

From the Family Room

**Creekwood Church of Christ
Mobile, AL**

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One Mistake Parents Can Avoid

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4

Many parents today work hard at getting parenting right. Some may work so hard they will not let their children fail. **Tim Elmore** wrote in his book *12 Huge Mistakes Parents Can Avoid* that this is mistake #1. He was asked about this in a recent interview. Listed below is his response.

Today, we have a large population of parents—millions of us—who “over-function.” We’ve been so intent on nurturing the self-esteem and safety of our children that we did too much. We didn’t want to “mess it up.” In fact, two extremes are happening in our homes today: abandonment and abundance. Adults are not present to mentor their children or they are doing too much, leaving children helpless to know how to do things for themselves. Both extremes leave the young adult ill-equipped for life after childhood. First and foremost is: We won’t let our kids fail.

Why won’t we let them fail?

- 1. We feel like WE are a failure as parents when our kids fail.*
- 2. We are often living out our unlived life through our children.*
- 3. We assume failure will damage their self-esteem.*
- 4. We somehow assume that good parents never allow a negative experience to happen to their child. (In actuality—negative experiences foster the most growth. If we raise kids as fragile, they’ll surely become fragile adults).*

For example, I’ve seen dozens of parents at Starbucks doing their child’s homework for them. I read about one mom who tried to take a standardized test for her teenage daughter. In 2014, one in twelve Millennials brought their parent to a job interview.

So, what are some steps we can take on this issue? First, parents should not set their kid up for failure. We should never desire our kids to fail. However, most of us would admit that our greatest growth in life occurred when we failed at something. Life will provide tough times and we should not PREVENT those times. But we should PREPARE our kids for them and be there to PROCESS those tough times with them. As they mature, we should loosen the reins and allow our kids to navigate challenging consequences.

Consider the message we send our kids when we won’t let them deal with a difficult experience: “Bless your heart. You don’t have it in you to handle this. You need me...” Instead, we should observe their growth, encouraging them to take on opportunities that will stretch them—encourage tasks that lie somewhere between STRETCHED and OVERWHELMED. Then, as they mature, it’s best to lead with questions not imperatives. (Why do you think that happened? How did it make you feel? How could you have handled it differently?)

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