

Parenting the Positive Discipline Way

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4 Easy Steps to Encouraging Contribution

“All of the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today” – Swedish proverb

This saying reminds me that what I choose to give my time and attention to today will impact what's possible tomorrow. When we're in the thick of parenting, it can be tempting to look for short cuts (perhaps masquerading as “efficiencies”), especially as the pace of life just seems to get faster all the time. Sometimes, in our haste, we forget that growth can't be rushed.

“You're 6 now – it's time to go out and get a job!”

Well, not exactly.

At the same time that we sometimes push our children to do things earlier and faster, we forget that kids need repeated exposure and practice to build skills (plus developmental readiness for a given task). And, if they can't do it fast enough or well enough at first, we sometimes move in to take over for them. This often happens with helping around the house when they're small. Too often we shoo young children out of the way when they want to help because we can do it faster without their “help”. But accepting and encouraging their efforts and taking time for training is a better bet. When we take time for training, it encourages kids to contribute. It not only helps them learn, but keeps 'em coming back for more as they feel good about being able to help the family.

Here's a simple process for teaching that's used in Positive Discipline.

1. Show them how to do it (& explain – few words)
2. Do it with them
3. Let them try it alone (be nearby to help – but help only if asked)
4. Let them do it alone when they're ready

So whether it's a toddler who wants to help unload the dishwasher, or an 8 year old who wants to cook dinner, take time for training. Have a 'tween who wants to learn to use power tools? Start by explaining and working together. As their skill evolves, let them try on their own. (Always supervise as appropriate).

It can be challenging to teach, implement, and maintain routines for sharing family work or jobs. Fortunately, there are lots of Positive Discipline tools that help make chores less of a chore for everyone.

In time, our kids will be able to save money for college and marry for love, since they'll be capable of cooking for themselves and doing their own laundry. And in the meantime, by welcoming their efforts to help where they can, and teaching needed skills along the way, we'll be sending a strong message of love, appreciation, and confidence.

What chores/tasks do your kids help with on a regular basis? How do you keep things running smoothly?

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