

# Parenting *ideas* INSIGHTS

*Building parent-school partnerships*

WORDS Michael Grose

## Do you let your kids amaze you?

**“I’m amazed at what children CAN do when given the opportunity and encouragement. I love the pride, confidence and sense of purpose/ pleasure in contributing, each new skill achieved brings. The smiles are awesome too.”**

A mother left this comment on our Facebook page recently in response to our post: “What would be the impact if you did less, not more for your children?”

Lovely answer!

It got me thinking that the joy that this mother took from watching her children develop independence was no accident. Her parenting style played a large role in her children’s independence. All power to her and her parenting style!

I’ve long believed that **adults are the gatekeepers for children’s independence.**

We open the gate to independence when we give children opportunities to develop **self-help skills** (carry their own schoolbags, get themselves up in the morning, tidy their own rooms); provide them with **real responsibility** (feeding pets, setting the meal table and preparing meals) and give them **autonomy** to make some of their own decisions (choosing clothes within limits, following own interests, making choices about pocket-money spending).

We close the independence gate when we **do too much** for children (tidy their toys away, pack their schoolbags, make simple snacks); **rescue** them from learning opportunities (take forgotten lunches to

school, sort out their friendship problems, pay their library fines) and **neglect** to build scaffolds to independence (such as help them make their bed, walk half way to school, teach them to ride public transport).

It’s a quirk of parenting that many children think they are older than they are, and parents think their children are younger than they are. We underestimate children’s abilities to the detriment of their development.

### **Are you an opener or closer of the gate to children’s independence?**

Think of independence as a continuum with opening the gate and closing the gate at either end. If your parenting is more at the closing end then look for ways to move down the continuum towards independence building. My advice is to make small adaptations to your parenting. For instance, start with a child making their own snacks before moving to helping you to prepare a meal. But first you need to develop a mindset for independence building. That means, be on the lookout for opportunities for children to do things for themselves.

As many readers will know I firmly believe that the job of parents is to make ourselves

**redundant** from the earliest possible age of a child’s life. That means, that our interactions with kids have an endgame in mind – we want our kids to be able to stand on their own two feet **physically** (Don’t we get a kick out of them walking for the first time!), **emotionally** (with support, of course) and to **navigate their world** without being reliant on others.

There is no better feeling as a parent than watching your child beam with joy and pride when they’ve mastered a new skill, overcome a challenge or conquered a fear. It’s those times that make parenting so worthwhile. Those awesome smiles won’t happen by accident. They require a parenting style that gives kids a chance to be independent; that encourages them to be brave and offers them the safety net of emotional support when life throws them curve balls. Why not try it? Give your kids a chance to amaze you.

*If the idea of promoting real independence in kids enthralls you then join me at Parentingideas Club where week in and week out I’ll show you how to raise kids that will amaze you. Find out more.*

Michael Grose 

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