

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - No. 1 parenting educator



What would you do as a parent?

“When a parent is more worried about a responsibility than their child, then the responsibility becomes theirs. Kids don’t have to worry about these things when their parents do all the worrying for them.”

Miranda usually makes her two children’s lunches each morning and places them on the kitchen bench for them to put in their schoolbags as they dash off to school. This is smart parenting.

She makes the lunches which is her job, but her kids take over and pack them ready for school. Sometimes though she is tested!

Ben, her eight year-old and youngest, sometimes forgets to pack his lunch. Sometimes Miranda notices, and reminds him to pack his lunch before he races out the front door. More often than not, Miranda sees the forgotten lunch sitting forlornly on the bench when Ben is well and truly at school.

It’s these times that she’s sorely tested.

One side of her knows that her son will survive without his lunch. In fact, deep down she knows that he will beg, borrow or swap something at school to get a feed. She knows from past experience that he is resourceful.

Another side of her says that she doesn’t want her son to be inconvenienced or to go hungry. She fears that going without lunch could impact on her son’s behaviour or learning.

This is the classic battle between the Good Parent and the Responsible Parent within most parents. It plays out every day in homes around the country in many different ways.

The Good Parent is well-meaning, but can take on too much responsibility for kids’ welfare. The Responsible Parent, tends to take a harder line and gives more responsibility to kids for their welfare.

Who wins?

In Miranda’s case, the Good Parent usually wins out. She usually ends up taking Ben’s lunchbox to school before recess, so that her son has his morning snack as well as his lunch. She feels embarrassed knocking on the classroom door and passing it over to Ben’s teacher, but she also feels that she is doing her job as a parent.

This is a parenting mistake. Well-meaning Miranda is making Ben’s problem, her problem. Ben will never have to worry about packing his lunch when his mum will bring it up for him, if he forgets.

Miranda’s job is to **make it easy** for Ben to remember to pack his lunch but not to become responsible for it. Yes, she can remind him or put it somewhere so obvious that he can’t help but notice it. But her job needs to stop at this point.

Make their problems, their problems

When a parent is more worried about a responsibility than their child, then the responsibility becomes theirs. The same principle applies with a range of every day issues such as getting up in the morning, eating dinner, putting washing in the washing basket. Kids don’t have to worry about these things when their parents do all the worrying for them.

If you want your kids to be responsible then give them responsibility. That’s a BIG FAMILY STRATEGY that you can put in place regardless of the size of your family.

What would you do if you were Miranda?

Would you be the Good Parent, the Responsible Parent or be somewhere in between?

Comment: www.twitter.com/michaelgrose or at www.parentingideas.com.au/blog



Published by Michael Grose Presentations.

All rights reserved. For more ideas, support and advice for all your parenting challenges visit:
www.parentingideas.com.au

