

The Power of Asking for Help

by Bethany Barnosky [2/06]

John 12:16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever"

Teachers

I know that homeschooling is right for my family and my daughter. I know that the time and effort we are expending here is producing eternal fruit. But sometimes, being a creature of flesh, I'm hesitant to ask for help. And yet, when I am willing to admit my helplessness and ask for aid, here is what I find:

1. The answer to a technical question and, more importantly, how to arrive at that answer myself.
2. Encouragement, because the person I have asked doesn't know--they've been secretly harboring that same question for years! ("I've always wondered about those imaginary numbers myself...")
3. A list of resources that could fit my needs... not six million (ever Googled "fifth grade mathematics curriculum?") but a reasonable handful that I can hunt down and evaluate.
4. Helping hands that reach out as friends volunteer to help out or lend or give items that I can't find elsewhere. ("I have a complete set of Saxon 6/7 that I'm not using this year...")
5. A new perspective--sometimes the problem that I've been struggling with isn't really a problem at all! ("No, dear, your third grader doesn't need to be comfortable with long division yet...")
6. In asking for help, I model for my students that every human needs, at times, to ask for help. It's not a crisis or an embarrassment, but it is often a necessary step in the learning process.
7. Peace. Knowing that I risked looking foolish and came out the better for it.

Ask for help!

Ask a reference librarian, a friend, a pastor, a professor, a specialist, a deacon or deaconess, a business professional, a teacher, a family member, or even
your local homeschool support group.

Ask!

Students

You know that you are an incredible student. Bright, hard working, of exceptional character... So why are you *still* struggling with fractions?

The reality is that you need help--and that's ok! It's no fun being stuck on a lesson that you don't understand. However it's even less fun *staying* stuck on for weeks because you didn't tackle the problem head on.

Here are some ideas for admitting you have a problem and finding a workable solution:

1. Do be as specific with your question as possible. Try to work through a problem or two so that you can more easily pinpoint the troubled spot. Write neatly and use good study habits so that others can understand your thought process.
2. Don't shove your book at your teacher and claim "I don't get it!" Grumpiness is contagious and annoying your teacher isn't going to help either of you.
3. Do come up with a less-painful way of admitting that you don't know what's going on... how about a flag, red light, or "HELP" sign that you can put on the edge of your desk when confused?
4. Don't blame your teacher for "not teaching right"... it takes two to learn and, frankly, two to be confused-- try, together, to make sense of a topic.
5. Do be persistent. If your teacher has explained fractional exponents five times and you still don't understand, say so. Try to find different words to explain the details of your confusion.
6. Don't give up. Keep plugging away at a topic every day (ok, you can take Sunday off...) until you get it. Keep working at it. However, don't practice doing pages of incorrect problems--that won't help either.
7. Do explore other alternatives. Perhaps a library book, tutor, friend, or even another teacher can explain a topic so that you "get it."

Ask for help!

Ask a parent, a reference librarian, a friend, a pastor, a youth group leader, a business professional, a teacher, an extended family member, or even
your local homeschool support group.

Ask!

For more information, consider: <http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Teachers/math.html>
http://www.oaklandcc.edu/ASC/ASCOR/or_sh_mat.htm
http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/mathpeertutoring.asp