

Poverty and Impoverished Thinking

By Diane Trautman

On a recent radio talk show, a teacher commented on the school voucher system. After years of teaching in both poor and affluent schools, he thought the biggest problem was that poor kids in poor schools have lost faith in themselves and hope for the future. It doesn't matter if you bring great teachers to them or move them to a school full of great teachers. Poverty becomes a state of mind from which few truly escape without significant help from others.

I grew up in a low-income family. Among the gifts of that childhood were that I learned to be creative, resourceful, and grateful for what I had. Perhaps the greatest blessing was being taken under the wing of a childless couple who invested time, money, and interest in me, and exposed me to the arts and culture. It was through their eyes, and those of some great teachers, that I began to see what my life could be.

One doesn't have to be poor to have a poor self-image. It pains me when a parent tells me that their child thinks of himself as less than capable or downright stupid. The fact is that some of us just need the encouragement and guidance of an objective third party who clearly wants to serve as our champion. That's why my company works to deliver great tutors who teach and mentor students, helping them develop their strengths and successful strategies for life-long learning. Our theory at StudyPros is that the right teacher can make all the difference.

Another product of poverty and impoverished thinking is lack of direction and meaning in life. In the absence of a true advocate—be it parent, teacher, tutor, or other responsible adult—children can become apathetic, depressed, or worse. They stop making the effort because they don't see the purpose, either immediately or in terms of a life goal.

We can help our children find purpose and develop goals by exposing them to a wide variety of experiences and people. This includes opportunities to find meaning through service to others.

As we enter this season of giving, many organizations will be sponsoring gift and food drives. This would be a good time to work with our children on projects to help the less fortunate in our community. In my experience, we always learn more about ourselves in the process.

Happy Thanksgiving to everyone!

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