

JACK IN THE BOX

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I was discussing an issue with my son one day and he said to me, “Mom, you need to think outside the box.” That made me stop short and reconsider. It never occurred to me that there might be some completely different way of looking at the problem. I was so used to only thinking one way and that way was to deal with the problem itself. Thinking outside the box meant I had to take two steps away from the issue and, by changing the indirect circumstances the immediate problem actually solved itself. We get so set in our thought processes sometimes that we think there are only one or two options, when in fact there are many inventive solutions.

Thinking outside the box can be applied to many other circumstances as well. It is a bit like eggs in a basket. We might think our options for jobs are limited to the skills we already have when in fact those same skills can be applied to jobs we have not even thought of or to jobs we are unaware of. Perhaps during a time of unemployment, we could retrain. Now, there’s a scary thought! Many times we restrict ourselves to activities and skills where we feel comfortable. “Better the ‘eggs’ in our basket that we know rather than those outside it”, we say. Sometimes we limit our learning by believing that ‘you can’t teach an old dog new tricks’. This is not so either. We met a 93 year-old woman last year that had just completed a Bachelor’s Degree just to keep her mind active.

So what has this got to do with our children you may ask? It has everything to do with them because, by teaching them that their thought processes have no limits, it means they can then solve problems and keep ahead of the game in all areas of their lives. There are so many decisions for our children to make in this era - probably ten times more than when my parents were teenagers. Kids have to learn to think on their feet so that as they get into their work lives they can change direction when the first option isn’t working. The current economy has certainly forced us into inventive thinking to secure a reasonable quality of life. Recent natural disasters have created such chaos that many families are in survival mode. They have been forced to think outside the box literally as many have lost their homes.

We need to prepare our kids for the future by ensuring that we teach them sound character and living skills. Home needs to be a safe place for them where, if mistakes are made they can learn from them. Our children need to learn effective ways of dealing with and solving problems. Home is also a place for them to learn how to make wise decisions. We need to teach our kids to be inventive and creative in their thinking. In preparation for their work lives, they need to be taking courses that are the most likely to earn them a good salary for

the future. As parents, we should discourage laziness and encourage them to adopt a sense of responsibility, purpose and direction.

When we have a number of options or strings to our bow we are much more likely to stay on our feet. Our kids can learn from our example. By being enterprising and well planned, their lives will remain challenging and exciting also. Who wants to be a “jack in a box?” Not me.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.