

## SOME QUICK TIPS FOR PARENTING THE RENAISSANCE SOUL

Margaret Lobenstine, M.A.  
www.ToGetUnstuck.com

### ◇ LISTEN TO YOUR LANGUAGE:

- Avoid putting labels on your children when they are young. “When this little one grows up s/he’s going to be a great ballplayer and make us all proud!” Rather say “If a team were scouting little Chris today, s/he’d be a first round draft pick! But who knows, s/he may surprise us and love using other talents even more.”
- Try to avoid the implicit singular in the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” by saying such things as “What are some of the things you’d like to do when you get big?” to younger children or “What do you imagine you might start off doing for money, assuming of course the answer will change as you grow.” to older ones. Use language that talks about designing a life rather than choosing a career.
- Be on the watch for “dilettante, jack-of-all-trades, singular” put-down language. “What, Chris isn’t playing cello anymore? Another set of lessons wasted, huh?” It is very important to present your child’s choice as “Chris is such a fascinating kid to have. S/he’s interested in so many things. Now that s/he understands cello, s/he’s eager to switch to a wind instrument and play more melody. Or s/he’s ready to focus on visual rather than auditory pursuits--s/he wants to take up b&w photography this semester!” You need to be thinking this way even when your child isn’t around to hear a given set of comments so that it becomes as second nature as possible for you.
- Unhook post high school choices from final career outcomes. Otherwise a kid may equate choosing a college with signing on to something for life, and, consciously or unconsciously resisting that, give the choice far less attention that would be desirable. (Download the Tips for High School Guidance Counselors at [www.ToGetUnstuck.com](http://www.ToGetUnstuck.com) for more on Renaissance Souls and the college choice)

### PROVIDE ROLE MODELS:

- Point out people/occupations that are multi-faceted rather than single-focused. Say things like “Wow, isn’t it great all the different things so and so is interested in!” or “How do you suppose someone came up with the idea to create a game like Dungeons and Dragons? What different things would s/he have had to think about? Isn’t it lucky that they could think about game rules in one part of their brain and crazy characters in another.”
- ◇ Underscore that there are many paths to financial success/ruin. Bring up examples of people who have made money following lots of ideas or who have ended up in financial trouble because they pressed their nose to too narrow a grindstone. Share times when family members/friends changed majors, college choices, jobs, fields, and didn’t immediately end up in the poor house. Try to note examples where success in one field wouldn’t have been as remunerative as the success derived from branching into another--e.g. The brothers on public radio’s highly successful “Car Talk” show vs what they’d have earned as plain

mechanics.

- Validate horizontal as well as vertical career moves. If you know people who decide to move horizontally instead of vertically, be sure that becomes part of family conversation: “You know my friend Jane? She could have been promoted to District Manager and supervised production at all the N.E. plants, not just the ones in Massachusetts. But she decided she’d rather learn more about the non-production side of things in the plant she’s in now, so she joined a multi-discipline team working on increasing customer satisfaction! It’s not as prestigious a position as District Manager, but she says she’s gotten excited about her job all over again.”

### **UNDERSTAND THE WAY RENAISSANCE SOULS USE TIME:**

Renaissance Soul children need to coordinate energy and task as much as possible. So instead of regimenting schedules, try, depending on age, one of these approaches:

- Give the kid two blocks of time in which they can choose to do a) homework and b) chore. Let them decide which block will be used for which task.
- If kid has lots of homework, go over different kinds with them and ask them which kind of homework needs what kind of energy so which would they prefer to begin with, end with...
- During open weekend/vacation times, formulate the question “There are a variety of things you might do in this time. What sort of energy do you have right now? Are you in the mood for being alone or with others? Do you feel like self-motivating or would it be easier to go with ideas offered by someone else? You said that you wanted to finish your book this weekend and you wanted to see Sam and you hoped to ride to town and get your bike looked at. Which of those activities fits your current mood?”

### **REMEMBER THEIR GOALS MAY BE DIFFERENT FROM YOURS:**

- Be careful not to live your own pattern desires through your kid. For example, once your Renaissance Soul child really “gets” how cello works, s/he may be far more intrigued by going back to beginner status on a new instrument (or even moving from orchestra to photography!) just at the time when you are beginning to preen your feathers and picture him/her as first chair!
- Starting new projects may be far more important to them than finishing old. Renaissance Souls love the first stages of a project--thinking it through, collecting the materials, figuring out how *they* want to do it. Often they are not particularly interested in the supposedly resulting potholder or wall hanging. It helps to think of it this way: if your kid went out to enjoy a bike ride, you wouldn’t be upset if s/he didn’t ride all the way across the continent. Of course not--it’s the joy of bike riding that matters. Likewise, for Renaissance Soul children and “projects”. They are investing in the joy of process, not product.

◇