allowed to go

to the park.” This step shows your child that while they're allowed to make a mistake, they are responsible for their continued actions. If they violate a major rule—such as hitting you—follow through with an immediate consequence. Show them that your job is to help them learn to follow the rules, and consequences are meant to help them learn from their mistakes.

2. Remain Flexible

There's enforcing the rules, and then there's being overly strict. You need to keep a little flexibility at hand for certain situations. Making too many rules is likely to backfire. A study done by the University of New Hampshire concluded that overly strict parents actually raise children who are more likely to break the rules. Additionally, research shows that children who have seriously strict parents often have lower self-esteem and a decreased sense of self-worth than those who have parents who loosen up every once in a while.

Your child should know the consequences of breaking certain rules, but effective discipline isn't a black-and-white affair. Adjust the rules and the consequences as your family grows, children age, and situations change.

3. Talk to Your Kids

Effective parenting begins with effective communication. Even when children are just learning how to babble, they benefit from conversations with their parents. Chat about everything, from how their day was at school to how they feel about the upcoming baseball season to what they want for their birthday this year. No topic should be off-limits. The longer the conversation, the more benefits it provides to your children. It teaches them about language, social skills, and imaginative thinking.

Regular conversations also help to make your child feel more secure and appreciated because it shows that you care about what

they think. So, talk to your child a lot when they're young, and they'll be more likely to talk to you when they're a teenager.

4. Read to Your Kids

This goes hand in hand with talking to your child more often. Reading aloud exposes your child to new vocabulary, teaches new concepts, and allows them to immerse themselves in new worlds. A child who is read to frequently will have a greater understanding of grammatical structures and a stronger imagination—not to mention a wealth of facts at their disposal if they prefer nonfiction books!

Aim to read to your child individually for at least twenty minutes per day. A study done by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that parents who read out loud with their children at a young age were up to a year ahead of their academic peers by age fifteen.

5. Spend Time Together

Throughout your day-to-day life, you spend plenty of time with your child, right? After all, you go through the morning routine, your commute to school and work together, you eat dinner tonight, you tuck them in at night. However, none of this is true quality time, which a child needs with a parent in order to thrive. Aim to set aside ten to fifteen minutes each day to give your child your undivided attention to do an activity of his choice. Play a game, dress up, or run around outside. Giving your child plenty of time-in will likely reduce the amount of time they'll spend in time-out.

6. Allow Kids to Face Challenges

Adversity builds character, but that doesn't mean it's easy to watch your child struggle. There will always be situations where your little one needs your help—or even a bailout of some sort—but as they get older, take a step back to see how they conquer

the challenges they face on their own. If, for example, your child has been working hard to be named the pitcher on the Little League team and the coach selects someone else to be the starting pitcher, don't swoop in and request the team leadership to rectify the situation. Explain to your child that sometimes, despite hard work, things don't go the way you planned. Encourage them to continue to hone their skills and try again next year.

This strategy not only teaches kids that their parents won't always fix their problems but also that sometimes things aren't going to go their way, and that's no reason to give up. Teach your child that they can deal with uncomfortable emotions, like failure and rejection, in a healthy manner.

7. Respect Your Child's Need for Independence

As early as two years old, children are learning to make their own choices (and they'll often be very vocal about them!). As they grow older, these choices are going to have more of an impact. While you don't always have to agree with these choices, you should respect them (as long as it doesn't jeopardize your child or another person in a significant way—use your judgment on that). Recognize that just because they don't do things the way you might do them doesn't mean it's a bad idea.

If that choice doesn't work out, then your child learns how the decisions they make can come with consequences. If it does go in their favor, they'll learn the positive impact that making smart decisions can have on their life. Let your child face natural consequences once in a while. If they insist on going outside without a coat, and they aren't in danger of freezing, let them do it. If they get cold, they'll be more likely to wear their jacket next time.

8. Spend Time Away From Your Kids

You might feel like your children are your whole life and the whole world—that's natural. But that doesn't mean you have to be with them twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days a year. Parents need a break sometimes. Arrange some time away from your children for some self-care or to recharge your relationship. You (and your partner) get to make the decision about how much time you need and when you'll need it; don't let others tell you what's appropriate and what's unacceptable. It might be that your partner takes the children out of the house on Sunday mornings so you can sleep in, drink your coffee in peace, and browse the internet at your leisure.

Or perhaps you get a babysitter and schedule a date night once a month so the two of you can reconnect over an adult meal. Don't forget to have a night away every once in a while, too, by asking a grandparent, sibling, or trusted friend to take your little ones overnight. It's healthy to show your child that you have interests, hobbies, and activities outside of the house, and stepping away once in a while will teach them that they can be okay without you.

9. Love Your Children Unconditionally

Your love for your child shouldn't have strings or limits, nor should your child feel like he needs to work for your affection. Highly effective parents make it clear that no matter how many mistakes a child makes, they will always be there. Provide support, guidance, and love as your child grows, and watch that child become a happy, responsible adult. That's the overall goal of parenting!

10. Praise Your Kid

Don't reserve praise for the times your child is perfect. Instead, praise their willingness to try hard or their desire to try again

after they fail. Make sure your child knows that your love for them doesn't depend on their achievement or success. Instead, show and tell them that you love them no matter what.

11. Help them set realistic goals

One way to measure success as a parent is by setting realistic goals for your kids. They should be achievable and tailored to their individual strengths and abilities. For example, if your child struggles with math, pushing for an A in advanced calculus might not be a realistic or fair expectation. Instead, focus on smaller, achievable things like improving their math grades or mastering a particular concept. By setting realistic goals, you can track your child's progress and celebrate their achievements.

12. Promote positive values

Another measure of success in parenting is fostering positive values and character traits in our kids. This involves teaching them the importance of empathy, kindness, respect, responsibility, and resilience. These qualities benefit them personally and can make them valuable members of society. As parents, we can model these values and encourage our kids to practice them in daily life. Instilling morals helps set kids up for future success.

13. Supporting their passions and interests

Nurture what your kids care about. Every child is unique, with their own talents, hobbies, and dreams. As parents, it's our job to identify and encourage these passions, whether it's sports, music, art, or academics. By providing opportunities for kids to explore their interests and help them pursue their goals, we help foster a sense of purpose and fulfillment in their lives. And when our kids find joy and happiness in what they do, that is truly a measure of success.

14. Keep your eyes on the prize

Success in parenting can't be defined by one specific metric. It's a combination of various things, like setting realistic goals, encouraging independence, building strong relationships, promoting positive values, and supporting our kids' passions. As parents, it's important to remember that our ultimate goal shouldn't be to raise perfect kids but happy and well-rounded individuals who will hopefully make a positive impact on the world.

Successful parenting is a combination of actions and interactions that are driven by purpose and goals and that help children develop character traits like independence, self-direction, honesty, self-control, kindness, and cooperation. Successful parenting requires a great deal of commitment, sacrifice, patience, discipline, and consistency, and it's attainable with a little thoughtfulness and perseverance.

I think we can agree that supporting and encouraging our children will increase their interest, whatever the activity. Martial arts training is important for kids for several reasons. First, it helps improve their physical fitness by enhancing their strength, flexibility, and coordination, and they're accomplishing this with an activity they enjoy. Second, it instills discipline and respect, teaching kids to follow rules and respect others, qualities that are beneficial no matter what the age. It also helps build confidence as kids learn to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Last, martial arts can also provide a sense of belonging and camaraderie as kids train together and support each other. In a nutshell, martial arts training can contribute significantly to a child's overall development.

I once had two students, brothers, who started at age four. Both were doing great! One of the children had a physical disability that wasn't noticeable when he was four, but when he was six, there was certainly a clear visual difference between him and typical kids in the class. His mom wanted to take him out of Karate because she was worried that he'd

feel different—even though his performance and attitude, as well as how all the other kids treated him, was fantastic. In fact, training in Karate was building his self-esteem because he was sincerely getting better and learning new skills. This is an example of an error we sometimes make as parents. We try to preemptively overprotect a child instead of pushing them to grow to new limits and achievements. If the child learns to grow, in spite of their challenges (and we all have challenges), they won't be able to learn to overcome challenges in the future.

Parenting is hard. As I mentioned earlier, children don't come with instruction manuals. Often, we feel like we're winging it and hoping for the best. This need not be the case. I've detailed fourteen ways in which you can work to improve your parenting. These steps aren't hard, but they do require consistency and determination. The end result is that having an excellent child is well worth any cost. We'll talk more about making your child excellent in the next chapter.

Chapter 2—

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHILD EXCELLENT

“Don’t handicap your children by making their lives easy.” – Robert A. Heinlein

Excellence in children is a goal for many parents. It's not just about academic achievement or athletic prowess but about developing well-rounded individuals who can thrive in various aspects of life. The key to fostering this excellence lies in providing constant challenges and embracing failure as a natural part of growth. As parents, we must learn to balance protection with allowing our children to face challenges and learn from their mistakes. In this chapter, we're going to explore the importance of challenge, the role of failure, and practical strategies for parents to help their children develop excellence.

If a goal as a parent is to develop excellence, the missing piece is often the challenge. Constantly challenging kids to improve and grow invites failure, which is essential for development. Without challenges, children may become complacent, missing opportunities to push their limits and discover their true potential.

Think about your own life. You probably can tie your biggest successes and periods of significant growth to times when you faced challenges or even failures. These experiences teach resilience, problem-solving, and the ability to adapt. By reflecting on our experiences, we can understand the importance of allowing our children to encounter and overcome challenges.

For example, consider a time when you faced a significant challenge at work. Perhaps you were given a project that seemed beyond your capabilities. You might have struggled initially, made mistakes, and even

faced criticism. However, through perseverance and learning from your errors, you eventually succeeded. This experience likely taught you valuable lessons about your abilities, work ethic, and problem-solving skills. It's these types of challenges that can lead to the most profound personal growth.

Take, for instance, a child learning to play a musical instrument. Initially, the child may struggle to produce the correct notes or rhythm. The challenge here is not just in learning the technical skills but also in developing the patience and perseverance needed to practice regularly. Parents can support their child by setting realistic goals, encouraging regular practice, and celebrating small achievements along the way. Over time, the child will improve, not only in their musical abilities but also in their confidence and resilience.

Extracurricular activities play a significant role in challenging children and helping them develop new skills. For instance, participation in martial arts, sports teams, drama clubs, or debate teams can push children out of their comfort zones and require them to develop teamwork, leadership, and public speaking skills.

Consider a child who joins a soccer team. At first, they might struggle with the physical demands of the sport and the coordination required to play well. Through consistent practice and encouragement from coaches and parents, the child learns to improve their skills, work effectively with teammates, and handle the ups and downs of winning and losing games. These experiences contribute to their overall growth and ability to handle challenges in other areas of life.

Having a mentality that it's okay to fail is crucial. Our job is to protect our kids from serious danger or trauma, but far too often, we try to shield them from making mistakes or experiencing anything negative. This overprotection can hinder their ability to develop resilience and self-confidence.

Think about a toddler learning to walk. You can't really help them walk; you have to let them try on their own. If they fall, you help them

up, but if you hold them too much, they won't learn as fast or as well. This process of trial and error is essential for their development. When your child is a toddler, do you follow them around, protect them from falling, or do you let them trundle along on their own, keeping an eye out in case they get too close to the stairs or the stove? The latter child, the trundler, is flexing their exploratory muscles, maybe stumbling, maybe not. The point is to let them try, let them explore. You're right there if it starts to go south, but by giving them the freedom to "try out their legs," you are fostering independence.

This principle applies to many areas of life. For example, when children are learning to ride a bike, they will likely fall several times before they master it. As parents, our instinct might be to prevent them from falling (just like the toddler above), but these falls are part of the learning process. Each time they get back up, they might have a scrape or two, but they build resilience and confidence.

In the academic world, you can't take the test for your children. You can guide them and provide support, but they need to face the challenges themselves. Over-involvement, such as calling the teacher to complain about a poor grade, doesn't help your child learn from their mistakes. Helping your kids sounds like asking, "How can Johnny do better next time?" instead of saying, "Johnny would have passed the test if you spent more time with him!" This approach encourages children to take responsibility for their own learning and improvement.

Imagine your child has failed a math test. Your first reaction might be to criticize the teacher or the test itself. However, a more constructive approach would be to sit down with your child and review the test together. Identify the areas where they struggled and discuss strategies for improvement. Perhaps they need more practice with certain types of problems, or maybe they need to develop better study habits. By focusing on what they can do differently next time, you help them learn from their mistakes and build the skills they need to succeed.

When kids fail, it's crucial for parents to handle the situation constructively. Mistakes we often make include being overly corrective right away, criticizing others, or giving premature praise. Instead, we should follow a more supportive approach, and here, it's important to remember Empathy First.

Let's pause for a moment to talk about the difference between sympathy and empathy.

Understanding the difference between them is crucial in effective communication and building strong, supportive relationships. Both concepts involve acknowledging another person's feelings, but they differ significantly in their depth and impact. Empathy fosters deeper connections and understanding, while sympathy can sometimes feel superficial or even dismissive. Let's explore the definitions, key differences, and practical examples of empathy and sympathy, highlighting why empathy is often more beneficial in relationships and parenting.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves putting yourself in someone else's shoes and experiencing their emotions as if they were your own. Empathy goes beyond acknowledging another person's feelings; it involves a deeper, more personal connection.

Sympathy, on the other hand, is feeling pity or sorrow for someone else's misfortune. It involves recognizing someone else's distress and expressing concern, but it does not involve experiencing their emotions. Sympathy is more about expressing compassion from a distance rather than truly connecting with the other person's experience.

	Empathy	Sympathy
Depth of Connection	<p>Involves a deep, personal connection.</p> <p>You feel what the other person is feeling.</p> <p>You put yourself in their shoes and see the world from their perspective.</p>	<p>Involves a more superficial connection.</p> <p>You acknowledge the other person's feelings but do not share them.</p> <p>You express concern or pity without fully engaging with their emotional experience.</p>
Emotional Involvement	<p>Requires emotional involvement and openness.</p> <p>You are vulnerable to feeling the same emotions as the person you are empathizing with.</p> <p>This emotional involvement can foster stronger, more supportive relationships.</p>	<p>Requires less emotional involvement.</p> <p>You remain more emotionally detached.</p> <p>This detachment can sometimes make the other person feel misunderstood or isolated.</p>
Communication Style	<p>Involves active listening and validating the other person's feelings.</p> <p>Responses are supportive and understanding.</p> <p>You might say, "I understand how you feel," or "That sounds really tough."</p>	<p>Involves offering comfort or consolation.</p> <p>Responses may be well-meaning but can sometimes seem dismissive.</p> <p>You might say, "I'm sorry you're going through this," or "At least it's not worse."</p>

<p>Example: A Friend in Crisis</p>	<p>Your friend is going through a tough breakup. Instead of just saying, "I'm sorry," you sit with them, listen to their story, and say, "I can see how much pain you're in. Breakups are incredibly hard."</p>	<p>Your friend is going through a tough breakup. You say, "I'm sorry to hear that," and then change the subject to something more lighthearted.</p>
<p>Example: Parenting Challenges</p>	<p>Your child is upset because they didn't make the soccer team. Instead of saying, "Don't worry, you'll get it next time," you say, "I know you're really disappointed. It's okay to feel sad about this."</p>	<p>Your child is upset because they didn't make the soccer team. You say, "It's okay, it's just a game," and try to distract them with a treat.</p>
<p>Example: Workplace Support</p>	<p>A colleague is overwhelmed with a project. Instead of saying, "That's tough," you offer, "I've been there too. Let's talk about how we can manage this together."</p>	<p>A colleague is overwhelmed with a project. You say, "That's tough," and then proceed with your own tasks without offering further support.</p>

Why Empathy is More Beneficial:

- **Builds Stronger Relationships**

Empathy helps build stronger, more meaningful relationships because it involves truly understanding and sharing in another person's emotions. This deep connection fosters trust and mutual support, which are essential components of any healthy relationship.

- **Promotes Healing and Comfort**

When people feel understood and validated, they are more likely to experience healing and comfort. Empathy provides the emotional support that people need to process their feelings and move forward.

- **Enhances Communication**

Empathetic communication involves active listening and thoughtful responses, which can prevent misunderstandings and conflicts. It encourages open and honest dialogue, helping people feel heard and valued.

- **Encourages Personal Growth**

Empathy encourages personal growth by allowing people to explore their own emotions and those of others. This self-awareness and understanding can lead to greater emotional intelligence and resilience.

Empathy and sympathy both play roles in how we connect with others, but empathy offers a deeper, more meaningful connection. By understanding and sharing another person's feelings, we can build stronger relationships, provide better support, and enhance communication. In parenting, empathy is particularly valuable as it helps children feel understood and valued, fostering their emotional and personal growth. By practicing empathy, parents can create a supportive

environment that encourages open communication and resilience, helping their children navigate the complexities of their emotions and experiences.

Back to what to do when kids fail:

1. **Start with empathy.** Acknowledge the child's feelings and validate their experience. For example, "Yeah, it's true that it wasn't great! It's understandable not to feel good about it." Instead of dismissing their emotions, let them know that it's okay to feel what they're feeling. For example, if your child is upset about a bad grade, say, "I see that you're really disappointed about your grade. It's okay to feel that way. Let's talk about what we can do to help you improve." Validating your child's experience shows that you understand and accept their feelings. This helps build their confidence and emotional security.
2. **Focus on the Positives.** After establishing empathy, focus on the good things that happened. Highlight what the child did right or the effort they put in. This helps build a foundation of positive reinforcement before addressing areas for improvement. Consider a scenario where your child has just lost a soccer game. Instead of immediately pointing out what they did wrong, start by acknowledging their effort. "I saw how hard you were running and how you kept trying, even when the game got tough." This helps the child feel valued for their effort and sets a positive tone for the conversation about what they can improve.
3. **Planning for Improvement.** Finally, make plans for the future. Discuss what can be done differently next time and encourage the child to think about solutions. This could involve seeking guidance from teachers or experts. The goal is to foster a mindset of continuous improvement. If your child is struggling with a particular subject in school, work together to create a study plan. This might include setting aside regular study times, finding additional resources like tutoring or online courses, and setting

specific goals for each study session. By involving your child in the planning process, you help them take ownership of their learning and develop important organizational skills.

Martial arts provide an excellent example of how to handle failure constructively. Parents often give kids corrections after they don't pass a test, despite not having taken a martial arts class themselves. This can lead to defensiveness and a lack of empathy. Instead, parents should follow the three-step process of empathy, focusing on positives and planning for improvement.

In martial arts, a child might receive feedback from their instructor after a test. Instead of a parent saying, "Here's how to fix your round kick," it's more helpful to express empathy ("I know it's tough not to pass a test") and then encourage them to listen to their instructor's feedback. This approach is more likely to lead to constructive improvement.

Consider a child who has been practicing martial arts for a year and has failed their first belt test. The initial reaction might be disappointment or frustration. However, the parent can start by acknowledging these feelings and expressing understanding. Next, they can highlight the progress the child has made so far, such as mastering basic techniques and showing discipline in attending classes. Finally, they can work with the child to develop a plan for improvement, such as focusing on specific techniques during practice sessions and seeking additional feedback from the instructor. This approach helps the child learn from the experience and continue to strive for excellence.

One of the most important lessons children can learn from failure is resilience. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from setbacks and keep moving forward. It's a critical skill that will serve them well throughout their lives. Imagine a child who loves playing basketball but was cut from the team during tryouts. This can be a devastating experience, but it's also an opportunity to build resilience. The parent can start by acknowledging the child's disappointment and empathizing with their feelings. Next, they can help the child identify areas for

improvement and set new goals, such as practicing specific skills, joining a local league, or working with a coach. By encouraging the child to keep trying and providing support along the way, the parent helps them develop the resilience needed to overcome setbacks.

Encourage your child to reflect on past failures and how they overcame them. This can be done through a simple exercise where they write down a few instances where they faced challenges, what they learned from the experience, and how they eventually succeeded. This reflection helps reinforce the idea that failure is a part of the learning process and that they have the strength to overcome obstacles.

A growth mindset, as opposed to a fixed mindset, is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through hard work, dedication, and learning from mistakes. Encouraging a growth mindset in children is crucial for their long-term success and ability to achieve excellence. When a child brings home a good grade, it's tempting to praise the result. However, it's more beneficial to praise the effort that went into achieving that result. For example, instead of saying, "You're so smart!" say, "I'm really proud of how hard you worked on that project." This reinforces the idea that effort and perseverance are what lead to success.

Consider a child who has struggled with a particular subject in school. They might believe they're simply "bad at math" or "not a science person." By helping them understand that these subjects can be improved through practice and effort, parents can foster a growth mindset. For example, a parent might say, "I know math has been challenging for you, but I've seen how much effort you've put into studying. Let's keep working together, and I believe you'll get better with time."

Engage your child in activities that promote a growth mindset. One effective activity is the "Yet" board. Whenever your child expresses doubt about their abilities ("I can't do this math problem"), encourage them to add the word "yet" at the end ("I can't do this math problem yet"). This simple addition reinforces the idea that their abilities can improve

with time and effort. Another activity is to set small, achievable goals that gradually increase in difficulty. Celebrate each accomplishment and discuss what strategies worked and what can be improved for the next goal.

Children often look up to role models in their lives, whether they are parents, teachers, coaches, or public figures. Role models can have a significant impact on a child's development and their pursuit of excellence. Parents are often the most influential role models for their children. When parents demonstrate qualities such as perseverance, hard work, and a positive attitude towards challenges, children are more likely to adopt these traits. For example, a parent who is dedicated to continuous learning and self-improvement sets a powerful example for their child. This might involve taking up a new hobby, pursuing further education, or engaging in community service.

Teachers can also serve as powerful role models. Consider a student who struggles with science but has a passionate and supportive science teacher. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and their dedication to helping students understand difficult concepts can inspire the student to develop a similar passion for learning. The teacher might use creative methods to make the subject engaging and provide extra support to ensure the student succeeds. This positive influence can change the student's attitude towards science and learning in general.

Martial arts instructors serve as powerful role models for children as well, embodying the principles of discipline, respect, and perseverance that are core to martial arts training. These instructors demonstrate consistent dedication to their practice, showing students the value of hard work and commitment. By exemplifying self-control and focus, they teach children the importance of setting and achieving goals, both in martial arts and in life. Instructors often share personal stories of overcoming challenges, providing real-life examples of how to handle adversity with grace and resilience. This consistent modeling of positive behavior helps children internalize these values, fostering their personal growth and development.

In addition to their technical expertise, martial arts instructors also emphasize the importance of respect and humility. They create a structured environment where respect for oneself, peers, and instructors is paramount. This environment helps children learn to value themselves and others, building strong character and social skills. The hierarchical nature of martial arts, where students progress through ranks by demonstrating skill and respect, reinforces the importance of earning respect through effort and integrity. Instructors who maintain high standards and demonstrate genuine care for their students' well-being inspire trust and admiration, making them influential figures in their students' lives. Through their example, martial arts instructors help shape not only proficient martial artists but also respectful, disciplined, and confident individuals.

Parents play a crucial role in helping their children develop excellence. Here are some practical strategies to implement at home:

- **Encourage Curiosity and Exploration**

Encouraging curiosity and exploration helps children develop a love for learning. Provide opportunities for your child to explore their interests and discover new ones. This could involve visiting museums, attending workshops, or exploring nature.

One way you could do this is to engage your child in simple science experiments at home. This could be as easy as mixing baking soda and vinegar to observe a chemical reaction or planting seeds to learn about plant growth. These activities spark curiosity and provide hands-on learning experiences that make education fun and memorable.

- **Foster Independence and Responsibility**

Allowing children to take on responsibilities and make decisions fosters independence and self-confidence. Encourage them to take ownership of their tasks and learn from their experiences.

For example, assigning age-appropriate household chores teaches children responsibility and the value of contributing to the family. Younger children can help with simple tasks like setting the table or watering plants, while older children can take on more complex chores like cooking a meal or managing their laundry. This not only teaches practical skills but also helps children develop a sense of competence and independence.

- **Promote Problem-Solving Skills**

Teaching children how to solve problems effectively is a key component of developing excellence. Encourage them to think critically and come up with solutions to challenges they face.

When your child encounters a problem, hold a brainstorming session to come up with possible solutions. For instance, if they are having trouble organizing their schoolwork, work together to create a plan. This could involve setting up a dedicated study space, creating a homework schedule, and using organizational tools like planners or apps. Encourage them to come up with ideas and evaluate which ones might work best.

- **Support Goal Setting and Planning**

Help your child set realistic goals and develop a plan to achieve them. This teaches them the importance of planning, perseverance, and time management.

Work with your child to set both academic and personal goals. For example, they might set a goal to read a certain number of books over the summer or to improve their grades in a particular subject. Break these goals down into smaller, manageable steps and track progress together. Celebrate milestones along the way to keep them motivated and focused.

- **Encourage Extracurricular Activities**

Extracurricular activities provide valuable opportunities for children to develop new skills, build friendships, and learn about teamwork and leadership.

Encourage your child to join a club or team that aligns with their interests. This could be a sports team, martial arts, drama club, debate team, or community service group. These activities provide a structured environment where children can pursue their passions, develop new skills, and build a sense of belonging.

- **Model Positive Behavior**

Children often learn by observing the behavior of adults. Model positive behavior such as perseverance, kindness, and a positive attitude towards challenges.

Demonstrate healthy ways to handle stress and setbacks. For instance, if you encounter a problem at work, discuss it with your child and show them how you approach solving it. Share your thought process, the steps you take, and how you manage your emotions. This provides a valuable lesson in resilience and problem-solving.

- **Provide Constructive Feedback**

Giving constructive feedback helps children learn from their mistakes and improve. Focus on specific behaviors and offer suggestions for improvement.

When your child completes an art project or a school assignment, provide feedback that is specific and constructive. Instead of saying, "This is great," you might say, "I really like the colors you used in this painting. Next time, you could try blending them a bit more to create a smoother transition." This type of feedback

encourages them to reflect on their work and think about how they can improve.

- **Create a Supportive Environment**

A supportive environment is crucial for children to feel safe and confident in taking on challenges. Provide encouragement, celebrate their efforts, and offer support when needed.

Establish a family support system where everyone encourages and helps each other. This could involve regular family meetings to discuss goals, challenges, and successes or setting aside time each week to support each other with homework, projects, or personal interests. Creating a nurturing and supportive home environment helps children feel secure and motivated to pursue excellence.

Developing excellence in children is about providing constant challenges and embracing failure as a part of growth. As parents, our role is to support our children through empathy, positive reinforcement, and constructive planning. By allowing them to face challenges and learn from their mistakes, we help them develop resilience, self-confidence, and a growth mindset. Whether it's through everyday challenges, academic struggles, or activities like martial arts, the key is to guide them with empathy and encourage continuous improvement. By fostering a supportive and challenging environment, we can help our children become well-rounded individuals who strive for excellence in all aspects of their lives.

In the next chapter, we'll look at discipline and how it helps lay the foundation for self-discipline, all without crushing your child's spirit. Discipline need not be a bad word!

Chapter 3—

DISCIPLINE TO SELF-DISCIPLINED WITHOUT CRUSHING THEIR SPIRITS

“If from infancy you treat children as gods, they are liable in adulthood to act as devils.” – P.D. James

Discipline is a critical element in the development of a child, laying the foundation for self-discipline that will serve them throughout their lives. It’s important to understand the distinction: discipline refers to external structure—children learning to listen to others, follow instructions, and respect rules—while self-discipline is the internal ability to regulate one’s own actions, emotions, and choices. One must come before the other. Children first need to experience discipline from parents, teachers, or instructors to begin forming the habits and mindset that eventually evolve into self-discipline. However, imposing discipline in a way that crushes a child’s spirit can have detrimental effects—stifling creativity, lowering self-esteem, and fostering resentment. The challenge for parents is to strike a balance: providing enough structure to guide growth while creating space for children to develop autonomy and internal motivation. This chapter explores how to achieve that balance, outlining the phases of building self-discipline and highlighting the powerful role martial arts plays in this transformation.

Children thrive on structure. It provides them with a sense of security and predictability, essential for their mental and emotional well-being. When children know what to expect, they feel safe and confident, enabling them to focus on learning and exploration. Without structure, children can feel anxious and unsure about what will happen next. This uncertainty can lead to stress and behavioral issues. For instance, a child

who does not have a consistent bedtime routine might struggle with sleep, leading to fatigue and irritability. In contrast, a structured routine helps children understand what is expected of them when reducing anxiety and promoting a sense of stability.

It may seem counterintuitive, but even play needs structure to be fun. Imagine a game without rules; it would quickly descend into chaos. Structured play, with clear rules and objectives, helps children learn cooperation, problem-solving, and social skills. For example, playing a game of soccer requires understanding the rules, working as a team, and respecting the referee's decisions. These elements of structured play are essential for developing discipline and social competence.

We're going to take a moment to discuss Pablo Picasso, one of the most renowned and influential artists of the 20th century, known for his revolutionary contributions to modern art. His story perfectly illustrates the topic of this chapter. Picasso's groundbreaking artistic achievements were built upon a foundation of rigorous and structured training. His story underscores the critical role that discipline and structure play in fostering creativity and excellence.

Picasso's father, José Ruiz Blasco, was an art teacher and painter who recognized his son's extreme talent at an early age. He provided Picasso with formal artistic training, emphasizing the mastery of traditional techniques and disciplines. Young Picasso spent countless hours studying classical art, learning to draw with precision and accuracy. He practiced still life, anatomy, and perspective—core components of classical training that require intense focus and repetition. This structured training was not merely about producing art; it was about ingraining in Picasso the skills and discipline necessary to understand and manipulate form, light, and shadow.

This rigorous foundation might seem counterintuitive when considering Picasso's later, highly abstract works. However, it was precisely this deep understanding of traditional art techniques that enabled Picasso to deconstruct and reimagine artistic conventions. The

discipline of his early years provided him with the technical proficiency and confidence to experiment and innovate. Without this structured training, Picasso would not have had the tools to break the rules so effectively and redefine the boundaries of art.

As Picasso matured as an artist, he began to move away from classical styles and explore more experimental approaches. His transition from realism to modernism was marked by a continuous push against traditional boundaries. Yet, it was his disciplined background that allowed him to make these bold leaps. Picasso's knowledge of anatomy and perspective meant that even his most abstract works retained a sense of structure and coherence. His famous Blue Period and Rose Period showcased his ability to infuse emotion and narrative into his work, blending his technical skills with a deeper, more expressive style.

Picasso's evolution into Cubism, characterized by fragmented and abstracted forms, was a testament to his deep understanding of the fundamentals of art. The ability to deconstruct reality into geometric shapes and present multiple perspectives within a single canvas required not just creativity but a profound mastery of artistic principles. This phase of his career illustrated how structured training provided the framework within which Picasso could explore his artistic vision. His disciplined approach to understanding form and structure allowed him to innovate in ways that were both radical and deeply grounded in artistic tradition.

The Picasso story serves as a powerful lesson for parents and educators. Structure and discipline are not constraints on creativity; they are the very foundations that enable it. Just as Picasso's early training allowed him to push the boundaries of art, children who are taught discipline and given a structured environment are better equipped to explore and innovate in their own pursuits. Whether in academics, sports, or the arts, a strong foundation in the basics provides the tools necessary for creative expression and problem-solving.

Parents can apply this principle by providing structured learning environments and emphasizing the importance of mastering fundamentals. This might involve setting regular study schedules, encouraging practice in musical instruments, or maintaining consistent routines in daily life. By doing so, they prepare their children not just to follow existing rules but to understand them deeply enough to innovate and excel. Structured discipline is not about limiting freedom; it's about equipping children with the skills and confidence to explore their full potential.

Picasso's story is a testament to the power of structured training and disciplined practice in achieving greatness. His journey from mastering classical techniques to pioneering modern art highlights how structure provides the foundation for true creative freedom. For parents and educators, this story reinforces the importance of discipline and structured learning as essential components in the development of creative, innovative, and successful individuals.

Discipline and structure initially come from parents and caregivers. Over time, children learn to internalize these behaviors and develop self-discipline. However, this transition is gradual and occurs through several phases.

1. Phase 1: Establishing Good Discipline by Modeling Good Habits

In the first phase, parents establish good discipline by modeling good habits. Children learn by observing their parents. If parents demonstrate disciplined behaviors, such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle, managing time effectively, and handling responsibilities, children are more likely to adopt these behaviors. Conversely, if parents exhibit undisciplined behaviors, it becomes challenging to expect children to develop discipline on their own.

For instance, if parents consistently eat nutritious meals and limit junk food, children will see these habits as the norm. On the other

hand, if parents frequently indulge in unhealthy snacks, children may struggle to understand the importance of a balanced diet. Therefore, parents must lead by example, showing discipline in their actions to instill the same values in their children.

2. Phase 2: Providing Structure and Guidance

In the second phase, parents provide structure and guidance. Children need clear instructions and defined expectations. At this stage, parents need to structure everything for their children. Kids are not "little adults"; they require 100% guidance on what to do. However, this means the children are the ones doing the work while the parents guide them.

For example, setting a specific time and place for homework every day helps children develop a routine. Parents can create a quiet, well-lit space for study, free from distractions. By consistently reinforcing this routine, children learn to associate this time and space with focused study, gradually developing the habit of disciplined study on their own.

3. Phase 3: Encouraging Independence

In the third phase, children start doing things on their own without guidance. This is the beginning of self-discipline. At this stage, children take more responsibility for their actions and decisions. They independently apply the habits and routines established in the earlier phases.

For instance, a child who has been guided through a structured morning routine for years can begin to wake up, dress, and prepare for school on their own. The consistency and repetition of the routine help the child internalize these behaviors, fostering independence and self-discipline.

4. Phase 4: Focusing on Long-Term Goals

In the fourth phase, children are self-disciplined in all their activities, and the parent's job shifts from focusing on habits to emphasizing longer-term goals and future aspirations. Parents continue to monitor and expect their children to maintain discipline but also encourage them to think about their goals and ambitions.

For example, as children enter high school, parents can help them set academic and career goals. This might involve discussing potential colleges, exploring career interests, and developing a plan to achieve these goals. By instilling the importance of goal setting and long-term planning, parents help children understand that discipline is not just about daily habits but also about working towards future success.

5. Phase 5: Achieving Self-Discipline and Seeking Guidance

In the final phase, the child, now likely an adult, has developed self-discipline for success and personal growth. They can confidently reach out to parents for help and advice when needed. At this stage, the relationship between parent and child becomes more collaborative, with the parent acting as a mentor rather than an enforcer.

For instance, a young adult might seek their parents' security and predictability, reducing anxiety and helping them understand the importance of structure in their lives.

As children grow, gradually encourage them to take more responsibility for their actions and decisions. This helps them develop independence and self-discipline. Introduce a chore chart where children are responsible for completing specific tasks around the house. Start with simple tasks such as tidying up toys or feeding pets, and gradually increase the complexity as they grow older. This teaches them responsibility and the importance of contributing to the household.

As we talked about in the last chapter, focus on praising the effort and process rather than just the outcome. This encourages a growth mindset and helps children understand that discipline and hard work are more important than the end result. When your child completes a homework assignment or project, praise their effort and dedication rather than just the grade they received. For instance, say, “I’m really proud of how much effort you put into this project. You spent a lot of time researching and organizing your ideas, and it shows.”

Help your children set realistic and achievable goals. This teaches them how to plan and work towards objectives, fostering a sense of accomplishment and self-discipline. For example, set a goal for your child to read a certain number of books over the summer. Break this goal down into smaller, manageable parts, such as reading for twenty minutes each day. Celebrate milestones along the way to keep them motivated and show them the value of working towards a goal.

Allowing children to make choices helps them develop decision-making skills and a sense of autonomy. This is crucial for developing self-discipline. Give your child the freedom to choose extracurricular activities that interest them. Whether it’s joining a sports team, taking music lessons, or participating in a club, allowing them to choose fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for their commitments.

Equip your children with problem-solving skills so they can handle challenges independently. Encourage them to think critically and come up with solutions. If your child has a disagreement with a friend, guide them through the process of resolving the conflict. Discuss possible solutions, role-play conversations, and help them understand the importance of empathy and compromise.

Regularly monitor your child’s progress and provide constructive feedback. This helps them stay on track and understand the areas where they need to improve. Review your child’s report cards and discuss their performance in each subject. Identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement. Work together to develop a plan to address any

challenges, such as seeking additional help or setting specific study goals.

Encourage your children to reflect on their actions and assess their progress. This helps them develop self-awareness and take responsibility for their development. Encourage your child to keep a journal where they reflect on their daily activities, achievements, and challenges. This practice helps them develop self-awareness and recognize the importance of discipline and self-discipline in achieving their goals.

Create a positive and supportive environment where children feel safe to take risks and learn from their mistakes. This helps them develop resilience and self-discipline. Hold regular family meetings to discuss goals, challenges, and successes. Use these meetings as an opportunity to support each other and reinforce the importance of discipline and self-discipline in achieving personal and family goals.

Martial arts provide a structured environment that naturally promotes discipline and self-discipline. The progression through different ranks and the clear expectations set at each level help children internalize the principles of discipline, and this progression travels through the same phase structure we talked about earlier.

1. Phase 1: White Belt

At the white belt level, children observe and emulate the disciplined behaviors of their instructors. They learn basic techniques and the importance of respect, focus, and discipline. This initial phase lays the foundation for more advanced skills and behaviors.

A white belt student learns basic stances, punches, and kicks. The instructor demonstrates these techniques, and the student practices them repeatedly. The emphasis on consistency and accuracy teaches the student the value of disciplined practice.

2. Phase 2: Early Color Belt Ranks

During the early color belt ranks, guidance is explicit, and expectations are clear. Students learn to follow instructions and maintain discipline. This phase reinforces the importance of structure and following guidelines.

Students learn class protocols such as bowing upon entering the dojang, lining up in order of rank, and responding respectfully to instructors. These practices instill a sense of discipline and respect that extends beyond martial arts and into other areas of life.

3. Phase 3: Intermediate Ranks

At the intermediate ranks, students begin to take more responsibility for their training. They start learning and practicing techniques on their own, building a foundation for self-discipline in other areas of their life.

Intermediate students are encouraged to practice techniques at home, set personal goals, and track their progress. This independence fosters self-discipline as students learn to manage their training outside of the structured class environment.

4. Phase 4: Black Belt

At the black belt level, students know the rules and structure. They set huge goals and have massive expectations. This phase is where even more fun and complex training begins, emphasizing long-term goals and continuous improvement.

Black belt students engage in advanced training, such as mastering complex forms, learning self-defense techniques, and participating in leadership roles within the dojang. They set personal and martial arts goals, understanding that discipline is key to achieving success.

5. Phase 5: Becoming Instructors

In the final phase, students become instructors and can guide others through all these phases. This transition from student to instructor reinforces the principles of discipline and self-discipline, as they now serve as role models for new students.

As the students become instructors, they teach classes, mentor younger students, and exemplify the discipline and self-discipline they have developed. This role requires them to reflect on their journey and continue practicing the principles of martial arts in their daily lives.

While discipline is essential, it's important to avoid methods that can crush a child's spirit. Here are some common pitfalls and how to avoid them:

- **Overly Strict Rules:** Overly strict rules can create a stifling environment where children feel they have no freedom. This can lead to resentment and rebellion.
 - **Solution: Balanced Approach.** Create a balanced approach by setting clear rules while allowing flexibility. For example, have consistent bedtime rules but allow for occasional exceptions for special events or circumstances.
- **Negative Reinforcement:** Constantly focusing on what children do wrong can damage their self-esteem and motivation.
 - **Solution: Positive Reinforcement.** Use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior. Praise your child when they follow the rules and meet expectations. For instance, instead of scolding them for not doing their homework, praise them for completing it on time.
- **Lack of Empathy:** Failing to understand a child's perspective can lead to feelings of being misunderstood and unsupported.

- **Solution: Show Empathy.** Always try to understand your child's feelings and perspectives. For example, if they are struggling with schoolwork, acknowledge their frustration and offer support rather than simply demanding better performance.
- **Inconsistency:** Inconsistent rules and expectations can confuse children and make it difficult for them to develop discipline.
 - **Solution: Consistent Expectations.** Be consistent with rules and expectations. For example, if screen time is limited to one hour per day, ensure this rule is consistently enforced. Consistency helps children understand boundaries and develop self-discipline.
- **Lack of Encouragement for Independence:** Doing everything for your child can hinder their ability to develop independence and self-discipline.
 - **Solution: Encourage Independence.** Gradually give your child more responsibility and opportunities to make decisions. For example, allow them to choose their clothes, plan a family meal, or manage their homework schedule.

Developing self-discipline in children without crushing their spirits is a delicate balance that requires structure, empathy, and gradual encouragement of independence. By leading by example, providing clear guidance, and supporting their growth through various phases, parents can help their children become self-disciplined individuals. Martial arts offer a structured framework that naturally promotes discipline and self-discipline, making it an excellent tool for parents to consider. Avoiding common pitfalls and fostering a positive and supportive environment will ensure that children grow up with the resilience and self-confidence needed to succeed in all areas of their lives. By focusing on these principles, parents can guide their children towards a future where

discipline is not a constraint but a pathway to achieving their fullest potential.

In the next chapter, we'll look at a very common mistake: forgetting that your child is a child and, instead, treating them as if they were a little adult.

Chapter 4—

YOUR KID ISN'T AN ADULT OR YOUR FRIEND

“If you've never been hated by your child, you've never been a parent.” – Bette Davis

Parenting is one of the most rewarding yet challenging roles an individual can undertake. It involves balancing love, discipline, guidance, and support in a way that fosters a child's growth into a well-adjusted, self-disciplined adult. However, a common pitfall parents fall into is treating their children either as adults or as friends. Bette Davis encapsulated a crucial aspect of parenting when she said, "If you've never been hated by your child, you've never been a parent." This quote highlights the reality that effective parenting often involves making tough decisions that might not always be popular with children but are essential for their development.

Even with a clear understanding of the principles of discipline and structure, it can be incredibly difficult for parents to let their children fail or to establish enough discipline for them to become self-disciplined. The secret lies in understanding that your child is not an adult and is not supposed to be your friend. This fundamental understanding forms the foundation of effective parenting.

Parents naturally want to protect their children from harm and disappointment. Seeing a child struggle or fail can be heart-wrenching, leading parents to intervene too quickly or too often. However, shielding children from all difficulties prevents them from learning valuable lessons about resilience, problem-solving, and perseverance. Letting go

means allowing children to experience challenges and failures, which are crucial for their development.

Parents often complicate their lives and their children's lives by confusing the roles they should play. Children are not yet adults and have not developed the same abilities and skills that adults possess. They also are not peers and cannot be treated in the same way. Children's brains are still developing, particularly in areas related to decision-making, impulse control, and understanding consequences. Expecting them to reason and behave like adults is unrealistic and can lead to frustration for both the parent and the child. Recognizing these developmental differences is key to setting appropriate expectations and providing the right level of guidance and support.

Friends are peers with whom you have reciprocal relationships. It's important to keep friends happy, and they want to make you happy as well. There is a sense of equality in friendships where sharing, mutual expectations, and compromise are the norms. With friends, you might share hobbies, interests, and activities where both parties contribute equally. For instance, planning a weekend trip with a friend involves mutual decision-making and compromise to ensure both enjoy the experience.

Children, on the other hand, are not peers. Parents are in a position of authority and responsibility for the child's own good. This means that parents provide for their children and do not compromise with them in the same way they would with peers. For example, parents set a bedtime for their children, considering the child's health and well-being. This is not a decision that requires mutual agreement, unlike making plans with a friend. The parent decides what is best, even if the child disagrees.

As a parent, your role is to guide, educate, and provide for your child. This often involves making decisions that will make your child unhappy. For example, you might tell your child to eat healthy foods they may not like, whereas you would never dictate what your friend should eat. Your child may dislike you at times because of the decisions you make, but

this is a sign of effective parenting. Unlike with friends, where mutual liking is often crucial, with children, your primary job is to instill discipline. A parent might insist that their child eats vegetables and limit sugary snacks. This is done with the child's long-term health in mind, despite potential protests from the child. With a friend, such a mandate would be inappropriate and likely damaging to the relationship.

When parents treat their children like adults, it is known as the "little adult assumption." This occurs when we assume that children can reason and understand problems in the same way adults do. However, this assumption is flawed because children do not have the same cognitive abilities and experiences as adults. Consider a situation where Johnny pushes his sister. Instead of sitting down with him and explaining for ten minutes why pushing is wrong and how it affects everyone, the more effective approach would be to impose a negative consequence to ensure the behavior doesn't happen again. Johnny already knows that pushing is wrong; what he needs is a clear and immediate consequence, not a lengthy explanation.

When parents operate correctly from a position of authority and treat their kids as kids, not adults, children tend to respond better. They want structure and rules because these provide a sense of safety and security. The biggest complaint among children playing games is often, "He broke the rules!" This indicates their intrinsic desire for order and predictability. In organized sports, children understand and appreciate the importance of rules. Knowing the boundaries and what is expected of them allows them to play confidently and fairly. Similarly, at home, structured routines and clear rules help children feel secure and understand their roles within the family.

In martial arts schools, children clearly understand who is in charge. The instructor-student dynamic is such that the instructor holds the command role, and students know their place. This clear hierarchy helps children feel secure and allows them to focus on learning and self-improvement. In martial arts classes, instructors set clear expectations for behavior, effort, and respect. Students learn to follow these rules and

understand the consequences of not adhering to them. This environment mirrors the structured guidance children need at home.

For parents who struggle with maintaining an authoritative role at home, observing how their child responds positively to a strong role model in martial arts can be enlightening. When a strong role model like an instructor treats the child appropriately, not only does the child behave better, but they also tend to enjoy the structured environment more. This can reinforce to parents the importance of maintaining a clear, authoritative role at home.

Discipline is the cornerstone of martial arts training, providing the framework within which students learn and grow. From the very first class, students are introduced to a structured environment where respect, focus, and consistency are paramount. Instructors enforce rules regarding behavior, punctuality, and dress code, teaching students the importance of adhering to established guidelines. This structured approach ensures that students understand the importance of following instructions and maintaining a respectful attitude toward their peers and instructors. By consistently reinforcing these principles, martial arts schools create an environment that is conducive to learning and personal development.

Self-discipline, a crucial aspect of martial arts training, is developed gradually as students progress through the ranks. Initially, external discipline is provided by instructors who set expectations and monitor compliance. Over time, as students internalize these lessons, they begin to take ownership of their actions and responsibilities. Practicing techniques, attending classes regularly, and striving for personal improvement become habits that students maintain independently. This shift from external to internal discipline is vital for personal growth, as it empowers students to set and achieve their own goals. The journey towards higher belt ranks, which requires dedication and perseverance, further reinforces the value of self-discipline in achieving success.

Understanding and respecting boundaries is integral to martial arts training, both physically and emotionally. On the physical side, students

learn the importance of maintaining control during practice to ensure the safety of themselves and their partners. Techniques are taught with an emphasis on precision and restraint, helping students develop an acute awareness of their own limits and those of others. Emotionally, martial arts training instills a sense of respect for personal space and boundaries. Students are taught to recognize and respect the boundaries set by their instructors, peers, parents, and themselves. This respect extends beyond the dojang, influencing how students interact with others in their daily lives. By fostering an environment where boundaries are clearly defined and respected, martial arts training helps students develop a balanced and respectful approach to personal interactions and self-awareness.

Below are some practical strategies for effective parenting:

- **Establish Clear Rules and Expectations:** Children need clear rules and expectations to understand what is required of them. Consistent rules provide a sense of security and help children develop self-discipline. Establishing household rules, such as designated times for homework, chores, and bedtime, helps children understand their responsibilities and the consequences of not meeting them. Consistency is key to reinforcing these rules and helping children internalize them.
- **Use Positive Reinforcement:** Positive reinforcement encourages good behavior by rewarding children for following rules and meeting expectations. This approach is more effective than negative reinforcement in promoting long-term behavioral change. Implementing a reward system, such as a sticker chart for completing chores or homework, can motivate children to develop self-discipline. Rewards should be appropriate and meaningful, reinforcing the behaviors you want to encourage.
- **Provide Consequences for Misbehavior:** When children misbehave, it is important to provide immediate and appropriate consequences. This helps them understand the link between their actions and the outcomes, promoting accountability. Using time-

outs for misbehavior, such as hitting or breaking rules, provides a clear and immediate consequence. Time-outs should be brief, as should the discussion that follows—indicate the problem behavior and, most importantly, how they can make better choices in the future.

- **Encourage Independence:** Gradually giving children more responsibility and opportunities to make decisions helps them develop independence and self-discipline. Allowing children to make choices, such as selecting their clothes or planning a family activity, fosters a sense of autonomy and responsibility. Providing choices within set boundaries helps children learn decision-making skills.
- **Be a Role Model:** Children learn by observing their parents. Demonstrating disciplined behaviors, such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle, managing time effectively, and handling responsibilities, sets a positive example for children to follow. Maintaining healthy habits, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition, and involving children in these activities teaches them the importance of discipline in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- **Show Empathy and Understanding:** Understanding and validating children's feelings helps build a trusting relationship and promotes emotional security. Empathy does not mean compromising on rules but rather acknowledging children's emotions while maintaining consistent expectations. If a child is frustrated with homework, acknowledge their feelings and offer support. For instance, say, "I know this is tough, but I believe in you. Let's work through it together." This approach reinforces discipline while showing empathy and support.
- **Avoid Over-Explaining:** Children do not need lengthy explanations for every rule or consequence. Keeping explanations brief and clear helps them understand and accept

the boundaries set by parents. Instead of explaining in detail why certain behaviors are unacceptable, provide short and clear instructions. For example, say, "We don't hit because it hurts others. If you hit, you will have a time-out."

- **Monitor Progress and Provide Feedback:** Regularly monitoring your child's progress and providing constructive feedback helps them stay on track and understand the areas where they need to improve. Review your child's report cards and discuss their performance in each subject. Identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement. Work together to develop a plan to address any challenges, such as seeking additional help or setting specific study goals.
- **Encourage Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Encouraging your children to reflect on their actions and assess their progress helps them develop self-awareness and take responsibility for their development. Encourage your child to keep a journal where they reflect on their daily activities, achievements, and challenges. This practice helps them develop self-awareness and recognize the importance of discipline and self-discipline in achieving their goals.
- **Foster a Positive and Supportive Environment:** Creating a positive and supportive environment where children feel safe to take risks and learn from their mistakes helps them develop resilience and self-discipline. Hold regular family meetings to discuss goals, challenges, and successes. Use these meetings as an opportunity to support each other and reinforce the importance of discipline and self-discipline in achieving personal and family goals.

Effective parenting involves understanding the unique developmental stages of children and tailoring your approach to meet their needs. Expecting kids to reason, behave, and respond as mature individuals just won't work. Children are in the process of growing and

learning, and they need guidance, structure, and support appropriate to their developmental stage. Recognizing this difference is crucial for raising healthy, happy kids who feel secure and understood.

When parents treat their children like little adults, they often expect them to have the same level of emotional regulation, decision-making skills, and understanding of consequences as adults. This assumption can lead to frustration on both sides. For example, a parent might explain complex reasons behind a rule, expecting the child to comprehend and accept it rationally. However, children typically need clear, simple instructions and immediate, concrete consequences. Expecting them to process and respond like adults can make them feel overwhelmed and misunderstood, leading to behavioral issues and decreased self-esteem.

Children thrive on clear guidance and consistent boundaries. Effective parenting involves setting age-appropriate expectations and providing the necessary support for children to meet those expectations. Younger children need more direct supervision and concrete instructions, while older children can handle more abstract reasoning and increased responsibility. By adjusting your approach based on your child's developmental stage, you help them build the skills and confidence needed to navigate life's challenges. This method acknowledges their current capabilities and provides a roadmap for future growth.

Treating children appropriately for their age helps build emotional security and trust. When children know their parents understand their needs and limitations, they feel more secure and are more likely to trust their guidance. This trust is foundational for healthy parent-child relationships. For example, when a parent provides comfort and clear, simple explanations to a toddler experiencing fear, the child learns that their emotions are valid and manageable. This approach fosters a sense of safety and emotional resilience that is crucial for healthy development.

Effective parenting also involves encouraging independence in a gradual and supportive manner. Rather than expecting children to handle responsibilities and decisions on their own from an early age, parents can

scaffold their child's development by providing appropriate levels of support and autonomy. For instance, a young child might start by choosing between two outfits, while an older child might be given the responsibility to manage their homework schedule. This gradual increase in responsibility helps children develop self-discipline and problem-solving skills at a pace that matches their developmental readiness.

The long-term benefits of effective parenting, which includes not treating children as little adults, are profound. Children raised with appropriate expectations and support are more likely to develop strong self-esteem, effective coping skills, and the ability to form healthy relationships. They learn to trust their own abilities and to seek help when needed, fostering a balanced sense of independence and interdependence. As these children grow into adults, they carry with them the emotional and cognitive tools necessary to navigate the complexities of life, contributing positively to their communities and building fulfilling lives. By recognizing and respecting the unique developmental needs of children, parents lay the groundwork for lifelong health, happiness, and success.

Parenting effectively involves recognizing that children are not adults or peers and should not be treated as such. By maintaining an authoritative role, providing clear rules and expectations, and encouraging independence, parents can help their children develop self-discipline without crushing their spirits. Martial arts offer a structured environment that naturally promotes discipline and self-discipline, reinforcing the principles parents strive to instill at home. By avoiding common pitfalls and focusing on positive reinforcement and empathy, parents can guide their children toward becoming well-rounded, self-disciplined individuals. As Bette Davis's quote reminds us, sometimes being a good parent means making decisions that children may not like, but these decisions are essential for their growth and development.

Conclusion—

YES! YOU HAVE MADE YOUR CHILD DO STUFF!

*“If we want our children to move mountains, we
first have to let them get out of their chairs.” –*

Nicolette Sowder

Parenting often involves balancing the delicate line between encouraging independence and providing necessary guidance. One of the most crucial aspects of this balance is ensuring that children engage in activities and responsibilities that are beneficial for their development, even when they resist. The quote above by Nicolette Sowder encapsulates the essence of proactive parenting: the importance of making children do things that foster growth, resilience, and success.

It is not only okay to make your child do things; it is your responsibility as a parent. Children often lack the foresight to understand the long-term benefits of their actions and may resist activities that seem difficult or uninteresting. However, as guardians of their future, parents must guide them through these challenges. This involves setting expectations, providing encouragement, and sometimes enforcing participation in activities that contribute to their overall growth. Assigning daily chores to children teaches them responsibility and the value of contributing to the household. While a child may initially resist, consistent enforcement helps them develop a work ethic and an understanding of teamwork.

To a child, six months can feel like an eternity. Kids struggle to perceive long-term benefits versus immediate costs, which is why parents need to focus on the benefits rather than the struggle. Achieving

significant milestones like earning a Black Belt in martial arts, obtaining a college degree, or succeeding in a business endeavor requires perseverance through challenging times. No student has ever expressed regret over earning a Black Belt. However, many have faced moments of doubt and considered quitting due to the challenges involved. By encouraging children to push through these tough periods, parents help them understand the value of commitment and perseverance.

When children are in the midst of a challenging task, they often focus on the immediate discomfort rather than the long-term benefits. It is the role of the parent to highlight and emphasize these benefits. By doing so, children can start to see beyond the immediate struggle and understand the value of their efforts. Encouraging a child to study diligently for a difficult subject can be tough, especially when they don't see immediate results. However, by continually emphasizing the benefits of good grades, such as college opportunities and future career success, parents can help their children maintain motivation.

Finding the right balance in pushing your child is certainly a challenge. Parents need to ensure that they push their children enough to develop essential skills and resilience without causing undue stress or resentment. This balance is critical for preparing children for a successful future. Encouraging children to participate in extracurricular activities, like sports or music lessons, helps them develop diverse skills and interests. While pushing them too hard can lead to burnout, not pushing them enough can result in missed opportunities for growth.

The cost of erring on the side of not pushing children enough can be significant. Children who are not encouraged to take on challenges and responsibilities may struggle to develop the skills and resilience needed for future success. They may lack the perseverance needed to achieve their goals and may find it difficult to handle adversity. Children who are not encouraged to handle tasks independently may struggle with self-sufficiency as they grow older. For example, a child who is never asked to manage their own school assignments may find it challenging to handle college coursework or job responsibilities.

Perseverance is a critical life skill that can be developed through consistent encouragement and support. When parents push their children to complete difficult tasks, they are teaching them the value of perseverance and the importance of seeing things through to the end. While they may struggle and feel frustrated, completing a project provides a sense of accomplishment and reinforces the importance of perseverance.

Clear expectations help children understand what is required of them and why it is important. This clarity can reduce resistance and increase compliance. Setting a specific time and place for homework each day helps children develop a routine and understand the importance of their academic responsibilities.

Consistent encouragement helps children stay motivated, especially during challenging times. Praise their efforts and highlight the progress they are making. When a child is learning to play an instrument, provide regular encouragement by acknowledging their progress and celebrating small milestones. This can help them stay motivated and continue practicing.

Provide the necessary support while encouraging independence. This balance helps children develop confidence and self-reliance. Teach children to manage their own responsibilities, such as packing their school bags or organizing their study schedule. Offer support and guidance, but let them take the lead in completing these tasks.

Positive reinforcement can motivate children to engage in tasks and develop good habits. Reward their efforts and achievements to reinforce the desired behavior. Implement a reward system where children earn points or privileges for completing chores, homework, or other responsibilities. This reinforces the value of their efforts and encourages continued engagement.

One of the most important pieces of advice I can give is to lead by example! Children learn by observing their parents. Demonstrating discipline, perseverance, and a positive attitude towards challenges can

inspire them to adopt similar behaviors. We've all encountered kids who exemplify all of the lackluster qualities of their parents—it's what they see every day! Show your children how you manage your own projects or responsibilities. Share your experiences, challenges, and successes to model the behavior you want them to emulate.

Effective parenting involves making children engage in activities and responsibilities that contribute to their development, even when they resist. By understanding that children cannot perceive long-term benefits and focusing on the positives, parents can help their children navigate challenges and develop essential life skills. Finding the right balance between pushing for success and providing support is crucial for preparing children for a successful future. Through clear expectations, consistent encouragement, positive reinforcement, and leading by example, parents can foster perseverance, resilience, and independence in their children. You absolutely CAN make your kid so stuff!

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Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy has classes for pre-school children ages 4-6 and elementary-age kids ages 7 – 10. Classes are designed to develop the critical building blocks kids need—specialized for their age group—for school excellence and later success in life. We have a special class for our Tweens and Teens aged 11 – 17. We up the intensity in this class and focus on building the special tools today's teenagers need to succeed!

Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy's Adult Karate training is a complete adult fitness and conditioning program for adults who want to lose weight, get (and stay in shape), or learn self-defense in a supportive environment. Master Theros has a passion for changing the lives of his students and presents self-defense, anti-bullying and leadership seminars to students of all ages throughout the community.

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Our Academy is located at 7331 Mallard Lane, in Schererville, IN 46375

You can contact us at 219-595-7365 or info@nwindianamartialarts.com

I can't wait to see you in class!

Master Adam Theros

If you are constantly battling with your child over activities they once begged to participate in, this book is for you. Discover the importance of pushing your child out of their comfort zone and teaching them the value of commitment and perseverance. Learn when to push and when to let go, and why making your child do things they may not want to do can ultimately make you a better parent. Don't miss out on this valuable resource for navigating the challenges of parenting in the modern world.

