

WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN ENJOY CHORES

By: Psychology today

Chores are often thought of as tiring and tedious. They are seen as the duties one must complete before doing something that's actually fun, relaxing on the couch, or getting privileges or an allowance.

It's not that chores aren't good for children. Research has found that giving children chores helps set them up for success in life. Using data collected over 25 years, Marty Rossman from the University of Mississippi found that children who had done chores since the age of 3 or 4 were more likely to be well-adjusted, have better relationships with friends and family, and be more successful in their careers.

Still, thinking of tasks as "chores" can take the fun out of them. Do your chores! Did you do your chores yet? I expect you to do your chores! It sounds so negative, like a punishment.

Thinking about chores as "meaningful roles" or "special jobs" helps put the natural joy back into them. Young kids tend to love jobs. While kids can learn to do tasks for themselves, such as clear their plates or get dressed, it's also important for them to do jobs that help a collective. Children are naturally motivated by helping family members, friends, or even strangers. They love using their power and expertise in unique ways for the good of others.

CHILDREN LOVE BEING OF SERVICE TO OTHERS.

Children like to help out and help others. They could have the “job” of helping the family, Children could match the family’s socks or put away the silverware (both of which help with pre-math sorting skills). They could be in charge of opening packages/boxes with their scissors (which strengthen fine motor skills). They could put muffin cups in holders while baking, pass out / serve food with tongs, squirt ketchup for everyone, or squirt water on tables and scrub them (which improve fine motor skills or pincer grasp).

CHILDREN LIKE TO MOVE THEIR BODIES.

John Ratey, author of A User's Guide to the Brain, describes exercise as "Miracle-Gro for the brain." Children enjoy raking leaves, shovelling woodchips, and vacuuming (all of which strengthen gross motor skills and build muscles). They like running laundry piles up to various rooms, sprinting to another part of a house to fetch paper towels.

CHILDREN LIKE TO HAVE OWNERSHIP, INDEPENDENCE, AND A SENSE OF POWER.

A need for power and control is one of four psychological human needs.

Children love to be “in charge.” They could be the D.J., survey people for their favourite music, and choose a playlist for the family and for guests who come over. They could have the job of greeting visitors and getting them a glass of water (which builds social/entertaining skills). They could have the job of checking the weather in the morning and telling younger siblings to wear long sleeves/short sleeves, pants/shorts (which helps with science).

BRING FUN ADD-ONS.

The smallest add-ons can make jobs way more fun. If a child's job is to wash windows, adding a small stepladder makes it more interesting. If their job is to clean up their toys, add some music. If their job is to write thank you cards, give them some stickers or stampers. If they are helping you at the grocery shopping, give them a clipboard with a checklist to mark things off when you get them.

ASK FOR THEIR IDEAS.

A key difference between feeling like a job is engaged work (not grunt work) is if you've been given some input. If it's a child's job to decorate for a party, ask for their ideas - do they want to blow up balloons, hang streamers, make a lot of little signs, or make one big banner? If they are going to help garden, what top 2 vegetables do they want to plant? Would they rather water them in the morning or before bed?

ROTATE

Having a rotating chart where children do different jobs each week prevents boredom and disengagement. For example, they could switch off between setting the table, sweeping after dinner, and clearing the table.

THANK AND REINFORCE.

Just like adults, children appreciate being thanked. "Thanks for helping me bag up these leaves. The way you stomped them down helped us fit so many extra leaves in the bags." "Thanks for washing the dishes tonight. I didn't think you were going to get that goo off the frying pan, but your elbow grease really worked!"