

The Time When Children Decide To Spend Really Counts

A variety of authors have written over the years what should be the amount of allowance a child is provided with or if an allowance should be provided at the first place. Different people follow different practices and the issue here is not what is better, but rather what parents consider to work best for their kids. The amount of money a child receives as a reward or a weekly stipend is not the only thing important. What I consider to be extremely important is the way kids learn to spend the money they receive for whatever reason since the responsibility lessons these practices provide will shape the children's character and will direct their actions for the rest of their lives.

I remember one sunny day, while sitting on a bench in my home city's park and reading a book, that I was given the opportunity to become a witness of a rather unusual, at least for my experiences, event. As I was near a children's playground I was able to hear parents talking to their children and them screaming their answers, laughing and playing with friends. At some point, a lady came and sat next to me, holding a kid's bike. A few minutes later, I watched her son approach and asking her if she wanted anything. That made me stop reading and I raised my head to observe the child better. The boy was not more than ten years old and seemed a very pleasant and happy kid. He was looking at his mother, who was in her early forties, while pointing at an ice-cream selling machine a few meters down the road.

I listened to her as she replied that the ice-cream would not be a good idea for neither of them at this point, since he was still playing football with his friends and he has been sweating. An ice-cream or anything really cold would probably harm his throat and he would not be able to speak later. The boy heard the reply and as this was not what he expected to hear, he decided to put on an unhappy face and beg for the ice-cream. His mother did not back up from her original decision and argued that since he is a big boy now, he could make his own decisions. But, since she was still his mother, she would not jeopardize his health by giving him money to buy something that could later trouble him. The boy then decided to follow another strategy and responded that he was going to buy as many ice-creams as he wanted with the money his dad has given him earlier during the week, as a reward for his school performance.

The mother agreed that if this was where he wanted to spend his money on, she was not going to stop him. She just added at the end, as the kid was looking at her with a suspicious face since he could not understand why his mother agreed with his plan, that "in case you do buy the ice-creams you want now, instead waiting for an hour to eat the one we have at home, you will decrease the amount you have been saving in order to buy that special basket you want so much for your bike. But if this is what you want, I will not stop you."

As one can probably imagine, the boy did not buy the ice-cream, but instead found the right opportunity to begin describing this "special" basket and a while later he joined his friends again. The mother when the kid left the bench smiled and so did I. What I realized by witnessing this conversation between a mother and her son, was that kids when treated as adults, instead of listening to their parents yelling, and threatening their existence, can become responsible individuals and understand why some things value more than a simple buying impulse. It is not only when or how much you reward your child. It is also how you teach them why and when the money they received can be spent that counts. I hope I will remember the incident when my future kid asks me for that exciting, wonderful, but totally unnecessary thing.

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