

# THE RESCUERS

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This week I was watching a sit-com. The scenario was as follows. A divorced mother was saving up to pay for an overseas school trip her younger daughter wanted to go on with her school class. At the same time her elder daughter confessed to skipping university classes during the year and wanted to go to summer school to catch up. Mother had a fit because she had paid for the College classes her older daughter skipped and was now in a quandary about how she was going to get the money together for both her children to fulfill their wishes.

In my mind it was a 'no brainer', but guess what happened. Mother gave the older daughter the money to finish her classes and the younger daughter missed out on the trip! What is wrong with this picture? What was that mother thinking? Daughter number one had been personally irresponsible as well as disrespectful in regards to her mother's money and trust. She should have been told to save up for her own summer school tuition. Instead, she happily took the money that was meant for daughter number two without thinking twice about the fact that she was preventing her sister going on the trip.

Why do we keep rescuing our children? How do we teach them the consequences of their actions if they are never made to feel the effects of their own poor choices? It is hard being a parent and watching our children learn hard lessons. However, we are not doing them any favors if we keep shielding them from the harsh realities of life.

Rescuing comes in many forms. My husband is astonished at how many parents come to the school and make excuses for their children's behavior. They will back up their children's lies about behavior even when the evidence is there on school security cameras. When parents rant at teachers in front of their children in support of their behavior it is really saying, "This is how you deal with anyone who upsets you, especially authority figures. Our society is filled with individuals who say, " It wasn't my fault."

Kids need to learn responsibility at an early age. If you are paying for 8-9 year-olds' sports or music fees then they need to know that you expect them to do their part by attending, training hard while there, and practicing at home. They need to know that dropping out is not an option. When children make poor decisions then they need you to explain what went wrong and how they can make a better choice next time.

The best way to instill responsibility is to explain your expectations and give your children time to make a few mistakes as part of mastering the requirements. You need to spend time talking though issues they may be going

through, and potential hazards they will face so they can be prepared ahead of time. If you don't foster open communication lines with your children they will seek advice from someone else they feel comfortable with and probably make mistakes.

Kids need to not only understand how the consequences of their actions affect them, but also how it affects others. The mother in the sit-com should have put the money in the middle of the table and said to the older daughter, "Who deserves this money I have saved, you or your sister?" Then it would have been a much easier decision for the older one to make, especially if she was made to look her sister straight in the eye as she considered taking the money for herself.

There are many positive lessons we need to teach our children. Enabling and rescuing is not one of them. This does not teach them to be responsible. It teaches them to slack, lie and be dependent on you to patch up their mistakes. It means they never have to grow up. Don't do it! Walk through the consequence with your children if you want to, but do not diminish the effect of their actions.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.