



Teenage Chores and Responsibilities

Are you allowing your teen to develop responsibilities

Today's teenagers face a massive amount of input from various sources. Television, radio, the Internet, their peers, and many other distractions are part of their everyday lives. The amount of visual and auditory stimuli is at an all-time high. Almost every second of every day kids are exposed to a multitude of things that can interest them and take their attention away from what is really important in life. Being a part of a functioning family unit is important and oftentimes not thought of in today's fast food, computer and video game culture.

As parents, one of our most important jobs is to make ourselves redundant. To do this we need to help our children develop responsibility so they can become independent young adults. By requiring our children to take part in the chores that keep the house running we are providing them with many opportunities to develop lifelong skills, assist self-esteem, learn organisational and time management skills and really feel part of the family unit.

Sometimes when a parent figure asks a child to help with a specific chore around the house, like taking out the rubbish, the child makes excuses that he/she is too busy to help out. Teenagers often use having homework to finish or a test to study for as excuses to not do chores but realistically the chores often only take a few minutes and completing the chore is a necessary part of being responsible inside a family unit. An easy fix for most chore related problems is to rotate the chores on a weekly or monthly basis. This way, the excuse of being bored with the same chore cannot happen. With multiple children this is applicable. With a single child, the parent must help out and lead by example.

A common mistake many parents make is using money as a way to get their children to do chores. It is best if the children are given an allowance that is not specifically tied to completion of the chores. It is important because everyone in the household must pitch in when things need to be done around the house. It is simply part of being a family member. By using money to foster behavioural change, parents are not utilizing the best way to get someone to do something – it is related to bribing which is one of the Seven Deadly Habits of External Control, as discussed by William Glasser. We want them to complete their chores to help them develop responsibility and skills that they will take into adulthood, not because they are being rewarded with money.

A great way to get started is to compile a list of what needs to be done around the house. Things like mowing the lawn, feeding any pets, taking out the garbage, cooking dinner, cleaning the dishes, sweeping the floors or using the vacuum, on and on the list goes. There are many fun things that the family can do together and this will, in turn, lead to a stronger bond when it is time for the



young ones to out on their own. When one child sets up the table and another helps prepare the food, this develops a great synergy and consistency within the household. Asking the children what they want to do is another way to build a feeling of teamwork. If they have a choice in the matter, they will not feel like they are being forced to do something they do not want to do.

What are age appropriate chores?

Following is a list of chores that are appropriate for different age groups:

11-12 year olds

- Operate the washing machine and dryer
- Change own bed and put out laundry
- Wash the car
- Sweep or use vacuum
- Cook and prepare an easy meal for the family
- Put out the garbage
- Set the table
- Clear away the dishes
- Stack and unstack the dishwasher

Teenagers

- All of the above, plus:
- Care of animals: feeding, walking, cleaning up after
- Make and organise own lunch
- Cook a weekly meal for the family
- Arrange own transport for extracurricular activities
- Responsible for own finances & budget (with guidance - for things outside of school)
- Responsible for clothing purchases within agreed upon budget

Remember that kids face a chore learning curve and that they learn at their rate, not yours. Once a chore is assigned or selected, show your child how to do it. If your child makes a mistake, don't rant and rave. Be calm and show him again how to do it, and tell him that the next time, he'll do it right. And when you see him doing it right later on, don't simply accept the result as something he's supposed to do. Praise him for his effort and doing it well. Too many parents notice when their children do something wrong; not enough notice when they do it right. "Catch them doing something right!"



Your action steps for this month

- Sit down with the family and create an extensive list of how the house runs
- Ask each member of the family if they think the current division of labour is fair
- Ask each family member to nominate chores that they would like to be responsible for on a daily or weekly basis
- Often it is best to rotate chores on a weekly or monthly basis
- Make an agreement with each family member on what they intend to do and how well and how often it will be completed
- Always clarify what is required to complete the chore

"Where you find yourself tomorrow is a function of the positive decisions and actions you take today."

Akin A. Awolaja