

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Opinion | Giving Them Room To Grow: Thoughts On Parenting

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Parenting is tough...

Reading the many news articles that have come out in the past few days after the fraudulent college admission practices were revealed leads me once again to reflect on parenting. I believe that the parents involved in this situation loved their children and, as has been exposed, would go to great lengths to protect them from disappointment and perceived harm. A challenging dynamic for a parent to absorb is how loving a child in this way does incredible damage. I can only imagine if I had to live with the reality that what I earned really had nothing to do with my talent.

While certainly neither as egregious nor illegal, I have witnessed loving and caring parents rob their children of opportunities to build the confidence and the skillset to face occurred when well-intentioned parents make reflect blame and responsibility to others.



Liz Morrison

I recall a student years ago who was part of a group of six boys at the Millbrook School who violated the school's drug and alcohol rule. Five boys all identified the group and the sixth boy denied he was there. He told the school and his parents that he was not involved, yet the other five boys (his friends) had been honest when asked about the situation and identified him as present. He went home and maintained his story, even coming back to school over spring vacation with his parents to plead his innocence. The school dismissed him for lying and for violating the drug and alcohol policy because it was determined that the other five boys were a reliable source and had no reason to misrepresent the truth.

He packed his bags and left school. The next week, he called and asked to talk to me. I could barely understand his words as he sobbed and said that he had lied and wanted another chance.

As someone who worked closely at the time with children who made poor choices, I was most interested in understanding why he held on so firmly to the lie when the consequences for telling the truth were reasonable and character-building. As he described the way his parents responded to his lie, it all made sense. They told him that they believed him and knew he wouldn't do something like that. He really thought they wouldn't love him if he said he had done it, and the profound desire to please them and not disappoint prevailed.

I thought of him often as I navigated the difficult waters of parenting my own children. I sometimes rehearsed being supportive and open to a truth that I did not want to accept when my kids made mistakes – some small and some larger. I think of him today as I reflect on the children of the parents who were engaged in fraudulent activities in the college process. They must be hurting because who they are isn't good enough because if it were, why would scores be changed or profiles be altered? Why would the college

that would love to have them and accept them for who they authentically are not be good enough?

Balancing the acceptance of who your children are and having dreams for them is hard – really hard. It is also challenging to accept that sometimes they make choices that don't reflect how we raised them, our values, or what we would ever want, but these are profound moments of learning and growth. Accepting them for just that is again hard – really hard.

It is so natural to want to protect our children and to worry that consequences will have a negative impact in unrecoverable ways. I have found the strength to fight those forces in two ways. The first is reminding myself of how valuable my parents' response to me as a child was to my development, and second is looking at all of the happy and successful adults I know who had unusual paths to success. With love, belief in them, and acceptance, our children will continue to amaze us.

Submitted on Friday by: Liz Morrison

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