



A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHECKLIST

If we want our kids to have a shot at making it in the world as eighteen-year-olds, without the umbilical cord of the cell phone being their go-to solution in all manner of things, they're going to need a set of basic life skills. Based upon my observations as dean, and the advice of parents and educators around the country, here are some examples of practical things they'll need to know how to do before they go to college – and here are the crutches that are currently hindering them from standing up on their own two feet:

1). An eighteen-year-old must be able to talk to strangers – faculty, deans, advisers, landlords, store clerks, human resource managers, coworkers, bank tellers, health care providers, bus drivers, mechanics – in the real world.

The crutch: We teach kids not to talk to strangers instead of teaching the more nuanced skill of how to discern the few bad strangers from the mostly good ones. Thus, kids end up not knowing how to approach strangers – respectfully and with eye contact – for the help, guidance, and direction they will need out in the world.

2). An eighteen-year-old must be able to find his way around a campus, the town in which his/her summer internship is located, or the city where he/she is working or studying abroad.

The crutch: We drive or accompany our children everywhere, even when a bus, their bicycle, or their own feet could get them there; thus, kids don't know the route for getting from here to there, how to cope with transportation options and snafus, when and how to fill the car with gas, or how to make and execute transportation plans.

3). An eighteen-year-old must be able to manage his assignments, work-load, and deadlines.

The crutch: We remind kids when their homework is due and when to do it – sometimes helping them do it, sometimes doing it for them; thus, kids don't know how to prioritize tasks, manage workload, or meet deadlines, without regular reminders.

4). An eighteen-year-old must be able to contribute to the running of a household.

The crutch: We don't ask them to help much around the house because the check-listed childhood leaves little time in the day for anything aside from academic and extracurricular work; thus, kids don't know how to look after their own needs, respect the needs of others, or do their fair share for the good of the whole.

5). An eighteen-year-old must be able to handle interpersonal problems.

The crutch: We step in to solve misunderstandings and soothe hurt feelings for them; thus, kids don't know how to cope with and resolve conflicts without our intervention.

6). An eighteen-year-old must be able to cope with ups and downs of courses and workloads, college-level work, competition, tough teachers, bosses, and others.

The crutch: We step in when things get hard, finish the task, extend the deadline, and talk to the adults; thus, kids don't know that in the normal course of life things won't go their way, and that they'll be okay regardless.

7). An eighteen-year-old must be able to earn and manage money.

The crutch: They don't hold part-time jobs; they receive money from us for whatever they want or need; thus, kids don't develop a sense of responsibility for completing job tasks, accountability to a boss who doesn't inherently love them, or an appreciation for the cost of things and how to manage money.

8). An eighteen-year-old must be able to take risks.

The crutch: We've laid out their entire path for them and have avoided all pitfalls or prevented all stumbles for them; thus, kids don't develop the wise understanding that success comes only after trying and failing and trying again (a.k.a. "grit") or the thick skin (a.k.a. "resilience") that comes from coping when things have gone wrong.

Remember: our kids must be able to all of these things without resorting to calling a parent on the phone. If they're calling us to ask how, they do not have the life skill.

Lythcott-Haims, Julie. *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*. New York: Henry Holt, LLC, 2015. Print.