

# HELPING AT HOME

Expecting children to help out at home helps them feel useful and become valued members of their family

There is no need to overburden children with jobs, but a sensible allocation of chores according to their age, study requirements and interests is not only good training but a great help for parents as well.

Children generally belong to their social groups in one of two ways. Either they belong in positive ways through the contribution they make to its well-being or through negative ways such as misbehaviour or being self-centred. When children are denied opportunities to belong to their family through contribution then they will often become self-centred or find their place through poor behaviour. Expecting children to help out at home helps them feel useful and become valued members of their family.

Many parents, however, have difficulty getting their children to help. Some spend so much time nagging children to do jobs that they often give up asking and expect little of them. There is no need to overburden children with jobs, but a sensible allocation of chores according to their age, study requirements and interests is not only good training but a great help for parents as well.

It is wise to expect children from a young age to help without being paid. By all means provide children with regular pocket-money, but don't link it chores. Doing chores in exchange for pocket-money develops in children the notion of what's in it for me, which is a self-centred view of life.

## GET THEM TO HELP

### HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU DEVELOP YOUR FAMILY INTO A TEAM OF HELPERS:

- 1. Give children realistic jobs rather than tasks that simply keep them busy.** Kids can sense it when parents give them jobs to keep them busy. Make sure the jobs you give make a real contribution to their own and the family's well-being.
- 2. Balance the personal chores with family jobs.** Involve children in choosing their jobs. Rotate the unpleasant tasks frequently.
- 3. Place the more arduous or difficult tasks on a roster.** The children can refer to it when needed, which takes the load off you and removes the need to remind them.
- 4. Use Grandma's principle\* to ensure their helping jobs are done.** That is, make sure jobs are completed before mealtimes and pleasant activities such as watching television.
- 5. Avoid doing jobs for children.** When children get the message that no one will do their jobs for them they will be more likely to help out.
- 6. Show your appreciation for their help.** Let them know that their contribution to the family is valued. If you do it often enough they may even show their appreciation for your help in return!

**7. Make sure they do the whole job, not half a job.** Don't accept half-hearted efforts or half-completed jobs. If you think your child is capable of putting the cat food back in the fridge and placing the spoon in the dishwasher then insist that he or she does the whole job. That is what is valued in the world of work, which they will eventually enter.

**8. Rebrand the term 'chore' as 'help'.** The term 'chore' definitely has an image problem. Mention the word and children turn up their noses in horror. Use the term 'help' as it is easier on the ear and really does indicate what you want from your kids.

**\*Grandma's principle** – putting activities in the right order. You get the bad things (making your bed) out of the way before you do the good things (watching TV or playing games).

## KEEP IN MIND

- 1.** Separate helping at home from pocket money. Expect them to help without being paid.
- 2.** Children can do a mixture of self-help activities and family jobs.
- 3.** Use rosters to place responsibility onto children to remember.

