

Being A Proud Parent Regardless of Their Grades – published November 1, 2013

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I have learned many lessons around being a proud parent, from both the perspective of a parent and of a therapist.

This blog post speaks to the struggle we have as parents around the grades our children receive, particularly as they get older.

We can "kind of" be proud of our children because they are thoughtful, kind, and compassionate. But we can't REALLY be proud of them if they struggle with getting good enough grades?

I understand why schools and teachers need to have this focus, it is their job. I'm curious if our education system is based on a fear of being not good enough, that we could DIE if we aren't good enough, smart enough, work hard enough, a fear that may have started around the times of the World Wars. I'm just curious....

The value that we are giving to the grades earned in our education system is having significant consequences that I am seeing regularly....

A client who tells me, "I just want my Father to be Proud of Me." And the father who says with tears in his eyes, "But I can't, his grades don't reflect what he is capable of. He isn't trying hard enough". Does that sound familiar?

And I say, "Yes, yes they do reflect who he is and what he is going through. He is a boy trying to be a man, who is wiser on how the world works than we were at his age. Who knows that much of what he learns in school will be irrelevant in his adult life. He is trying to negotiate his emotions, his relationships, uncover his identity, meet the expectations of his parents, friends, and society. His grades reflect his attempt to figure this all out in a constant state of confusion about his value. Am "I" important, smart, loveable, ENOUGH...just for being who I am??? The answer he often hears is "No".

As I ask my 18 year old son to come over to watch a video where a rapper gives his experience regarding the relevance of exam scores and who he is as a person, my son's reply is, "That sums up what I experience" and THEN I ask him to read this post to get his thoughts, he stands behind me reading then leans over me resting his arms on my head, no words are able to escape his mouth, tears coming to his eyes.

After a few minutes, he finally says, "I don't know what to say" gives me a hug, grabs a tissue, smiles at his younger brother.

I did this to my son. I am responsible. He knows how I feel now. Fortunately for both of us, we figured it out his senior year in high school. He is a GREAT man! He is a responsible, caring,

thoughtful, strong, courageous person. I am PROUD of HIM, UNCONDITIONALLY. All of HIM. His grades are but a distant memory that no longer hold any relevance to who he IS.