



transform your spark, ignite your inner fire

By Mill Creek Resident, Elizabeth Lambert

As a life coach, I work with a diverse demographic of women and girls. I coached a business executive who held it together at the office but felt fragile in her personal relationships. I also coached a woman who was transitioning from homelessness. She owned nothing more than donated clothing, but her spirit was strong and she had a “can-do” attitude.

What made the difference? Both reported growing up in loving families, but this stood out. The executive’s mother was quick to fight her battles. The other woman was expected to work through some of her own issues. Girls benefit from being taught to stand up for themselves. This helps them to become stronger women, whose contributions build stronger families, stronger organizations, and stronger communities.

When my daughter was born, the responsibility for raising a confident woman sat heavily upon my heart. It caused me to take inventory of who I was. Whether intentional or not, I was her role model. There would be no filter to make my example pretty on the rough days. There were lots of things to teach between her birth and adulthood. She was shy and easily wounded. When playing in groups, she was easily reduced to tears. I sometimes found myself referring to

her as “my wilting flower” – a big mistake! Parents should never give their daughters nicknames related to perceived weaknesses, nor tolerate such practices from others. It was no surprise that when she started school, there were daily tears in the car on the way home. This is a familiar scenario for many parents. Our gloves come off ... The no-one-is-going-to-bully-my-daughter feeling overtakes us! In these moments, mature parenting is required and we must put aside our feelings to identify the difference between learning social norms and bullying. I am not suggesting that we ignore intimidation, physical and/or verbal abuse. These are never acceptable. However, some things that our daughters experience teach them that although the world is tough, so are they? The things that hurt their feelings are beneficial when they also help them navigate difficulties in relationships, learn to set good boundaries and insulate them from relational weaknesses.

I committed to using my daughter’s experiences to encourage her to stand up for herself. She had an ongoing issue with a boy who made it a regular part of recess to give her his negative opinions about her clothing and hair. She, in turn, rewarded him with her tears. It became a cycle. While his comments hurt her feelings, they were not what I classify as bullying. Rather than run to her rescue, I used role-playing to empower her. Some days were harder than others, and I had to restrain my own emotions. In the evenings she would relate the story of the day, tears included. I’d listened without interruption, then we would role-play

– me showing her how to handle the situation. Early on it was a simple stare down and silence. This would frustrate her, and she’d ask why I wasn’t saying anything? I wouldn’t answer that question, but instead asked how it made her feel. According to her, she felt dumb. I instructed her to go back to school and make the boy feel dumb. I always told her she had the power to stop his behavior and to never give her power away to anyone. Afterward, if she came home in tears, but had not tried to solve the problem I’d ask, “Why did you give him your power?” and I’d tell her to go to school and take it back. The day she finally followed through, I saw new confidence in her. When we got into the car, she in-



Elizabeth Lambert, Life Coach

formed me that she had taken her power back. At recess, she stared him down, in silence – no tears. The boy said her silence was dumb and ran off. They enjoyed the rest of the year without further incident and became friends. I knew she had come into her own understanding of how to navigate elementary peer troubles when a couple of years later other moms began asking why my daughter wasn’t a part of the latest girl-drama. As a mom, I had given her a few tools and she had committed to using them with a little coaching.

The world will not always be kind, but

we can raise strong daughters by equipping them with the right tools rather than rescuing them. A girl who is taught to stand up for herself is more confident and better prepared to navigate life’s challenges. Let’s start the process while they’re young and continue it until they are teaching the same principles.

*Read *Investing in the Next Generation; Raising Stronger Daughters* (Middle School and High School) Part 2 in the May 2020 issue.

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Investing In The Next Generation

Raising Stronger Daughters (Elementary Years), Part 1