

Two years ago at Christmas time, my college aged nephews and nieces talked the aunts and uncles into watching the movie Napoleon Dynamite. The only moderately interesting concept of the whole movie was the idea of “skills”. If you had skills in this movie you were somebody. You would be OK. Life would work out for you if you had skills. It prompted me to start thinking about actual real-life skills for our students. Does the current generation of students have significant skills or is texting on their phones at high rates of speed their only claim to fame?

I grew up in the 60’s and 70’s in Iowa and in the country. We had work to do called chores and lots of hobbies. Many were outside things like yard work or taking care of livestock, walking beans and detassling corn. Our hobbies included working on motorcycles and cars, hunting, trapping and building things. It was a great life. As I look back on that life, I can list off several skills I learned through my life as a young person. Some of those skills I learned from my Dad and some I just picked up on my own. Those same skills serve me well today as I care for my family and home.

Are we preparing our kids with a set of skills with which they can manage their own lives and homes someday? Our 21<sup>st</sup> century life I fear, has allowed us to raise a generation of kids whose plan to run a household one day will include speedy dial numbers for someone else to come and fix their problems. Parenting expert, John Rosemond, used to describe the role of adolescents as being able to run your household by the time they are in high school. The notion of turning your household over to your 16 year old to run scares some of you! ☺ Ponder the skills required to accomplish this task – cleaning, cooking, buying groceries, laundry, managing finances to name a few. Does your child have the necessary skills to successfully accomplish these things? If your answer is yes, congratulations! If your answer is no, fear not! It is never too late to begin this process of teaching your child life skills.

It will take some commitment on your part to accomplish this task as well as your time. Resist the notion that “it is quicker if I do it myself”. That is true for everything, but it will never prepare your son/daughter to successfully negotiate life before the age of 30. You may say your kids are too busy to find time to do any of this. As our kids have become less and less relevant in our home economies, we have filled up their idle time with activities. Cut back on the activities so they have time to learn skills. It really doesn’t take much time. Show them how to do laundry next week and then put them in charge of their own laundry for the next few weeks. Do the same with meal preparation. Have them pick out a single item to begin with. Start with desserts since everyone will enjoy it! Once they learn how to make cookies or a cake move on to an entrée. Once they can do a couple of simple entrees, put them in charge of one meal a week. The summer time is good for this at our house since the household pace slows down a bit. Work your way through the other areas until your child has a set of skills they can impress their friends with! Trust me, the kids who have skills when they get to college will be revered because they know how to do things like change a flat tire or do their own laundry or sew on a button or cook.

You may be thinking that you don't have the necessary skills to pass on to your kids. This is a great time to become skilled yourself – work on this together! Remember, you are your child's best teacher.