



The World Is Waiting For You...



Parenting With Purpose

Request #5: Support

“With the right set of mind, with the right people,
With the right support, things happen.”

Grigor Dimitrov

If you SUPPORT me as I try new things, I will become responsible.

Support vs. Rescue

“I forgot my lunch!” “We’re swimming in gym class today and I forgot my bathing suit!”
“Everyone is going to the movies but I don’t have any money!” “Today is band and I don’t have my flute!”

If I had a nickel for every time I got a frantic phone call from school, I’d be rich beyond my wildest dreams. But I don’t. So I’m not. I am, however, the proud winner of ultra high miles on my car because of all the trips to school and back. Woohoo! Enough already! There must be a better way to get our kids through high school....AND LIFE!

Well, there is. And it begins by making a distinction between support and rescue. Check out these definitions:

Support: *“to aid”*

Rescue: *“to bring out of danger”*

“The truest help you can render an afflicted man is not to take his burden from him, but to call out his best energy, that he may be able to bear the burden.”

Phillips Brooks

Now, I don't really think that needing money for a movie is a life threatening situation, but a teen would definitely define it as a crisis, don't you agree?

The act of supporting someone is actually based on courage. Building and growing their courage and helping them learn to “do” by themselves; to figure out a solution by themselves. On the other hand, rescue is fear or crisis based. Big difference. So every time I jump on my white horse (I mean my red minivan) and ride on out to the High School, lunch or bathing suit or money in hand, I'm doing my teen a disservice.

I'm rescuing my child, not supporting her. And that doesn't help her grow toward independence. If we continuously rescue our kids, they will be less responsible, less “street wise.” I don't know of a single parent, even the most lazy and uninspired, who would want that for their adult children.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons here is that there won't be any consequences for their actions if you continually rescue them. If they forget their lunch every day, they're going to be hungry when they get home. If they forget their homework again, they're going to get a bad grade.

Over time, they will figure out that they don't like being hungry so they won't forget their lunch for the sixth time in a row. Let them feel the consequences. And I get it. It's soooo hard to do when it's your little pumpkin crying on the phone. Yeah, I get it. But realize that we're growing independent, responsible young adults here and this is how you do it. Of course I understand that parents feel the need to both support AND rescue, depending on the situation. I've rescued my four kids many times myself. The problem is that parents are more fearful now.

Some of that fear is justified, some is not. If my daughter gets a flat tire on the highway at night, you better believe I'm "rescue mama!" But if she has a flat tire in my driveway? How can I support you, sweetie? This is a jack...this is the spare...

And there is nothing wrong with letting your children/teen know that the "rescue" part of your parenting role will be reserved for when it is really, REALLY needed. Give them a clear understanding (in advance) of what the consequences will be if they continue to take advantage of your good nature.

For example: "Susie, you have forgotten your lunch money 5 times this month. What are some things you could do to help you remember? I will no longer run up to school to bring you your lunch if you forget it again! You will have to make it through the school day without eating and that sounds pretty miserable."

The time to mold our teens/tweens into responsible, independent young adults is NOW, while we still have their attention. Just realize that the type and level of support that our children need from us changes as they grow. How do we know what they need in each new situation? We ASK them!

“A child’s mental health is just as important as their physical health and deserves the same quality of support.”

Kate Middleton

There are 5 distinct types of support that people of all ages crave and search for:

- * Financial - Managing money
- * Emotional - Teaching awareness
- * Physical - Caring for the body
- * Intellectual - Learning styles (there are 8, by the way)
- * Spiritual - Why are we here? Our purpose

Most of the time, it’s obvious what kind of support your teen needs, but sometimes it’s a little more vague. It’s your job to remain fluid, open and pay attention to what they say they need from you. And really try to focus on the support without judging them. Respectful support should be given on an individual basis, without a set timetable or desire for your child to succeed at a particular thing.

The “courage based” level of support is definitely more work up front. However, the long-term benefits are more than worth the effort. Now your teen knows how to change a tire or find money in a pinch. Another good idea is to let them know that the rescuing is going to be reserved for times when they are in danger or really, really need your help.

Ready for some examples?

EXAMPLE #1:

Jordan was thrilled to be offered a job with Outward Bound. Working for the adventure company had been a goal of his since childhood and finally the time had come! He was due to leave bright and early the next morning for his first assignment as the photographer for an Outward Bound Adventure and he couldn't wait. But while packing his bag, he made the horrifying discovery that he had forgotten to buy the film for his camera! It was expensive and he didn't have the money because he hadn't received his first paycheck yet! What's a mother to do?

1. Rescue Option: Give him \$50 and drive him to the store.
2. Support Option: How can I support you in figuring this out? What are your options? After discussing the situation with his mom, Jordan called his supervisor at Outward Bound and arranged to set up an expense account so he could buy the film when he got there the next morning.

Instead of handing him the money, his mom taught him about planning, budgeting and being more organized. Win/Win!

“Each person holds so much power within themselves that needs to be let out. Sometimes they just need a little nudge, a little direction, a little coaching, and the greatest things can happen.”

Pete Carroll

EXAMPLE #2:

Jenny wants a new paint set. Not exactly a crisis, but you know how kids are when they desperately want something.

1. Rescue Option: Buy her the paint to get her to stop sulking and complaining.
2. Support Option: How can I support you in getting the paint?

Jenny does odd jobs for her mom to earn the money for the paint set. Together they go to buy the it, but Jenny agonizes over how hard she had to work to get the money and decides she would rather keep the money! Lesson learned about patience, budgeting, and the value of money.

“Your small support could accomplish a big dream.”

Mohammad Rishad Sakhi

EXAMPLE #3:

Sam has a big project due at school and feels too overwhelmed to even start.

1. Rescue Option: Let me help you get started. (And even worse, probably do the project and finish it too.)
2. Support Option: What support do you need for this project?

Note***

Saying, “How can I support you” in this instance, places the burden of helping squarely on your shoulders. It implies that you are willing to do the work FOR your child. Instead, say, “What support do YOU need?” or “What support are YOU going to need to finish this?”

Now your child can think about what he really needs to get going on his project. Maybe he needs you to sit with him at the kitchen table to encourage him to list the steps needed for each phase of the project and to keep him on task. Maybe he needs you to physically hold the parts of his creation. Who knows? But the important thing is that you are supporting him, not “doing” for him.

So the next time you get that frantic phone call from your child and you race out the door, stop! Ask yourself if you are supporting or rescuing? Yes, each have their place in the job of parenting, but now you have the knowledge to make sure that your answer will serve your teen on their journey to adulthood! But a quick word to the wise: If you have a previous pattern of rescuing your child and now want to change to a model of support, talk to your young person about your decision before you make the change. Maybe even make an agreement with your children in advance and let them know how you will support them going forward.

It’s about working hard, resting when you need to, leading a healthy life, and having a support structure around you. These factors help you improve.”

Adama Traore

Practice Support

It's time to build on your previous skills involving respect, listening, understanding and appreciation to get in tune with what kind of support your child needs. Remember to stay flexible and assess the unique qualities of your son or daughter as you think of meaningful ways to support them. Your presence at a baseball game might mean more to him than helping him through a loss after the fact. Or, financially supporting your daughter's flying lessons might be a more concrete show of faith than telling her she can do whatever she sets her mind to.

Remember that the type and level of support that your kids need will change over time. One day they may crave your emotional support with a breakup, and the next day they may want no support from you at all! Stay fluid! Go with the flow.

PRACTICE #1 - IMPROVE

Write down what kinds of financial, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual support that you offer your teen. Note which areas are the least supported and think of ways that you can increase your level of support in that area. Practice this as a routine and you will add depth to your support repertoire. For example, you may provide plenty of financial support by paying for their cell phone, piano lessons and travel baseball fees, but you spend little time listening to their problems with their boyfriend/girlfriend or taking them to Church regularly.

PRACTICE #2 - TRADITION

Create a tradition of periodic outings with your teen. Just the two of you. Make it a routine your teen can depend on. Go out to their favorite restaurant every other week. Quality time at this age sets the stage for regular communication; critical for a good parent/teen relationship. All you have to do is be there and engage!

My friends and family are my support system. They tell me what I need to hear, not what I want to hear and they are there for me in the good and bad times. Without them I have no idea where I would be.”

Kelly Clarkson

PRACTICE #3 - SAY IT

By now, you must be getting used to the practice of saying these things out loud! Here’s one more for you. Start including the word “support” in your conversations with your child. Again, it’s a word that is not often used in normal conversations between parents and children, but we’re going to change all that!

Of course, if you feel like you are overusing the word, support, you can switch it up with words that mean the same thing...assist, encourage, back you up. It all gets the point across.

And you don’t have to guess what your child needs; ask them directly. Simply say, “What kind of support do you feel you need from me (or us) right now?” Open up the lines of communication around this subject and include it in your language from now on. When they tell you what they need, don’t be judgmental, critical or defensive. Just use your listening skills to really hear what they have to say.