

# FROM THE HEADMASTER'S DESK

There is a post which has been doing the rounds of social media recently in which a mother bemoans the modern parent's lot:

## HOW TO BE A PARENT IN 2017:

*Make sure your children's academic, emotional, psychological, mental, spiritual, physical, and social needs are met while being careful not to over stimulate, underestimate, improperly medicate, helicopter, or neglect them in a screen-free, processed-foods-free, plastic-free, body-positive, socially conscious, egalitarian but also authoritative, nurturing but fostering of independence, gentle but not overly permissive, pesticide-free two-storey, multilingual home preferably in a cul-de-sac with a backyard and 1.5 siblings spaced at least two years apart for proper development. Also, don't forget the coconut oil.*

## HOW TO BE A PARENT IN LITERALLY EVERY GENERATION BEFORE OURS:

*Feed them sometimes.*

While the comparison may be a little simplistic, it does resonate. It does feel sometimes that we overcomplicate things. With all the best intentions in the world, as parents, we can all fall into the trap of giving our children too much, of trying to protect them from as much pain and as many obstacles as we can. Even if we know that this is not always the best thing to do, the temptation and pressure to do it can be enormous. We want *the best* for them. The problem is, that instead of children who are always gloriously happy and grateful for our tireless efforts, we can find ourselves dealing with young people who lack the resilience and display a sense of entitlement.

Overcoming obstacles and working through difficult times are essential to the development of inner toughness and grit. We should not underestimate our children's capacity to work through difficult issues. As parents, our job is sometimes to get out of the way, and to let our children work some things out for themselves.

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At the same time, our 'feeding' of them can extend beyond mere food – we can feed them ideas, and values and expectations, and give them the space to nurture and develop those things in their minds. In that sense, the privilege and responsibility of education includes the development and shaping our students' values. If we can do that, we will have a lasting influence on their development as adults. What good is being educated if that education is not directed toward a greater social good? If all our students wish to do beyond school is to gather personal wealth, we have surely failed them.



As we have seen from the student-driven anti-guns movement in the United States, young people do have the potential to be inspirational and instructional when their passion and clarity of vision gives purpose and direction, and when they come together in common voice. They can call out hypocrisy and double standards with laser clarity. And they have enormous capacity for good, when it is simply expected of them. We see it in our own students when they get behind something like 'The World's Greatest Shave' and far exceed any of the expectations we might have placed on them. We see it when they get excited about trying to save the planet and prompt their School to undertake a large solar power installation. We see it in simple, small acts of kindness they offer to each other in passing.

Raising and educating children can be a frightening, frustrating and thankless task. It is also the most important thing we do, and if we do it well, we can make the world a better place.

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