

Sheriff's Office class prepares mentors for youth

Central Oregon Partnerships for Youth (COPY), a program of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, is offering a virtual class to prepare volunteers to become mentors for children with an incarcerated parent.

After initial training and comprehensive background checks, volunteers are matched with a child in Sisters, Bend, Redmond, or La Pine that share similar interests and activities and commit to spending a few hours a week together for a minimum of one year. This time is often spent on outside activities, exploring the community, doing art or craft projects, or simply hanging out and talking.

On Saturday, January 16, COPY will offer a virtual orientation/training class. This 3-1/2-hour class covers program policies, how to establish a mentor relationship, the impact incarceration has on families, communication skills, and safety and best practices for mentoring in a COVID-19 world. There is no cost to attend, but advanced registration is required.

For additional details call 541-388-6651 or email COPY@deschutes.org. Additional program information is available at the Sheriff's Office website at www.sheriff.deschutes.org/copy.

Commentary...

A growth mindset – hope and believe

By Edie Jones
Correspondent

As we move into 2021 it's hard not to approach it with fear and worry, considering the year we're putting behind us. When this is the mindset we adults carry forth, it is sure to be picked up by the children in our lives, whether we verbalize it or not. An important question is how can we avoid passing on these negative vibes to our kids?

Probably the most important thing we can do is to find a way to change our perspective. Even if it happens in small increments, it can make a difference. Finding a way to start each day remembering the good things in our lives helps balance our outlook as we face the challenges of the day.

Carol Dweck, a researcher at Stanford, has coined the terms now becoming familiar in education circles of "fixed" and "growth" mindsets. When people believe their qualities are fixed traits and therefore cannot change, they often stop working to develop and improve them. It is the belief that talent alone leads to success, and effort is not required. It is the belief that "I'm less intelligent than others so why try." Or, "I'm so smart I better be careful because I don't want to make a mistake. So, I'm not going to try to avoid messing up."

Contrast this with a growth mindset, where people believe that with effort, time, and experience their situation can change.

Even though these terms usually refer to learning I think they also apply directly to how we see the pandemic affecting us.

When we have a growth mindset we believe in our ability to cope, push forward and have hope that things will get better. With the pandemic circling around us, it is often hard to perceive things this way. However, the more we work at it, the easier it becomes. The more we adapt the mindset of trying harder at social distancing the more comfortable it becomes. When adults have a growth mindset, kids develop one also.

When you consider how difficult comprehensive distance learning is for many of our students, a growth mindset is essential to their succeeding. Helping kids recognize that just because studying and learning right now is hard, it doesn't mean it will always be. Encouraging growth in even small areas, such as staying with a project five minutes longer each day, will help them develop the perspective of having some control over a situation that seems out of control.

When a parent loses a job and life gets tough, it's extremely difficult to maintain a positive attitude and believe things will change.

However, looking for the smallest silver lining, such as the extra time available to help a child learn to read or do math, can be rewarding. When you get excited about small accomplishments, your child will too. And, when one or two happen, more are sure to follow.

Training ourselves to have a growth mindset takes time and often is not easy. When we've lived with the concept that things are the way they are because they just are, it's hard to make a transition to thinking differently. If there was any time it was important to take on the perspective that things can change and are going to get better, it's now — if not for our own peace of mind, for the growth of our kids.

It's hard to recognize the good in our current situation. One concept that may be overlooked is that the kids living through all the school changes are learning to be adaptable and flexible. Both of these are qualities needed as a person matures. The more someone can adapt and move with the flow, the more responsible they become, and the more responsible they are,

the better they are at coping with new situations.

We all know there will be many other situations where kids will be called upon to change and grow. The more we can plant the beginning of a growth mindset today, the better prepared they will be for the next time. Let's all hope they will never have to cope with another pandemic.

Jane Kirkpatrick, a well-known local author, uses the metaphor of a coping saw to describe something that has strength while still being flexible. I use it often in describing an adaptable, resilient parent. A growth mindset in our kids helps them to approach difficulties with that same attitude, having hope and believing in their abilities to handle whatever comes their way.

When I get down, feeling I'm going to be isolated and alone forever, my kids remind me that it's not forever, and it will change and get better. That gives me hope and a belief in my ability to handle whatever is happening right now, empowering me to be ready when the pandemic is gone and change comes.

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