

# MATTMCWILLIAMS

Live with Passion. Lead with Purpose. Leave a Legacy.

## Finding Beauty in the Messiness of Life

I recently made a terrible parenting mistake. One that I swore I would never make. I've seen far too many well-intentioned people make this mistake. They want to prevent a loved one or someone they lead from feeling pain, making mistakes, embarrassing themselves, or accidentally going against a social norm.

### **What was that terrible mistake that I made?**

I told our four-year old daughter, Aracelli, not to play in the mud. Worse, I got mad at her for doing so.

That may not seem like a big deal to some of you. After all, there are important things to protect. Like our carpet, her clothes, and her lady-like behavior.

And in an effort to protect those things, we destroy the essence of childhood:

- Exploration
- Discovery
- Learning
- Making messes
- Mistakes
- Progress

Those aren't just the essence of childhood, they are essence of life itself. And my desire to protect her from a mess and protect our precious carpet could have taken all of those away.

### **The Words No Parent Should Say**

Years ago, I swore I would never make that mistake.

One night I caught myself telling Aracelli to "not make a mess" as she was washing her hands. I realized in that moment how horrible those words are.

She was just learning to wash her hands and I was worried about what? A little water on the floor?

In effect, what I was saying to her was:

- "Never try something that's hard."
- "Stick to what you know."
- "Be afraid to fail."
- "Stay in your comfort zone."

- "Don't try to do things on your own."

I decided in that moment that I would never tell Aracelli to not make a mess again. Messes are a part of learning. Messes are a part of exploring. Messes are a part of life.

### **Embrace the Messes**

Instead of discouraging our kids (or our employees or friends) from making messes, we should encourage them to do so. For it is in the messiness of life that we learn the most. It's in the messes of life that accidental discoveries suddenly come into view. It's in the messes that greatness is unleashed, leaders are made, and the world is changed.

Are you afraid to get dirty? Are you scared of making mistakes? Does fear hold you back from exploring...and ultimately discovering something great about the world and about yourself?

### **My Email to Our Daughter - Get Messy**

Perhaps you need to hear the words I wrote to Aracelli the next day. They apply to you. They apply to all of us. For when we no longer fear failure and embrace the messiness, we find true greatness.

Hey Sweetie,

Yesterday I got mad at you for having dirty hands from playing in the mud. That was wrong of me. Thank you for forgiving me last night.

Don't ever be afraid to play in the mud.

Don't ever be afraid to get your hands dirty.

Don't ever be afraid to have fun.

Don't ever be afraid to be creative, even if others think it's crazy.

Don't ever be afraid to play.

Life will sometimes tell you that to be successful you have to be serious. That is a lie.

God wants you to have fun. To play. To enjoy life.

Others will say:

"Follow the rules."

"Keep your head down."

"Don't speak up or stand out."

"Don't get your hands dirty."

Life might be easier that way. It might be less painful at times. It might even feel successful.

You'll be told to:

Do no wrong.

Never dare.

Stay clean.

Avoid pain.

But where is the joy in that?

Where is the thrill in a life of always clean hands?

Where is the triumph of the human spirit?

Some of these things might not make sense to you today. They might not make sense to you ten years from now. But I hope and pray that you will never let anyone, especially me, tell you not to get your hands dirty.

Don't let anyone tell you that your creativity is wrong. Or that your idea of play is too messy. Or that you should always follow the rules, because some rules are meant to be broken.

The life you are called to live will hurt sometimes. If I told you anything differently, it would be a lie.

Others will ridicule you. They will mock you. They will lie to you. They will try to drag you down to their level.

And when they do, remember what your Daddy told you.

Dirty hands are part of the fun.

Keep playing.

Keep laughing.

Keep failing.

Keep being creative.

Keep making messes.

Keep being you.

Love,

Daddy

Embrace the messiness of life.

Embrace it at home. Embrace it at work. Embrace it when you are looking for an elusive parking spot. Embrace it everywhere.

Keep making messes.

Keep being you.

*What mess are you glad you've made in life?*