



# National Newsletter

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Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools  
Submitted by Sam Streak, SAMA President

Article: Make Yourself Dispensable By Thomas Haller and Chick Moorman

Are you at all interested in raising a thirty-year-old Nintendo player who lies around your house all day eating cold pizza and sucking up Diet Pepsi? Probably not. If you're like many of the parents who attend our parenting workshops, creating a thirty-year-old video game player is not high on your list of parenting goals. Our prediction is that you are probably a lot more interested in raising a responsible, caring, conscious youngster who, somewhere between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, is capable of leaving home and living successfully on his or her own.

Raising a responsible young adult, one who can function effectively in today's world, does not happen by luck, coincidence, or magic. It occurs only when parents set out to make it happen by working diligently and purposefully throughout a child's life to see that he or she learns about independence, responsibility, and personal power. It happens where and when parents work intentionally to make themselves dispensable in a child's life.

Are you interested in making yourself more dispensable so your child can become more responsible and independent? If so, use the suggestions below to help you move closer to your goal of raising an independent, autonomous, fully functioning young adult.

1.) Believe that making yourself dispensable is your main job as a parent.

If you believe that your job is to be needed, that your central role is to do for your children, you will have a difficult time implementing the ideas that follow. Helping doesn't always help. Sometimes it creates learned helplessness. When you do for your children the things they can do for themselves, you are over-functioning. Over-functioning begins with the belief that my children need me to do for them. Change that belief to: my job is to help my children do for themselves.

2.) Refuse to do for your children what they can do or can learn to do for themselves. Do you do laundry for a teenager? Do you pack your fifth-grader's lunch? Do you tie the shoes and zip the coat of a six-year-old? Do you look up phone numbers for your fourth-grader? If so, you could be over-functioning.

Remember, the more you function, the less your child has to.

3.) If you want a behaviour, you have to teach a

behaviour. Children do not naturally know how to clean the fishbowl, set the table, dry the dishes, or take their own dishes to the sink after dinner. If you don't teach behaviours, you could end up doing them all yourself.

4.) Refrain from answering for your child. We recently overheard a conversation where a friend approached a parent and child and spoke to the child, asking her a direct question: "How are you doing today, Maria?" The mother responded for the child, replying, "She's not in a very good mood today." The silent message the parent delivered to the child was: "You don't have to speak up for yourself. I will take care of you." Allow your child to answer for him- or herself.

5.) Teach your child to ask for help. One way to do that is to not help them until they ask. Parents often rush in with help before the child has articulated a desire for help. Why would a child ever need to ask for help if help always arrives without asking?

6.) Teach children to solve their own problems. Do not say, "Don't say anything to your mother. I'll handle it for you. I know your mother well, and I can catch her in a good mood." Say instead, "You're going to have to handle this with your mother. Let me teach you what I know. I generally try to catch her in the afternoon because she gets real busy in the morning. If she's having a bad hair day, forget it. Also, she responds better if you make it sound like a suggestion rather than a demand. Hopefully, these tips will help. I know you can handle it."

This style of speaking announces to your child that you believe in him and that you see him as capable.

7.) Refrain from rescuing children from experiencing the legitimate consequences of their actions. Do not rescue, save, bail them out, let them slide, accept excuses, or fail to hold them accountable for the choices they make. When you refuse to protect children from the choices they make, you allow them to take responsibility for their lives.

Raising responsible children is not an easy task. It takes effort, energy, and persistence. You can do that best when you take steps like the ones listed above to make yourself dispensable.

Thomas Haller and Chick Moorman are the coauthors of *Teaching the Attraction Principle to Children: Practical Strategies for Parents and Teachers to Help Children Manifest a Better World*. To sign up for their newsletter visit their websites today:

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