

Twitter Thread by Jess Calarco



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I study kids and help-seeking. I wrote a whole book about it. So I have *a lot* of thoughts about those tweets with the dad and his daughter and the can of beans.

A thread. 1/

On the one hand, when parents swoop in and do everything for their kids, kids learn to fear failure and hard work.

So I get what the dad was trying to do - teach his daughter to work hard for what she wants and not be afraid to fail.

But, I also take issue with his approach. 2/

What's wrong with his approach? Especially given that she was successful in the end? Well, let's consider what the daughter might take away from this interaction, particularly in terms of her confidence in herself and her trust in adults. 3/

First, how might the daughter feel about herself after taking so long to figure it out? Especially if her dad said to her what he said in the tweets (e.g., she's not a "mechanically inclined kid;" "spatial orientation, process visualization... are not things she... intuit"). 4/

My guess - she'll assume it took her so long because there's something wrong with her. When, in reality, it was because her dad refused to give her the scaffolding (info and skills) she needed to succeed with the task. Can you imagine teaching kids math or reading this way?! 5/

As a side note, this is not all that different from how I was "taught" to drive a manual transmission car. With equally confidence-crushing results. 6/

Second, how might the daughter feel about her dad after all this? She might feel pride in surviving his "tough love." But I'm guessing she won't trust him enough to ask him for help when she's really struggling. And I hope she has someone else she can trust, instead. 7/

As I find in my research, when kids don't get the support they need with learning and with tackling tough problems, they avoid asking for help. They feel bad about needing support. And they blame themselves when they can't figure it out on their own. 8/

<https://t.co/dkeoGUTBEO>.

So what's the takeaway? Parents shouldn't just do everything for their kids. And they shouldn't refuse to give any help. Instead, parents should help kids recognize when they don't have the info/skills they need to succeed, and they should provide that scaffolding and support. //

The approach I'm suggesting is *way* harder than doing things for kids or telling them to figure it out. But good parenting - like good teaching and good mentoring - requires real work. And yet, because it's not valued as real work, there's little incentive to do it well. //