

Are my kids entitled?

The question, are my kids entitled?, can strike a painful chord in us. No one would want their kids to think the world revolves around them.

Many kids growing up in our communities have this sense that their life focus needs to be about themselves. Many kids and young adults are focused on what they want to get, what they need and what they don't have. This also includes a primary mindset on the opinions of others.

So yes, this life focus can be very self-centered and one might say, entitled. Naturally, it's very difficult for parents to not seek to meet our kids' needs. We aim to protect our kids from pain and setbacks through life.

Unfortunately, an outcome of kids who grow up being fully provided for, and protected from life's harms, is an overly self-focus that is separated from the realities of life. They are not only unprepared for living independently but they are also unaware of the needs and struggles of others. Specifically, as the definition says, they think 'the world revolves around them.'

This entitled mindset will not help them be a good co-worker, friend, or partner.

So how can we change this? How can we raise kids who aren't self-centered? It's not easy when you are able to provide for all your kids' needs and have a parenting focus on their personal success and triumphs in life.

So, while we may seek to change this through conversational reasoning with them or through debating or preaching at them; there is another way that seems effective.

Over the past several years, through our youth non-profit organization Freedom4U, we have come upon some exciting experiences with teens. Our service leadership group has been a place where teens can learn a healthier mindset through serving others.

There are many meaningful service groups that help teens accumulate hours for their college applications. However, we have found that the service needs to be meaningful for the teens who are doing it. It has to connect to their heart. Our focus is other people groups who are less fortunate, have deeper life struggles, who have suffered or are living painful lives. The personal connection that our teens make at these service activities seem to be life changing. Their feedback after a service activity, indicates a mind and heart changing experience.

Here are a few quotes from Freedom4U teens:

"The experience has certainly given me a new perspective on second chances and the strength of other people. I found it very inspiring to hear about the struggles some of the people went through, and it was even more amazing to see the people they have become because of their hardships and the help they have received."

"I think my favorite part of the visit was talking to the people. It was a humbling experience and I grew to know how thankful I am for my wonderful life. I have always wanted to help people in this sense. When I was eating my own lunch, I met a great man who had literally gone through the impossible. This spoke to me in a very particular manner in a way that no other volunteer ship could ever do. I loved doing everything while we were there, it was one of my greatest experiences."

“I realized how similar we were. This man may have experienced a lot more tough times than I have, but otherwise, we are very much the same. And though I am grateful to be in a position to help people like this man, by showing me kindness himself, this man helped me as well.”

So basically, what I am suggesting is that a way to defeat entitlement, is to give your kids an experience helping someone less fortunate. It's important they make a personal connection with the people they are helping (instead of just giving out supplies or even just setting up chairs for events).

Again, our goal is a heart changing experience that moves their life focus off themselves and onto the needs and considerations of others.

The result of these service experiences for our kids is gratitude, kindness, and an other-centered focus for their lives. These kids can still be very successful but also a better employee, entrepreneur, spouse, and parent one day.

Thanks for reading and don't forget to have fun times with your kids!

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