**Clarion Review**

Family & Relationships

**Allow Your Children to Fail if You Want Them to Succeed**

Avril P. Beckford
978-1-4259-7648-4
Four Stars (out of Five)

Today's children are overstimulated overbooked overpraised and underprepared to handle adversity in an emotionally intelligent way. Doctor Avril P. Beckford a well-qualified pediatrician has seen enough to present a cogent plan for course correction.

Two types of parents breed consistently negative results: overindulgent rat-racers and neurotic hoverers. The former walk around with cell phones grafted to their ears and shower children with luxuries in place of their own availability the latter tend to remove so many challenges that a child has no toolbox for coping when they must later pursue their own achievements.

A loosening of reins on the day to day level is recommended. Responsibility in children is first constructed by allowing them to make choices and then expecting them to adapt to the consequences. While it may be hard for parents to resist fixing homework peppered with errors the hands-off approach clarifies to teachers which learning strategies still need reinforcement. If even savvy adults stumble then surely children cannot be prevented from missing their goals at times. Modeling mature reactions to failure is key. "Knowledge and accomplishment without character are void. The best lessons in life are learned when we challenge ourselves fail and start again with courage and resilience…"

Although the author mentions a lack of social justice as a substantial stress factor her examples involve problems and solutions most specific to the upper and professional classes. Some advice requires action beyond the financial means of the majority of families. City residents who can't safely allow their offspring to go exploring on their own are advised to take vacations to idyllic resort towns and balance work with home time. The fact that single parent households are quite common in America is mentioned but then dropped without being properly addressed.

Born in South Africa with faculty stints at Penn State and Morehouse University Doctor

Beckford has twenty years experience as a pediatrician. She is an active officer of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Georgia chapter. The author states that she is an idealist. Her life is organized in line with her principles maximizing effectiveness in both family and professional spheres. She seems earnest. Even so anyone who has ever batted cleanup with nappies and wipes will be forced to crack a grin when she says: "…changing a diaper is a wonderful opportunity and a privilege…"

For a slim volume there is a fair amount of help here although the value will vary according to the lifestyle of the readers' families. Those most directly addressed are likelier to be found in tax shelters than homeless shelters. Moms and dads who need a reminder that parenting is not the same as shopping can straighten out their priorities by heeding Doctor Beckford. Although issues of all developmental stages are touched on this book is most useful to parents of elementary students.