

National Crisis: Calling attention to benefits of learning home safety skills

Do young people understand the benefits of learning home safety skills? If you have ever heard these scenarios, then your answer is probably no. "And why should I care about mending the fence I broke?" Mom, the toilet is overflowing with disgusting stuff; I don't know what to do!"

Most young people are not aware of what they don't know around the house in order to keep safe from fires, electrical problems, and plumbing disasters. Because of this, we face a national crisis. Parents are supposed to know how to teach their children basic home safety. But if parents lack the skills, how will children know what to do in an emergency? Everyday practical knowledge for the home comes with education, practice and experience. Unfortunately, progress and changes in our society have contributed to the demise of the time and knowledge needed to teach our children the benefits of being their own handyman or handywoman.

With each new generation there is less time to pass on traditions. There are fewer opportunities to teach home repairs. And sadly, there is not as much family involvement with parents and grandparents to explore the importance of being a self-sufficient home dweller.

Even if we can identify the life skills children are losing, do most kids and parents think it really matters? We don't exactly know. There is no national survey for this question, but there should be. But one truth is known, it's hard to care or think it matters if parents don't see the benefit of knowing how to use a hammer or wrench.

As parents it is up to us to provide a balance in their lives between their new toys and toys that can be made with a hammer, chisel and bench saw. Finding time to teach our children can be difficult. One day our children will leave home for their dorm, apartment or home. Will they be ready for the safety challenges that await them? Did you remember to teach them to set a timer for the lights to help prevent a burglary? Can they prevent the

basement from flooding because they know to replace the old water heater? Even more importantly, can they prevent fires from happening? Will they change the filter to the furnace each year, unclog the dryer vent, and maintain a clean fireplace? If they don't, would you want to live next door to them! According to fire statistics, each year fires kill more Americans than natural disasters with cooking fires being the leading fire maker. Not providing our children with the necessary skills to keep safe in their homes hurts them and can harm others. Don't assume schools are taking the time to educate them about tools, fire safety and homeownership. Schools are not in the business of doing the jobs of parents unless forced to do so.

Parents that are associated with construction can lead by example. But for those who can't, they can only hope that somewhere down the road their children will learn some form of home life skills, perhaps from friends and relatives or books and teachers. Hopefully, before they become homeowners, and not after a basement flood or fire in the chimney! Luckily, adults have lots of home shows on cable television to watch which can guide them through many home safety and repair issues. Unfortunately, kids of all ages do not have a home safety show to enjoy on a Saturday morning!

So what can be done? As parents, we can't force our children to like playing with tools, real or as toys. We can't force them to remember every fire safety rule or every home maintenance tip, and we certainly can't convince them to make or fix things with their hands. The National Kids Construction Club suggests the following. If your child is young, encourage hands-on fun with shovels, blocks and other kids of building toys. Go outside and explore your world by visiting a construction site or stop and watch a sidewalk or road being made.

Join school clubs that encourage creativity with hands-on learning. Consider a membership with youth organizations like the Boys or Girls Scouts. As teens, encourage them to participate in Habitat for Humanity projects which will help them learn about building technology. If their school offers practical arts courses, take them. Plan a visit to a hardware store with your children. Read how-to books and create a home repair project, such as installing new tile on the laundry room floor, with your son or daughter. If you're lucky enough to have a grandpa and grandma, go share stories of the old times. Then explore your heritage by finding pieces of furniture made by hand.

If we recognize that we need to instill good values into our children, then we have come a long way in solving this national problem. How we teach youth about the importance of achieving a well-rounded education that includes technology and practical home safety training needs to begin very early. If we as parents help, perhaps our children will listen. Why not encourage them!

Our Mission Statement

The National Kids Construction Club seeks to educate and inform children of all ages of the skills and professionalism of those involved in all aspects of the construction industry. Whether it is the construction of a sidewalk, home, building, road, bridge or any other structure, real or imaginary, all children should be encouraged to construct and build.
