What does a marshmallow have to do with kids’ success?

The answer is, everything

The story goes back to a research study conducted at Stanford University in the 1960s. Four-year-old kids were given a choice: eat one marshmallow now, or wait for fifteen minutes and get another marshmallow. Each child was filmed while they waited. You can imagine what happened—some kids ate the marshmallow before the researcher was out the door, others sang, danced, did whatever they could—they wanted that second marshmallow. The researchers followed these kids for eighteen years and they found that the kids who could wait—those who had demonstrated self control—were more successful in school and work, had more friends and were generally happier.

In the end, the experiment had little to do with marshmallows. The importance of the experiment was that waiting for the second marshmallow was an incredibly good measure of a character trait crucial for success in school and life: self-discipline. Do you think that your child could wait for the second marshmallow?

The power of No

Dr. David Walsh, founder and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family, has connected with parents, teachers, and professionals across the country with his new book, *No, Why Kids—of All Ages—Need to Hear it and Ways Parents Can Say It*. With warmth, experience and humor, Dr. Walsh paints a powerful picture of how messages screaming “More, Easy, Fast and Fun” undermine the critical character traits kids need to succeed. Dr. Walsh argues that learning how and when to say No is crucial to raising healthy, self-reliant kids.

Create real change in 2009

Join the marshmallow movement. By most accounts, 2008 was a difficult year for our country and 2009 will be as well. As a nation, we learned the hard way about the importance of self-discipline and self-control. While it is easy to feel helpless as we watch the news and hear about the suffering economy, it is important to realize that we stand at an important crossroads. As we look to create real change in 2009—we have the incredible opportunity to ensure that our children have the tools they need to forge a different future. By giving our children the gift of self-discipline, the ability to say no to themselves, we are arming them with the critical character trait they need to ensure that their lives, and our country, get back on track.

Join teachers, parents, and public officials throughout the country who are coming together to ignite community conversations around a deceptively simple, but difficult to say, two letter word—NO. Start 2009 off right by reading this guide and going to www.sayyestono.org so that you can start the Say Yes to No conversation in your community today!
Self-Discipline = Success

Kids today spend an average of 44.5 hours a week in front of electronic screens, more than any other activity except sleeping. As a result, children are exposed to over one million Yes messages a year, nurturing a rising epidemic of Discipline Deficit Disorder in our kids. The constant barrage of Yes messages undermines critical character traits for success. The social and economic ramifications cannot be overstated. Research shows that self-discipline is twice as strong a predictor of academic success as intelligence. Our kids may be as smart as ever, but a culture of “More, Easy, Fast and Fun” threatens the learning that happens in the classroom and what children need to become thriving adults.

How to Prevent Discipline Deficit Disorder:

1. Learn how to say NO.
2. Support, don’t rescue.
3. Encourage, don’t coddle.
4. Give kids what they need but not everything they want.
5. Back up teachers and schools.
7. Set clear and high expectations.
8. Expect kids to do chores.
9. Set and enforce clear limits and consequences.
10. Expect kids to volunteer and help others.
Use the following discussion questions to jump-start conversations about No.

1. Do you agree that today’s parents have a more difficult time saying “no” than parents did in previous generation? Why do you agree or disagree?

2. If you agree that today’s parents have a harder time saying “no,” why do you think that is the case?

3. Do you see evidence of “discipline deficit disorder” in today’s youth?

4. Research shows that self-discipline is twice as strong a predictor of school success as intelligence. Does that make sense to you? Do you have any experiences of your own or of your children that support this?

5. What do you think are the key ingredients of self-discipline? How can you help your children cultivate them?

6. Dr. Dave states that the word “no” is not as important as the strategy, and that there are many ways to say “no” without using the word. Can you identify some examples?

7. Do you agree that our country’s economic competitiveness is in jeopardy unless we teach our children and youth the lessons of “no”?

8. In your opinion, what are the best ways that parents can build self-esteem in their children?

9. Discuss how you manage media in your home.
To cell or not to cell?
Cell phones aren’t what they used to be. Not only do they make calls, they also take pictures, play music, and stream TV shows! Download this guide to learn about new cell phone technologies and how this mini media machine can be a healthy part of kids’ lives. More...

Be intentional, make a plan.
The Internet can be a great resource and source of entertainment but be sure to get off to a good, healthy start by establishing rules and expectations. More...

MediaWise Back to School Guide
Get help answering these questions and more: Will computers help my kids succeed in school? How do I encourage my kids to read? What’s the deal with multitasking? More...

Say Yes to No
Say Yes to No is a grassroots campaign igniting community conversations around raising healthy, self-reliant kids so they will be successful in school and life. Check it out today at www.sayyestono.org. More...

Tell your friends about the Network!
Connect with others, get access to FREE tools, resources, and ideas. Create positive change for your family and community! More...