Industriousness

I. Nature and importance of Industriousness

A. What is industriousness? The virtue of working well. It is a very American virtue (as in Horatio Alger), but is needed for life in general.

B. Its importance for life

1. Throughout life a person has to work (unless you are fabulously rich); success in life requires that a person work well, at least to a minimal degree.

2. Some people are extraordinarily talented and can get by with little work, especially when they are young, but these same people often fail to learn to work well and as life goes on they experience troubles.

3. To have formed a habit(s) of working well will allow a person to support his family, make a real contribution to society, and keep him from falling into many temptations that come from idleness. It will also allow him to sanctify his work, which is its deepest meaning (you need to work well if you are to offer your work to God).

C. What elements makeup industriousness?

1. Punctuality; starting on time. This is often an issue of temperance, in that you have to leave off doing something else that you like doing.

2. Perseverance, especially when it becomes more difficult. This is an aspect of fortitude.

3. Neatness and Order: keeping things in their places; cleaning up as you go; doing the distinct tasks in the proper order, etc. Being able to plan ahead without having to rely on deadline-generated adrenalin.

4. Finishing tasks: getting all the last details done and getting the finished product out the door to whoever is waiting for it.
5. Teamwork: being able to coordinate your work with others. Most jobs involve this and a great number of men are very bad at this.

D. Work is the norm, not play. This is something boys need to learn early in life.

1. Most of people’s time is spent in productive activity. This is normal.

2. Play is a respite from work, so that we can recoup our energies. We do not work in order to play, but vice versa.

3. We work to have leisure which is different from play (has a contemplative aspect to it).

4. To treat play with the seriousness of work is a deformation (lack of the virtue of eutrapelia).

5. Obviously boys need to play, but they need to learn its proper role in life.

II. Inculcating the virtue of industriousness

A. Example of Father

1. They need to see their father work, if possible in his workplace.

2. It is good for boys to hear about their father’s work; the problems he faces and how he overcomes them. Normally their only access to the world of professional work is their father. They like hearing about it and it increases their respect for their father.

3. The father should not complain about work or act as if he dislikes work and can’t wait to be done with it. This gives a negative impression of work.

B. Making sure the children have real work to do

1. They need real work if they are to develop the virtue of working well. Virtues are formed by repeated actions of the good type of behavior. You cannot learn to work and develop these habits without real work. That means things that have real consequences for life (as opposed to games where the outcome does not really matter).
2. Their own studies. These are serious activities with serious consequences. They need to be help to clear times of study and they need to be held to high standards in their studies (i.e., good grades).

3. Household Chores

4. Earning money. A paying job (especially with someone other than the parents), is an excellent school of virtues. Keeping children short on money (i.e. giving them little money) is a good incentive for them to look for paying jobs (it usually takes some imagination).

5. Other activities that are serious and involved work, such as volunteering.

C. Work before play

1. Children need to learn that you do your work before you play. They should certainly play, but they should do so after doing their work. Just like real life. In this way they learn unconsciously that work has priority over play.

2. They should not feel guilty about playing, which can happen if parents are not careful (parents can sometimes give the impression that you should be working all the time). They should have the sense that when your work is done, you can go out and play or do whatever you want.