

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Does raising a successful child have anything to do with you?

BY CAMILLA RANKIN

One part sperm, one part egg; mix together and bake for nine months and hey presto: one perfect baby. Now add love, education, values and decorate with a whole lot of success. Sounds simple, right? For many parents, raising a successful, happy child is the holy grail of parenting but how you do this all depends on how you and your child define success.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

There is not a simple, concrete definition of success: we each develop our own very personal definition based on the values we aspire to. Johannesburg clinical psychologist Emma-Kate McCormack agrees, "Most people have their own idea of success, based on their individual value systems. For some, it is material – accumulating a certain amount in their bank account, earning a particular salary, or buying a particular car. For others, it is spiritual – to feel that they are living a righteous or 'good' life. For others it is about relationships – the ability to communicate with and connect to special people in a meaningful way."

Author and motivational speaker James Ray points out that, "Success is a direction you choose, no one can define it for you. It is not an outcome or result or a set of circumstances. It's a never-ending journey."

"Success is not about possessions," agrees Johannesburg-based "success guru" Keith Tindale. "Material things are the results of success and not the success itself." The trick then to raising successful children certainly is to help your child develop his own unique definition of success and then to achieve it, but how do we do that?

THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

Economist and author of *Happiness, Lessons From A New Science*, Richard Layard, proves through his research that, simply put, happiness equals success, but success does not always equal happiness. Following this concept, if we do what makes us happy, then we will be successful at it. Keith wholeheartedly agrees, "If we follow our passions, we'll find that gift that makes us come most alive. So successful parenting is raising a happy, healthy person who makes the world a better place just by being herself and contributing her unique gifts." Research on happiness shows that success is closely connected to:

- Loving what we do, which drives us in a positive way and gives us early expertise in whatever we're really passionate about.
- Understanding and

getting along with other people, whether these relationships be with our bosses, employees, peers, funders or customers.

- Emotional intelligence that allows us to manage ourselves productively.
- The ability to problem solve and to think creatively.

YOUR UNIQUE CHILD

Keith Tindale runs motivational team-building workshops that aim to help people – adults – discover their unique skills and play to their own strengths. He says, "If you follow your own passions and talents you will be successful.

In parenting terms this means getting



WISDOM OF THE DYING

When we are defining our ideas of success and what it means to be successful, the work of Australian nurse Bronnie Ware is great food for thought. Ware spent many years working in palliative care, caring for people in the last 12 weeks of their lives. She gathered their insights onto a blog and a book called *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*. Here they are:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others had expected from me.
2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.
4. I wish I had actually stayed in touch with my friends.
5. I wish I had let myself be happier – happiness is a choice.

to know who your child is, showing her that she has unique strengths that no-one else in the world has, and by not forcing your own hopes and dreams onto her." We as parents need to change our perspective: instead of seeing our children as blank slates onto which we "parent" our values, hopes and dreams, we need to see parenting as a journey of getting to know "who our children really are", and helping our children to figure this out too, so that they can develop their own skills, talents, and understanding of success.

PARENTING FOR SUCCESS

"It is a gift-centred parenting philosophy rather than a lack-orientated one," as authors of *Nurture The Nature: Understanding And Supporting Your Child's Core Personality*, Michael Gurian and Dakota Hoyt, point out. "And it runs counter to the social trends that rule parenting today that say: your child should be or do xyz or he or she won't succeed.

It is based on the idea that our own nature wants to be found, and we as parents need to ask ourselves, "How can I best nurture the actual nature of my child for success in the world?"

Keith answers this question, "The best way to get to know your child is to spend time with your child; lots and lots of time." "And talk to them and let them play," adds Emma-Kate, citing sociologist Annette Lareau: "Lareau researched the way parents communicate with their children, and found that children who come from homes where parents talk and reason with their children developed the capacity to negotiate and hence to achieve in the world. These children are encouraged to ask questions, and feel entitled to engage with adults and professionals. Conversely, those children coming from homes where the parents issue commands tend to be quite shy and find it difficult to talk to people they perceive as being superior to them."

WHAT DOES SUCCESS MEAN TO YOU?

The bottom line is that your child will be

a success – whatever success means to your child in particular – if you let them. As Keith says, "Your child's success has zip to do with you and everything to do with your child. He just needs to know that you, his parents, have got his back." Spend time playing with your child, getting to know the things that make your child unique and special, and encourage your child to explore and develop those passions. When it comes to seeing our children as "successful" adults, it's important for parents to truly understand what our children's definition of "success" is. It may even reshape our perspective. ●

- Keith Tindale is a team motivational educator and gives workshops that aim to equip people with the tools to succeed and to discover their own personal strengths.

- Emma-Kate McCormack is a clinical psychologist who is based in Johannesburg and can be reached on 082 339 5480.

- James Ray is an American author and motivational speaker who has developed a program called The Science of Success.

