

RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

Getting children to help without paying them a cent!

Children generally belong to their families in two ways— either through positive contribution or through self-centredness, which often shows itself through misbehaviour or helplessness.

Effective parents provide real opportunities for children to contribute to their family's and their own well-being so they feel valued for what they bring to the family, rather than what they can take. We often call these 'jobs' or 'chores', but it is better to call it 'help'. It is just a little rebranding, but the term 'help' better reflects what it is about.

"What does my child do around the house that other people rely upon?" is a question we need to ask ourselves constantly.

Training for contribution and independence starts from a young age and continues into adolescence. Developmentally, children are ready around two years of age to learn the skills of independence so it makes sense to begin these habits early.



Encouraging a positive contribution is one of the best ways to promote self-confidence. Parents who teach children to do jobs for themselves and provide opportunities for input into family decisions related to age, issue and interest send a powerful message that they believe that their children are capable. Actions speak louder than words.

Children are capable of doing complex tasks if we show them how. It is useful to break complex jobs into simple tasks. For instance, a young child can begin making a bed by arranging teddies and pillows, progressing to smoothing out a doona and so on.

Children will often make mistakes when they assume greater responsibility so expectations need to be in line with children's capabilities. Parents need to accept their genuine efforts and also be supportive when they make mistakes.

It is difficult sometimes to know when to allow children to assume more responsibility for their own well-being. Parents need to continuously assess children's capabilities and consider letting go when they appear ready. **"What am I doing now that my child can do for himself?"** is a challenging question for many parents.

The most effective way to promote responsibility in children is to give them responsibility. When we give them more responsibility we are making ourselves redundant, which is the main aim of parenting!



TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To give children the opportunity to contribute at home:

1. Establish a weekly **HELP roster**. Lists have the advantage of placing responsibility on to children to perform the helping task – without you reminding them. Involve your children in establishing the roster.
2. Think about what you are doing for children regularly that they can **do for themselves**. Identify one thing and give that responsibility to your children.
3. Ask children to prepare or help you make at least one evening or main **meal** a week.
4. Identify a helping task (e.g emptying the dishwasher, taking out the garbage) where your children can take turns being **The BOSS** for a week. They can make up the rules for that week about how the task is organised.

ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit www.parentingideas.com.au

QUOTE

'I was taught very early that I would have to depend entirely upon myself; that my future lay in my own hands.'

DARIUS OGDEN MILLS

WHAT'S YOUR CHILD LIKE?

DOES YOUR CHILD MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE FAMILY?

DOES HE

1. Take responsibility for a reasonable number of tasks that others rely on? **Yes [2] No [0]**
2. Develop his self-help skills and willingly take on independence? **Yes [2] No [0]**
3. Like to have a say in what happens in the family without being overbearing and bossy? **Yes [2] No [0]**
4. Willingly help others when they need it?

Yes [2] No [0]

5. Volunteer to help even though he may not receive any recognition? **Yes [2] No [0]**

SCORE:

- 10:** A positive contributor! Leadership potential.
- 6-8:** A willing participant but may need some prompting.
- 0-4:** What does he do that someone else relies on?