

TRAINING YOUR KIDS TO DO CHORES

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We have just returned from a trip to the South Pacific and while in Australia, we stayed with a very good friend, a single mother of a 22 month-old boy. One morning she was getting ready for day-care and did something she had never thought of doing before. She asked Joshua to take his diaper and throw it in the trash. He went out to the kitchen and found a plastic bag. He put the diaper in the bag, screwed it up and threw it into the trash. She couldn't believe it. He had done exactly as he had seen her do hundreds of times before. This child is not even two years old! Obviously from now on, this will be his little task and by being given praise for it, will perform his task willingly.

There are a number of reasons why parents do not train their kids. They may think the child is too young to learn a task, or that it would be quicker for an adult to do it. Some parents do everything for their kids because they feel they have some value within the household by doing all the household chores. Wrong!

Not training your kids to perform tasks is a disservice to you, to them and their future families. We have a friend who has done everything for her husband and boys who are now adults. None of the men in the house make any contribution to household tasks. Their mother still makes their beds, does all their laundry, ironing, cooks all the meals and does the dishes. She cleans up after them and feeds any friends they bring home. She has turned herself into an unpaid maid and her family takes her for granted. The message she has given them is that household chores 'are women's work'.

Two to three-year-olds can be trained to do simple tasks like making their beds (pulling up the comforter and straightening their pillows), putting their toys away, cleaning their teeth, wiping down tables, washing themselves, brushing their hair, putting their shoes and socks on, learning to wait, listening to others, not talking or interrupting, sitting still, sharing, and learning not to touch things. They can learn to sweep the floor and put things in the trash. Boys and girls both need to learn to perform these tasks.

Children from three to five years old are capable of keeping their rooms tidy, folding washing, stacking the dishwasher and putting some dishes away, setting the table, cooking toast, getting their own cereal, and putting their own dirty laundry in the basket. They can also learn good manners, respectfulness, and they learn to take consequences for their own actions. They can learn to be kind to animals and the environment, and show love to other people.

It is true that kids learn by watching others. This can be a good or a bad thing. It is imperative that parents take time to not only show kids what is

expected of them, but to make them practice until they do it right. All family members need to contribute to family life and that includes toddlers. Training and encouragement are the keys.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.