**Help your kids identify strengths, weaknesses**

**Source-** www.ocregister.com

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It’s a given that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. But at what point in life do people recognize them – and begin to act in order to make the most of who they are? The earlier we come to understand ourselves, the more satisfied and productive we can become. One gift parents can offer is helping their children discover their own abilities and shortcomings. Here are seven tips that can help you, as a parent, help your child come to a better understanding of his or her talents.

**Observe your kidsin various settings**

Watch them at work and at play. What kinds of tasks come easily? What tasks seem difficult? What activities and tasks do they enjoy? Which ones do they dislike?

**Affirm and/orchallenge your kids**

Provide lots of affirmation for strengths you can identify in your kids. Challenge them when you recognize weaknesses in areas they need. Challenge them to improve skills in their areas of strength.

**Evaluate with your kids**

Give your kids feedback about various task-related areas of their lives. Tasks they enjoy might be signs of strength. Tasks they dislike might be signs of weaknesses.

**Encourage experimentation**

Kids should have many opportunities to experiment. Kids often stumble onto hidden strengths and weaknesses through new experiences. Make sure your kids don’t get into a rut.

**Don’t force improvement of weaknesses in areas that aren’t important**

Sometimes parents want their kids to succeed in everything. This desire can be manifested by requiring kids to spend a lot of time fixing weaknesses. While there are some life skills that are necessary to function as an adult (and parents should have their kids focus time and energy to improve in these areas), realize that your child might not have an aptitude in a certain area. Focusing your child’s time and energy on fixing weaknesses can take time and energy away from developing their strengths.

**Don’t ‘buttonhole’kids early in life**

Your kids will excel in some areas and falter in others. The wise parent will allow their children, interests and abilities to change over time. A child might excel in mathematics and pursue math-related courses and activities in their earlier school years but want to move in a different academic direction in high school or college.

A good parenting strategy would be to affirm the child’s mathematic skills, while encouraging him or her to experiment in other academic areas.

**Encourage dreaming, creativity and passion**

A big part of the meaning of strengths and weaknesses has to do with the context of where tasks are carried out. For example, a child might discover that he or she has strength in the area of teaching others. That strength can be connected to a passion for a certain type of teaching (such as age groups or location). The child might dream of being a teacher to children in a developing country, not in a public middle school.