In Just Five...Children and Helping at Home

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"As a busy parent, why is it important to teach children about chores and helping at home? Isn’t it easier for me to do them so that we have some time together after a long school and work day?"

While this may appear useful, having children contribute to a greater cause (the family) and extend their own personal competencies through actions and deeds provides valuable lessons in cooperation and self-sufficiency.

Here are some tips to get started or to add to your family’s ideas:

Match tasks to age and abilities
- In early childhood, make a game of matching, sorting and categorizing with laundry, unbreakable utensils and dishes and returning items to labeled bins or shelves.
- With school-aged children, provide real-life experiences with pet care and feeding, basic meal planning and preparation for a “kid’s meal night” and home care such as dusting or vacuuming.
- ‘Tweens and teenagers can take more responsibility for their school and recreational schedules and personal tasks such as laundry and making lunches.

Compliment, not criticize
- Discuss and agree to reasonable expectations about what tasks are done and how they are to be performed.
- Expect in the beginning - especially with younger children - that task completion may take several attempts.
- Offer suggestions as needed, and recognize effort and achievements.

Highlight family contributions and rewards
- Children may not fully realize the extent of chores done by their parents, especially if they occur after bedtime.
- A family chart for identifying assigned chores, or a “job jar” where an individual or set of tasks are listed on pieces of paper and selected weekly by each family member, can help in rotating home chores.
- Set a goal for chore completion and reward the entire family with a special outing or other selection.

Interested in additional ideas? Visit “Winning the Chore War” or go to http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/supporting/resources/chorewar.cfm (English version) or http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/supporting/resources/ganando.cfm (Spanish version).

Do you have questions about other family and child care resources? Contact Caryn Jung, MS, Senior Coordinator by email or by calling (520) 621-9870. For information about elder care, contact Jan Sturges, M.Ed., LPC, Caregiving Coordinator by email or by calling (520) 626-4770.

"In Just Five" was developed especially for University of Arizona faculty, staff and students with busy work, school, home and family lives. Designed to be quickly read in about five minutes, rotating tips and strategies will highlight practical ideas and resources in support of caring for yourself, your loved ones, and your work and personal life roles.

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