Twitter Thread by Save Your Sons

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@SaveYourSons

A great father is a great teacher

Here are five critical thinking skills you must master, so you can one day teach them to your kids

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1. Pattern recognition

Figuring out “what things have in common”

Our brains are pattern recognition machines. We constantly analyze the similarities between people, events, and scenarios to make decisions. Pattern recognition is how we deduce danger. It's also how we prosper.

1a. Pattern recognition

Example exercise:

Say your son loves baseball. Ask: what do all the great hitters have in common? What do they all do the same? What do they do differently? When does a manager usually come out to the pitcher's mound? Why do you think that is?

2. Reverse engineering

Figuring out "what's required"

It's nearly impossible to create anything if you can't first picture it in your mind. Effective thinkers begin with the result in mind and work backward to determine what steps they need to take. The whole informs the parts.

2a. Reverse engineering

Example exercise:

Say you're building a birdhouse. Before you begin, ask: what will we need to DO to build this birdhouse? What materials might we need? How will we get them? What instructions might we need? How will we find them? What comes first? Why?

3. Inference

Figuring out "why something happened"

We won't always have all the facts. And a smart person doesn't always need them. They're able to analyze scattered facts and make deductions about why and how certain outcomes came to be. You can train this in your kids.

3a. Inference

Example exercise:

You're driving and you see a stray dog walking along the road. Ask: how do you think the dog got there? What might have happened? What are some possible explanations, and which of those are most likely? Why is one more likely than the other?

4. Prediction

Figuring out "what will happen next"

Cause-and-effect runs our lives. We must constantly determine the consequences of our actions. If we can't deduce an action's outcome, we can't make beneficial decisions. And if we make bad decisions, we lead horrible lives.

4a. Prediction

Example exercise:

Simple thought experiments are a great way to build this muscle. What would happen if you left the lights on overnight? What would happen if you ate whatever you wanted? If you stayed up late every night? Then ask why, why, and why again.

5. Synthesis

Figuring out “what’s important”

As an adult you’ll need to sort through masses of information, retaining what’s relevant and discarding what’s not. Our brains are incredible, but they function best when we’re able to focus on what matters and ignore what doesn’t.

5a. Synthesis

Example exercise:

If you watch a movie together, can your kids determine who the main characters are? Can they summarize the plot? Ask them what the hero wants to achieve. Ask them why the villain wants to keep the hero from achieving it. Then again ask WHY.

Conclusion

The world is full of data

Don’t rely on schools to teach your kids how to think. Everyday events can be used to spur countless conversations about how the world works. As your children get older, scale up the difficulty. Tailor the discussions to their interests.

The above examples are intentionally common in everyday situations. You will experience them, why not use them as a chance to practice the art of thinking?

Your kids will have thousands of questions about the world. Your job is to help them answer those questions on their own.