

PLEASE, TELL THEM MY NAME

Overprotectiveness of Parents and Teachers Stuns the growth of the children

Thrust of the Story

This sort of caricature story: "Please, tell them my Name" was prepared for a P.T.A. meeting, The topic being: Children have to be given freedom and permission to do mistakes and to experience hurts in order to mature.

THE STORY

Johnny was a healthy and normal boy. He was full of fun and frolic. He longed to play, like all kids do. But, his overprotective and overanxious Parents kept forever telling him: "Darling, do not go out of the house, you may be hurt! - Honey, don't run like that, don't jump like this, you may get sick! - Do not play with other children. They may spoil you! - Don't talk to strangers." and so on and so forth.

One day when a visitor asked Johnny: "Sunny, what's your name?" Daddy whispered to Johnny: "Do not say it, darling, you may do a mistake." And quickly turning to the visitor, Dad said: "His name is John. Isn't a cute name?"

On another occasion, when someone asked: him: "How old are you? Tell me, darling!" Mummy intervened and said: "He is 5 years old! He is just an infant!"

Once in a while, their good neighbors would offer Johnny some sweets? Every time, his Dad or Mum would cut in and say: "No thanks! He does not like sweets!"

And so, Johnny never got a chance of speaking by himself. How could, possibly, such good and responsible parents allow Johnny to do mistakes and expose himself to ridicule, dangers and hurts?!

One day, when Johnny had become a bigger boy, his parents told him: "Sunny, plump, from today on, we shall allow you to speak to outsiders but, of course, only in our presence!"

Next day, some visitors came to the house: When they saw Johnny, casually they asked him: "Sunny, what's your name?" Trembling all over and uncertain of himself, Johnny turned to his parents and asked: "Shall I tell them?" Exceedingly pleased with the obedient attitude of Johnny, his parents replied: "Of course, little prince, Tell them your name."

Johnny opened his mouth, he made a visible effort to speak but no sound came out of his mouth. When he tried again, he just stuttered and burst out crying. With tears in his eyes

and a pleading, voice, Johnny begged from his parents: "Please. Mum, Tease, Dad, 'fell them my name!"

Unisonous, both parents told the visitors: "His name is Johnny! He is such a sweet, loving and obedient little boy!"

QUESTIONING

1. Why was Johnny not allowed to tell his name to the visitors or play with other children or go out of the house by himself?
2. Trying to protect their child from all mistakes, failures and dangers, what did Johnny's parents actually do to him?
3. Can we learn anything at all –walking, speaking, writing, cycling, singing, whatever without first doing mistakes?
4. What do we mean by training our children to responsible freedom?
5. Can they learn responsible freedom if they are not given freedom at all?
6. What do children – and grown ups too - learn by experiencing hurts, criticisms and failures?
7. Have you ever in your life, been treated a bit like Johnny? Remember those instances.
8. If so, how did you feel then? What good or harm did it to you?

IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

- Without facing risks children cannot acquire self-confidence
- Without freedom a child will never be able to take responsible decisions in later life.
- One thing is to guide a child and quite another to suppress his freedom and initiative
- Over-protective and over-anxious parents, superiors and teachers, cripple their children and those under their care.
- Over-anxious parents bring up shy, withdrawn, nervous and angry children.
- We all learn by trial and error. Children have a right to do mistakes in order to learn.
- Hurts, criticisms and exposure to failure are necessary to grow to maturity and to acquire the resilience necessary to face life.
- We should not make things too easy for our children. They have to learn the hard way. Modern society tends to pamper our children, making them "softies". and irresponsible
- Children must be taught to face their own problems and difficulties, not to escape or to avoid them.

GUIDELINES

1. The best thing to teach your children is self-confidence and self reliance, assertiveness and 'responsible freedom'
2. Do not brand assertiveness in an adolescent child as rebelliousness, disobedience or haughtiness. He is just experimenting with his freedom, and trying to be himself
3. Patiently, encourage him/her to take his/her independent decisions.
4. Teach your children/wards to help themselves. Do not rescue them under the guise of helping them

6. Allow your children to suffer the painful consequences of their free choices .Assist them to bear their sufferings, but do not take them away from them.

POINTS FOR ACTION.

How to train our children for "responsible freedom"?

What are the things children need most to grow and be themselves?

How to prepare our children to face the burdens and responsibilities of life?

A FEW BIBLE TEXTS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Lk 2/41-52 Jesus at twelve goes to the temple with his parents, on his own remained behind. They did not seem to be over anxious. They let him free for an entire day without missing him.
- Lk 15/11-13 The Father of the Prodigal left his son free to leave the home. The boy learned much from his mistake.
- Ep. 6/4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”