

“Working Smarter vs. Harder”

By: Jack Muellerleile

“Working Smarter vs. Harder” is an expression that honors hard work but encourages THINKING even more.

In today’s rapidly changing, fast paced world, the ability to THINK is prized above all. The problem is that our young people, for the most part, are not being adequately trained to THINK. Of course, that does give a tremendous advantage to those who are being so trained.

Which do you prefer? Children (or employees) who mind their parents (workplace supervisors) absolutely without being inquisitive, without questioning the policies / rules imposed upon them, or ones who sincerely wish to understand the reasoning behind those policies / rules? Remember...when those being ruled by others buy into the policies / rules they are expected to obey, far fewer violate those policies / rules. Further, they even help in the enforcement of the policies / rules because they have come to embrace the reasonableness and need for same.

So...most very much want THINKING children (employees) because they are much more likely to ‘work smarter’ not just harder. Children (employees) who ‘work smarter’ are more likely to identify and bring to the attention of decision makers more efficient ways to get the job done, suggestions for improved handling of routine matters, even ideas for entirely new things that may enhance the family / firm progress in achieving its goals.

How do we train our children to THINK (become practiced in analytical thinking)? Here are some time-proven methods:

1. Accept responsibility as the parent to perform this task.
2. Early on, explain your thinking to the child / ask his opinion about the subject / listen to what he has to say / acknowledge the importance of his input / thank him for sharing his thoughts with you.
3. As time marches along, devise various ‘what if’ scenarios for the child to consider (helps him visualize things before they occur) and ask how he might handle the situation. Again, acknowledge & confirm his thoughts. Suggest possible improvements to be considered and why they may be important. Try to guide his thinking toward shared goal attainment.

4. Select schools for the child that shares your family's philosophy.
5. Advise his teachers of the importance you place upon the child's growing ability to think independently, to question things, to understand & embrace the rationale for conclusions reached.
6. Reinforce this during parent-teacher conferences particularly whenever the child is also present.
7. Especially in the lower grades of elementary school, assure that the child does all of his homework first while things are fresh in his mind before allowing him to engage in other activities.
8. During the 4 secondary school years, require that the child take 5 years of mathematics. This focuses his mind on absolutes where objective and analytical thinking is cemented in place for a lifetime of use in decision-making.
9. Again, question the child about problem-solving situations or 'what if' scenarios. By now, his trained mind just may teach the parent a thing or two.
10. As he enters higher education, continue to challenge him to THINK through all the various things where decisions are required and to share with you his rationale for the choices he is making.
11. Continue these discussions during his 4 years of college work encouraging him to take more Math courses, plus Logic and Philosophy along with some English courses to sharpen his skills in reducing his thoughts to writing. Be certain he takes Speech classes to help him develop the platform speaking skills needed to coherently set forth his thoughts while addressing groups large and small.
12. When approaching his post-graduate phase of academic training, this child will have developed a keen mind and will possess crystal clear THINKING ability. He is now fully prepared for advanced learnings in a high speed environment where all the participants are equally qualified in the THINKING capacity department. This is where he will display his THINKING and be recognized for same. This is where he will learn to accept the recognition in stride so he is not at all fazed by it when encountered in the workaday world that follows.

“Working Smarter vs. Harder” will be a breeze for him hereafter for the rest of his life.