

Raising Entrepreneurial Children

by Lori Cranson

L'impact de la récente récession et des changements importants provoqués par l'économie globale font qu'un grand nombre de parents s'inquiètent moins de leurs propres carrières que du futur incertain de leurs enfants.

Children need to develop a set of skills, attitudes, and behaviors, that motivate and equip each of them to mobilize resources that will address opportunities through new, innovative endeavour.

Parents are becoming increasingly concerned about what the future holds for their children. Recognizing that the opportunity for a “gold watch” is gone (i.e. having a lifetime career with one company), parents are asking: What will my child do? Will he or she have an opportunity for further education? Will my child be a responsible, contributing member of society? What will the job market be like when my child is ready to enter? What does the economy hold in store? How will my child identify and seize opportunity? What will be left of the environment for my children and grandchildren to enjoy? These questions are echoed by parents everywhere.

As I started to ask these questions to myself, I realized that the answers lie in assisting parents, and other interested adults, to recognize that the “basics” of reading, writing, and numeracy, while still critically important, are no longer the only “basics” that kids need. Children need to develop a set of skills, attitudes, and behaviors, that motivate and equip each of them to mobilize resources that will address opportunities through new, innovative endeavour. In other words, helping children become entrepreneurial in their approach to all endeavour will go a long way in helping each child carve out a brighter future for him or herself.

Kahlil Gibran once said that our children are “living arrows sent forth.” For those arrows to go swiftly and far, my husband and I recognized that although we were giving our children every opportunity our parents afforded us, there was something missing. Our children are bright, active children. They do reasonably well in school, participate in community activities, team sports, and socially with great friends. They believed that if they studied, got decent grades, did as they were told, they would move on to the next grade in school. It has become our opinion that this type of lock-step thinking will not

stand our kinds in good stead in the 21st-century.

We, as parents, realized we must give our children the opportunity to develop the attitudes, skills, and behaviors required for success—opportunities they were not getting in school. This is the greatest gift a parent can give a child. It is the wings that will allow them to fly!

We live in a world of accelerating change. The process of change never ends, yet the impact of change continues to accelerate. We can decide to participate in and lead change or stand on the sidelines and be left behind.

My husband, Steve, and I grew up in very traditional families. Our mothers stayed home and our fathers went to work. We were encouraged to follow the rules, get an education, get a job and everything would be perfect. Only problem was, it didn't actually work that way.

Economic reality as well as personal sanity required me to remain in the workforce. Luckily, I loved my job, teaching, and it allowed me the opportunity to learn and grow as an entrepreneurial person. I was encouraged to learn new ways to practice my “trade” which I did enthusiastically. In fact, I gained such confidence as I increased my repertoire, I began to invent new applications to assist student learning and development. The more I implemented an entrepreneurial approach to learning and an environment that supported it, the more I witnessed students thrive.

I came to recognize that it is critical for all children, not just my students, but other teacher's students, my own children and other children, to learn how to respond to, adapt to, and in some ways lead change in new and innovative ways. Confident self-expression, positive personal development, and the ability to create and launch solutions—the hallmarks of successful entrepreneurs—become increasingly important in a fast-paced global world. Change become a lifetime positive endeavour when our children learn “success isn't final, and failure isn't fatal.” (Don Shula, NFL coach)

Instead of being pressured by uncertainty and instability, we found our family was strengthened through our successful efforts to adapt and deal effectively with the impact of change on our children, our community, and our world. To thrive in our new global economy, our children need to be able to capture their share of new opportunities. We encouraged our children to act on opportunities they identified at school, at home, and in the community. One of the concrete results is the Spring In-Line Skate Hockey League which our two sons have initiated and operated for two years in our community. They have 250 kids playing rollerblade hockey for three months, between ice hockey season and camping season.

From my work with students and with my own children

ages ten, 14, and 17, I learned that entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and behaviours can be developed by/in children of all ages, to enable each of them to play a significant role in inventing/innovating their own future. The sooner children have the opportunity to develop and practice entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, and behaviours, the better, but it is never too late to make positive changes in attitude and behaviour or to learn a new skill.

There are many practical and innovative ways that a caring adult can support the entrepreneurial development of a child of any age. For starters, encourage your child to participate in a variety of activities, from sports to crafts. Talk to your child about each activity—what did you enjoy? What did you learn? What would you do the same or different next time? This type of conversation can happen with kids as young as four.

Provide opportunities for your child to play with “undefined” toys and puzzles. What I mean is, select toys, puzzles, and books that demand and support critical and creative things—building blocks, paints, books with blank pages, chalk boards. In this way, children learn to think, make decisions, create, and to see themselves in different roles. Through this process they might identify new areas of interest to pursue.

With children a little bit older, challenge them to look for more than one solution to a problem. Stopping at the first right answer is no longer the “right” thing to do. Help them to learn strategies such as brainstorming, mind-mapping, and patterning to look beyond the first solution.

Learn not to say no to every idea your teenager approaches you with. Ask them to determine if it is a good idea. What might the side effects be? What are the opportunity costs? Are there alternatives that could yield the same results with less resources? Recently, my fourteen-year-old asked for a stereo tape player for his upcoming birthday. I offered to pay 25 per cent of the cost. I asked him to determine if he could raise the rest of the money. He thought about saving his weekly allowance or using birthday money he might receive from his grandparents and decided that it would take a year to save the money for the tape player he wanted. The second alternative was to

apply my offer of money to purchasing a ticket to see the Rolling Stones, live in concert. We discussed opportunity cost, immediate gratification versus long term gratification, comparing quality and price of various tape players, and then I let him make his own decision. Teaching children to make well thought out decisions in a safe environment will help them to use good judgment when faced with tougher decisions.

Keep an open line of communication with your children by discussing ideas

and opportunities that you think about, read about, or see on television. Engage your child in conversation by asking their opinion. What would they do under the same circumstances? What can they learn from the behaviour of others, and from talking to other people?

Recently, the Canadian Women Entrepreneur Awards and Conference hosted a youth program for 60 teen-aged women between the ages of 14 and 18. The teens had the opportunity to practice networking skills, interact with the award winning entrepreneurs, and

participate in their own program. Paige Silcox of *Cookie It Up!* presented the teens with real issues she faced in her business. The teens brainstormed ideas, discussed alternate solutions, and Paige shared the company decision and rationale behind it.

The women entrepreneurs attending the conference were significant role models for the teen participants. They talked about achieving goals they set for themselves, the obstacles they had to overcome, the support they had from family and friends, and the need for a sense of humour.

Parents who encourage their children to participate in events such as this believe that involvement in entrepreneurial activity is key to their child's success; recognize that the world is changing very rapidly and that “old” ideas may not serve their children well in the future; and understand the need for a more proactive approach to life.

Parents who feel empowered to help their children to be entrepreneurial in their approach to all endeavour will find that it yields long term positive results. The maxim “show the way, pave the way, get out of the way” is the guiding formula for success. Parents who work at developing a solid, practical framework to bring out the talent and



Nancy Reid

capabilities in their children, to encourage each child to take initiative, give them an opportunity to learn and demonstrate what they can do, and a scope within which to grow will find the answers to the questions posed at the outset of this article much easier to answer.

The results will be children who develop positive self esteem; become self-reliant and self-directed; take a proactive approach to all endeavour; search for creative solutions; become goal oriented; and connect with the community—in other words, develop into an entrepreneurial person.

Entrepreneurship is increasingly being recognized as a vital component for economic development. A strong competitive economy is one built on innovation, leadership, and quality. It is imperative that our children have the opportunity to recapture the pioneering, entrepreneurial spirit that built North America and apply it to the challenges that confront each of them.

Lori Cranson is Program Director at The Learning Partnership. She is currently writing Wings To Fly: A Parents Guide To Raising Entrepreneurial Children, to be published by Trifolium Books.

CATHY FORD

The days of the dead...

maudlin, melancholy, dark, darker, caring less about these vocabularies, I will marry you the grief in you, the grieving always we will go down deep far as the next dream of the next planet in one another's humanity. Assumption of the carapace of dying, a chrysalis, butterfly, tomb or psyche never recovering ourselves, or the necessity to forswear sentiment for sophistication, just let it be said

I love you more than myself, or any other crime accused, concealing nothing. There will never be a gloss over this, or rings of dust around this death-pale atmosphere there will never be anything more true, or closer to the air, the surface of vision, let it be said, I will pray it anywhere, you are in me like the discovery of saturn impossible to reach except faster than light, farther than the heart, possible to get to, only faster galaxies after the speed of light.

Cathy Ford lives on Mayne Island, B.C. She has published nine books of poetry, and her fiction and personal essays have appeared in literary magazines across Canada.

BARBARA PARKIN

Hill

I am the mountain & you are the climber, a boy in search of home, diapered trek across my hollow where you once kicked & created a mound of my belly in anticipation of you

boy across my breasts toes pressed into the clavicle arms suspend in flight safe again around my hip

below us a field of wool & springy sheets where we come to rest how soon your range will expand I become no longer your greatest challenge

high above the earth I hold you watch your face break into the full width of a smile your world in one glance

Barbara Parkin's poetry appears earlier in this issue.

PATIENCE WHEATLEY

Brother

Shortly after our brother was born our father went off to the Italian Lakes I still have the watercolour sketch he did there: mountains, blue water and a long red pennant flying above women in bathing suits, deck chairs, yellow sand.

When he came back he brought us all presents: an edelweiss pendant for me, an enamelled gentian brooch for my sister miniature lederhosen for our brother.

Father considered our brother the most generous gift possible for Mother but he brought her an Italian leather manicure set because she bit her nails.

(from the long poem The Astrologer's Daughter).

Patience Wheatley's had two poetry collections published by Goose Lane Editions: A Hinge of Spring and Good-bye to the Sugar Refinery.