

Section 2: Inspiring Kids To Clean

When do our kids finally transition into that self-sustaining adult age where they are responsible for their own behaviors? That’s the big question for most of us who are raising children or grandchildren! The World Health Organization studied the different ages that children from various countries became functional adults. Researchers determined that most kids from technologically advanced countries outside the United States reached adulthood between 16-17 years of age. In the United States, however, we are still coddling our kids well into their early twenties!

So perhaps we need to begin some serious, more focused parenting efforts much earlier than we currently do. A professor once said, “Students come into my office looking for a place to plug in their umbilical cords. Parents fail to teach their children how to get along in the world...young people have to learn self-discipline [after] they

leave home.”

Some of us spend more time planning a two-week vacation, buying just the right gifts for Christmas, or getting the car detailed than training our child to organize his room, clean a toilet or cook a meal.

And the job list we so carefully put together that one month when we were really pumped up on perfect parenting? To our kids it was no different than hanging a “most wanted” sign at the post office! They looked at it, shrugged, shook their head, even cringed—but they supposed it wasn’t really their problem—so they walked away.

At least half of our parental frustration from earlier years of failed job lists was probably our own fault because we simply didn’t follow through enough times. Or maybe we didn’t take the time to train our kids by working alongside them. Perhaps we showed minimal interest in the whole homemaking process ourselves and we

got a job out of the kids that reflected the same. Some of us thought our kids

weren't ready for tasks. The reasons are many.

Why don't kids do as many household jobs nowadays?

- Parents have condos and apartments where yard maintenance is provided
- Parents use money to buy convenience products that make scratch cooking next to non-existent
- Parents remember how much they hated chores when younger and want to spare their kids
- Parents tend to be more lenient and less authoritarian
- Parents don't expect immediate obedience—they negotiate with kids
- Parents want their kids to be friends more than children
- Parents feel work may traumatize kids
- Parents are affluent and buy cleaning services
- Parents are gone long hours so they don't want to waste what few hours they have together fighting with the kids to clean when they could be “having fun” as a family
- Parents get fatigued using lists, charts, files, cards, wheels to set up jobs.
- Parents don't follow through and are not consistent with children on their jobs.
- Parents don't make time to train kids by working alongside them
- Kids are over-scheduled. There's barely enough hours for homework, lessons, practices and dinner
- Kids try to put parents on guilt trips
- Kids claim they can't do the task at hand—it's too hard
- Kids are too busy with their own friends and on the computer
- Kids friends don't have to do the work, so why should they?
- Kids have many distractions which make them focus on other things
- Kids think they do more than their own share already
- Kids say parents don't like the way they do things anyway
- Kids don't like the kinds of jobs they get assigned

When you think about it, household care and cleaning is one of the few ways parents have left to bond with and teach their children necessary delayed gratification skills. They do a job—they get rewards: praise, a cleaner room, more confidence and control, and a good feeling. A tidy house can be a sideline advantage compared to what the child gains from the cleaning experience.

Strategy & logic of cleaning. The psychology of it all! Children need to make the connection that our homes are something more real than just a load of 2 x 4's nailed together with some shingles slapped on top. We want our homes to be places where we really live, not just a glorified bed/breakfast stop. The home is something which lives to serve and grow the family. Tell children to think of the home as our larger body. "If we get sticky fingers from eating, we wash them off and it feels better; if we step

in the mud, we can change out of our soggy shoes; when our play clothes get sweaty and dirty we dump them in the washing machine. Likewise, our house needs to have a bath and get cleaned up sometimes. It doesn't like having a dirty floor, smudgy windows or a ring around its toilets. We have to help it get clean, just like us!"

A healthy home is a clean home, and if we can keep it clean we'll all feel better. Tell children, "If germs are whisked away, we'll get fewer colds. When we vacuum, and dust we have fewer allergies. If we clean corners and cobwebs, we'll see fewer bugs," and so forth. Take a digital picture

When our home is in order, friends like coming over. "They want to play at our house when books, games, adventure toys and dolls are in their own buckets, bags or on shelves. Friends don't like to dig through messes. They would rather go to somebody else's house!

of a clean room, and post it so the child will know the standard of clean that is acceptable in your house. It's simply embedded in a mother's genes that clean is good, and dirty is bad but this concept must be gradually

transferred to our children.