

CHORES: IT'S EASIER TO DO IT MYSELF!

I saw a cartoon once that said, "Excusing children of responsibilities is child abuse that does not show up until adulthood."

Do your children have chores? And do they complete their chores without reminders from you? Completing chores will help children to develop responsibility and accountability. Inevitably, when I talk to a young person who is not following through with homework or school work, I'll find a student who is not being held accountable for chores at home.

BENEFITS OF CHORES

Accomplishing chores on a regular basis instills a sense of accomplishment in kids and can also enhance their self-esteem. When parents have to constantly remind their kids to finish chores, kids may learn to expect reminders from teachers, and only complete assignments when reminded or nagged.

Completing chores will also teach children how to be sympathetic to other family members. Letting kids know that you appreciate their efforts because it helps you out and saves you time will help teach them to be responsive

to others and considerate of the needs of others.

CONSIDER REWARDS

Consider giving kids an allowance as a tangible reward for completing chores. An allowance can help them learn the value of money, and with a little help from you, they can



begin to learn how to budget it to meet their needs. Learning to make money and to use money wisely can create for kids a feeling that they can make things happen in their lives. (Many teenagers simply *let* things happen in their lives rather than actually trying to *make* things happen.)

The amount of an allowance

needs to be comfortable for you, and meaningful for your child. Start with a small amount, increasing it as your child grows up. As the allowance amount increases, your child should be expected to assume more responsibility for his or her needs.

Kids should also be expected to do some work around the house without pay, simply because they are part of a family.

TIPS

Consider the following tips in setting up chores:

1. Write a list of all the possible chores that need to be done in the family, and as a group, divide up chores.
2. Don't discourage volunteers. If someone would rather clean a bathroom than wash dishes, try to honor that request.
3. List the chores on a chart and display the chart. Kids can mark off completion of items on the chart. If you have a home computer, make up a weekly chart; put your child in charge of printing it out and updating it.

Continue the chart throughout high school, as it helps kids to remember the chores, serves

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as a method of accountability, and cuts down on the tendency for kids to say they “forgot.”

4. Reward the completion of chores. Consider giving kids a certain amount of money as allowance (simply because they are part of the family) and additional money for each chore completed.

A “when/then” policy may also be helpful. If all chores are done on time, then all is well, but if a certain number of chores are not completed, then the offender loses a privilege (such as watching TV that

night) and/or goes to bed early.

5. For chores that may be done any time during the week, pick a certain day by which they must be completed. Consequences for not finishing tasks by the deadline could include completion the following day without pay. It's important not to revert to nagging and reminding your child, but to state the rules and the consequences, and then follow through.

I remember when our son was not doing his chores during his

senior year in high school. We set a new rule that if the chores were not done by Thursday night, then he could not go out on the weekend. His first question to me about this new rule was, “Could you remind me?” I said no, and several minutes later while in his room, I noticed he had posted two signs in his room, one on his window and one on his door, reminding himself to do his chores. This is the goal you are striving for—to help your kids to become responsible for themselves, instead of depending on reminders from authority figures.

A CHALLENGE TO YOU:

1. Determine whether or not you have gotten into the habit of nagging and reminding your kids to complete chores.
2. Set up chores for your kids following the tips given, and/or revise your current system to make it more effective.

