

Are you coddling your kids with Saren Loosli and April Perry -- Episode 108



Power of Moms A Gathering Place for Deliberate Mothers

In this podcast, April and Saren discuss the topic of coddling and raise the questions: Are we giving in too much and being pushovers? Or are we being too tough and not giving in to the point that our kids think we don't care?

Over the weekend, one of Saren's sons had a couple of incidents that brought to light the issue of coddling. Silas, Saren's ten year old son, was running around with some neighborhood kids, playing Nerf wars, etc. He ran full speed into a sharp edge, split open his leg, and had to be taken to urgent care to get stitched up. Saren's family was about to settle down to their Friday movie night when this happened, so everyone went to the urgent care with Silas. All seven family members and the doctor were in the room. It ended up being a pleasant evening in a hard situation.

Sunday was full of rest and relaxation and by the end of the evening Silas was running around and feeling much better. Monday morning and time for school, Silas goes, but then calls Saren talking about how his leg is throbbing and really hurting. Silas is having a hard time at school with Spanish, which is a class at the end of the day. The timing of his leg hurting coincided with the time of this class. Saren talked to him about the situation and made sure that he thought it was the right decision for him to come home and he said it was. So, she went to get him.

Driving to the school, Saren wondered when the best time to push back is – on the one side, there's the tough love and push through it philosophy where you send your kid to the Spanish class; and on the other side, you don't want your kid to be in pain. There are times when you're between a rock and a hard place, where you want to do the right thing but just don't know what that is.

April readily admits to being a coddler at heart, and Saren notes that we tend to parent how our parents parented. April's mom was a coddler. Saren's was not. She is a tough love mother, definitely not mean and very tender when feelings were hurt and needing extra TLC, but to a certain point. She would reach the point where she gave the impression to pull yourself up by your bootstraps and not wallow. Both of these mothers are wonderful mothers. April and Saren discuss these two differing styles.

April remembers a time in the 3rd grade where she's wearing purple pants that she hated and wanted to go home and change her pants. Knowing that her teacher wouldn't let her go home to change so she made the "sick face" and the office called her mom and she was able to go home to change. This happened maybe once a school year. For April, this wasn't a regular occurrence. If there was a call from the school, April knew her mom would take care of her.

In another incident, April had hurt her arm and wanted to get a cast. Her friend was wearing a cast and she wanted one too. So her mom drove to the doctor so that April could get x-rays and explained that she knew April's arm was hurting and wanted to get x-rays to make sure her arm wasn't broken, but that these x-rays would cost about \$300. If April thought that this was the best thing to check then they would go in there and get the x-rays; however, April's mom offered some alternatives, such as ice and rest, to see if the arm didn't get better that way. April then made the decision to go home and not get the x-rays.

As mothers, we need to help kids understand the big picture. Help them see that a cost is associated with their choices. Don't try to make them feel guilty, but help them make an informed decision.

Coddling, for the sake of clarification, is not meant as a negative thing. Of course our children need us to do some things for them and of course we gain pleasure from helping them out when necessary. April has a sister that gets joy from putting her kids' clothes away and making their lunches. Let's make sure that our kids *know how* to make their own lunch, not necessarily that they put it together every single day. Our kids need to know how to do things so that they can be successful in life.

Sometimes we do things because we want them done a certain way.

Provide guidelines for them to follow. If your child wants to pack their own lunch, set some parameters as to what equates to a good lunch – vegetables, fruits, etc. The same can be said of clothes. If your child is particular in what they wear have them set the clothes out the night before.

There is a fine line between coddling and controlling.

Sit down with your kids and set out the skills that they need to learn. Discuss with them how they can help. Explain that you have no problem helping them, but that they need to learn life skills. Go through the process together. Do some things for your children to set them up for success, but then step back and allow them to do it; things do not have to be perfect.

There are a couple of **questions** we should ask ourselves:

#1 – Is what I am doing right now going to be appreciated by my child's future spouse (or their future self)? #2 – Am I crippling my children in any way by doing this for them?

We have a couple of **options** to consider when dealing with these life skills (including school projects):

Option A – I can *teach* my child to do it which will take more time, patience, etc.

OR

Option B – I can do it myself which means the project will get done faster, and I can worry about teaching them later.

Procrastinating teaching children these life skills will only hurt them in the future; children need to learn these skills now.

When that situation comes up, we need to *deliberately* choose and make that investment for the future.

Show Notes by Rosie Liljenquist