



BROOKLYN_BORN

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I HATE reading! Does that shock you?

Friday, January 30, 2015

Of course it's not true. I'm here every day both reading and writing. I read mostly for information and to stay connected to the world. My taste in fiction leans toward historical novels.

What if your child came home from school and said "I hate reading. I'm just not good at it."
What would be your response?

What if he or she complained:

"Why do I have to read Shakespeare or those old classics or poetry. I'm never going to use that stuff."

Chances are that most parents would encourage the child and try to help them through their difficulty.

I doubt anyone would reply, "That's OK, I was never good at it either." You can find it all on video anyway. You can always hire an assistant to read the boring stuff for you"

Now substitute "math" for reading and think about the responses children get.

Why am I writing this on Spark?

Because yesterday I wrote about how I watch Judge Judy while doing my strength training. She often makes a point that she "can't do math."

In the pre-recorded program I watched yesterday, she spoke about her reply to an email question from a young woman who wanted to go to law school, but she was "bad at math." Judge Judy told her not to worry. All you need is an assistant to do the math for you.

I think I heard a similar story from a bankrupt movie star in trouble with the IRS.

Children's perceptions about food, nutrition and exercise are formed early as they absorb the attitudes of family and role models. Their attitudes toward learning and specific subjects in particular are similarly developed.

Should a parent's response to "I hate vegetables" be

"Oh, that's all right. I hate them too. Here, have a chicken nugget instead"

It's accepted that the American addiction to fast, processed food and aversion to exercise have resulted in our leading the world in obesity.

"I can't do math"

"You'll never use this math"

"You won't need math"

"Don't worry, I couldn't do math either"

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These are prevailing American attitudes too.

Could they be a reason we score so poorly in math assessment compared to the rest of the world?

Some years ago I read the book "Innumeracy" which is the math equivalent of illiteracy and how lack of understanding in math has led to poor decisions individually and in society.

The percentage of Americans in math and engineering programs has been falling for decades.

There are now millions of adults who do not understand, do not like or even believe math is irrelevant.

My only hope is that they keep those feelings to themselves and not pass them on to future generations.

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SWEDE_SU

oops... i'm one of those who.. well, learned tools, shall we say. i know how to make that excel spreadsheet work for me. i know the basics. but math was not my forte, and two out of my three children struggled with it; one was ultimately self-taught (he struggled with rules period), one chose the same career path as me, and the third is telling computers what to do, as one kids mom put it. words are my tool of choice, and my degree in english taught me how to find answers - including in math - and gave me my career, albeit a bit unusual. still, your blog really made me think - but then again, that's what i learned in college, how to think, if not math itself...

2315 days ago



ALICIA363

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! Not only do I agree with you on clothing size inflation, I am so with you on this soap box as well. BECAUSE I see it in the economic and finance realm. I heard somewhere that 80% of Americans are financially illiterate, and I believe it. Finances REQUIRE math. Yes, it's boring and repetitive. So is brushing your teeth.

I'm the assistant that's doing it for others. They need to thank their lucky stars that I'm ethical, because the ignorance I see (Yes, some of the 80% are calling the shots) is ... well, pick an adjective. It's scary.

Don't let your assistant do your thinking for you. And admit when you don't know enough about something, and go learn. Sorry, I will step off the soap box now. Thanks for easing some of the



pressure out of the cooker
2315 days ago



FANGFACEKITTY

I agree with you, and many of the posters, however it is not always the parent's fault or refusal as WALLAHALLA states :

"I hear complaints from parents all the time. The can not help their elementary children with math because they are incapable of doing it themselves. Instead of wanting a better life for their child, they "save face" by declaring it unnecessary and stupid. Hard to fix a child's attitude when their parents refuse to behave like caring adults."

I am one of those parents who could not help her children with math because once again the schools have changed how math is taught and INSIST that the children show their work in the "new" way. To those brought up in the "old math" these new methods are ridiculous and make no sense. I had to admit to my son's 1st grade teacher than even though I have an MBA I couldn't do 1st grade math and help my son with his homework!

Gone are the times tables and methods we learned as children. My children received many points off their assignments and wound up very confused because Teacher required one method but Mom could only show a different method. Most teachers refused to accept work done the "old" way.

True, many parents cannot "do it themselves" because they never bothered to learn how, but the bigger problem is a school's inflexibility when it comes to methods. Why does it matter what method the child uses to arrive at the correct answer ? Isn't the important part that the child does arrive at the correct answer, whether in the "old" way or the "new way" ? Because - to me at least - the point of teaching math is to get the child able to find a way to do it., not to get all hung up on method (as long as the method is valid & works).

I see too many younger people nowadays who can't do basic math without sitting down and drawing little boxes and whatall because that is how they were taught...rote memorization is "bad" yet thanks to those times tables we were forced to learn as children we can add/subtract/multiply/divide in our heads generally, to add up the bill, to calculate the tip, to know



what % we will save, to balance our checkbooks, etc. The schools today are turning out a generation of math illiterates to "save" the kids' self-esteem because the "old" math was "too hard".
2321 days ago



DDOORN

Attitudes and beliefs are very contagious, especially among family members where we are subjected to them day in and day out. Passing along unhealthy attitudes / beliefs about food and fitness can be fatal!

Or at least certainly life-limiting...

Don
2322 days ago



KAYATLANTA2010

Very interesting blog!
2323 days ago



1STBUCKETITEM

Great blog and wonderful comments! The "dumb downing" of America is deplorable. We used to export our engineering and technical expertise, now we have to import the engineers. When are

we going to wake up and stop making "excuses" for our ineptitude!



By the way, I also enjoy historical novels, especially old ones. Have you read any of Thomas B. Costain's works? After watching an old movie "the Black Rose" with Orson Welles & Tyrone Power

when I was in high school I really got hooked on historical novels.



2323 days ago



MARYJEANSL

No one in my family is ever allowed to say s/he can't do math! Not ever - and it has worked so far, at least insofar as all of my kids have more or less uncomplainingly learned math to algebra and beyond. However, my oldest, in spite of a 5 on the calculus AP exam and a 5 on the chemistry AP exam, declared that he hates math and science and got his degree in history. Ah well, at least he learned it before declaring he never wanted to see it again! And he has a job besides.
2323 days ago



MJREIMERS

Being a kid that did hear, "Our family just isn't good in math" and it taking years to overcome that "vice," I completely understand.

When our kids say that they don't understand why they have to do "x" work, we explain that sometimes it's not the content of the subject, but that it teaches certain problem solving skills or it promotes critical thinking.

I think the way we think can be a crutch and excuses to "why we can't." That's the great thing about Spark, we are here for each other and excuses won't work. There is gentle prodding and positive examples!

Hang in there!!
2323 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM

OMG... I hereby quote one of my computer science professors, from back in the 1980's: "If you're willing to let your software do your thinking for you, you'll have to settle for minimum wage."

While not exactly true, it *does* highlight the advantages and value of being able to tell the computer what to do, as opposed to having the computer tell YOU. I write software. And math/logic is essential to do so.

It's also essential to run a business. Determine how much paint you need to cover your walls, how much carpet to lay, how much detergent to put in your washing machine... we use math almost intuitively every time we slice a pie or make a recipe (although that's a rapidly disappearing skill, too... what, fractions of cups?)

But even those of us who love math can get lazy about calculation... and dependent on the amazing tools that geeks have invented. Spreadsheets and calculators and smart phones, oh, my!

p.s. Mom was the mathematician in the family and modeled the skill well for us all.
2323 days ago



DOVESEYES

Here in Australia they are talking about 'dumbing down' English because it is TOO hard for children and immigrants to learn.

Maybe they will get rid of maths altogether, we don't want to do hard things do we?



2323 days ago

**GIVEUP30**

the math one I use to say all I need is add, Subtraction, Multiplication, division and this is so true this is all I use today.. Keeping my books of the month bills and every thing I do. But I did try my best to learn Algebra, , all of them and did fine reading I just had to keep trying I had parents that would say go to the dictionary ...WHAT good was the dictionary when I looked up by sound....



English for you

2323 days ago

**WALLAHALLA**

I hear complaints from parents all the time. The can not help their elementary children with math because they are incapable of doing it themselves. Instead of wanting a better life for their child, they "save face" by declaring it unnecessary and stupid. Hard to fix a child's attitude when their parents refuse to behave like caring adults.

2323 days ago

**TERI-RIFIC**

I loved Algebra 1 and 2. I loved geometry. I got straight A's. I don't have a mathematical mind, though. A lot of times numbers just get mixed up in my head. I can easily make a mistake in calculating change! - even though intellectually I know how to calculate change. When I worked as a nurse one of the docs made up a computer program to calculate drip rates. After a year of this we lost power and no one (except me) could reliably figure out drip rates without the computer. This is not because I was good at math it was because I am bad and really had to work to get it into my head in the first place. I get nervous when I record my exercise minutes for the Daisies and always triple check my addition. I never took calculus and don't think the average person needs to. I think a mastery of basic arithmetic, algebra, and geometry is good for most people who are not in a technical field. Logic is a math field that should be taught more, too.

2323 days ago

**SYLPHINPROGRESS**

Intellectual flaccidity, lack of curiosity, how painful. Kanoe makes a fine point about kids using calculators instead of learning the way numbers work. It takes so much more effort to remain ignorant than to let things in.

2323 days ago

**PHOENIX1949**

I read you, pun intended. I've always loved reading with one exception -- directions other than maps. Not sure why the aversion.

2323 days ago

**WILSONWR**

I agree 100%! While I many not use my calculus and trigonometry skills every day (what little I still remember), I do use algebra skills all of the time. Math skills not only can help you in day to day life, but they also encourage logical thinking. Like you, I don't care for the comments that "I don't like math." It is discouraging to others and makes it sound ok to not have math skills. I talk to young adults about this all the time. Great blog!

2323 days ago

**GINIEMIE**

I hear you, I love reading, French, and now that I'm older History. Math has always been difficult for me, but I use it daily and when I was teaching I admitted that I got tutors for my college math classes. Did I learn something....yes! Do I use all of what i learned no but I use enough that I recognize the importance. I think we need to look at how we teach math. I actually had fun learning time tables, division, addition and subtraction. I had more trouble with some concept than others, but I use math to pay Erik's caregiver, to calculate how much fabric, yarn or paint I need. Some times having a difficulty with something can make us stronger-like learning to calculate calories of what we ate, how much we eat vs how much we exercise. Now I use SP to help with that, but that doesn't mean that I ignore my math skills....BTW I still use pencil and paper not the calculator. I

want my brain to be as sharp as the way I look in eight months.



2323 days ago

MILLEDGE2

One of the wonderful things my dad did for me: in 8th grade we had a pretty wacky math teacher and it just wasn't cool for the girls to like math. My dad heard me saying, "I hate math" in that whiny way 13-year-old girls have. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard you say. Don't ever say that again!" I didn't dare say it again and, of



course, I grew to secretly love it!

Guess this might apply to "I hate exercise" too?
2323 days ago



DR1939

I always reminded students that they used calculus to cross the street safely, so they really could do math. I also told them if they couldn't work with percentages they couldn't know how much they would save at a 15% off sale. Many, many students come to university needing remedial math and reading skills. I found that with the good math teachers almost everyone could conquer college level algebra and statistics. I also agree with KANOE10 that students need to visualize the way the numbers move around on the page.
2323 days ago



IFDEEVARUNS2

Well Said!

I still remember the day my math-averse youngest realized that math had taught her useful skills at the grocery store. Small victories!
2323 days ago



LINDAKAY228

I liked both math and reading (at least till I got to calculus LOL) but I tried and tried to learn the piano or Spanish and failed at both repeatedly. I am still so amazed at people who pick it up so easily. I had a friend who could listen to a song and pick out the music to play on the piano and she sang beautifully. I was a little jealous of her because I loved music but no ability.
2323 days ago



CD4114015

I loved this blog! I have been saying this very thing myself for a long time. I did love math as did my dad and did one of my two sons....it's a shame nowadays how many things kids get out of school NOT knowing. And then through all programs and advertisements they are told, "you DESERVE this and that" (like 400,000.00 houses when they work at Walmart). You struck a nerve



with me on this blog...can you tell?
2324 days ago



MISCHAKEO

As a teacher of young kids, I do not like the way that students are being allowed to use calculators instead of figuring the problem themselves. I taught 5th graders who could not add or subtract or multiply or divide without calculators. I agree with you about the importance of math..and that concept of innumeracy occurring. That could be why we use foreign engineers.



2324 days ago



FITNIK2020

Agree. Very valid points . Here in Toronto I see an increase in the no. of women in Engineering...is it a trend here ! My English degrees have been of limited use in the workforce...& actually have worked against me. Math is fundamental .
2324 days ago



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