

Fostering Personal Responsibility in Your Child

It's no secret that kids live in the moment. Their responsibilities are limited, so consequences and preparing for the future are often difficult concepts to grasp. A child may procrastinate or avoid homework altogether because he/she would rather be having fun, and many school subjects seem designed only to torture him/her. Acquainting your child with consequences is an important step toward personal responsibility and the benefits of hard work. We want to give our children everything they desire, but it's more important to give them the skills that will help them successfully navigate life.

Create a homework chart: For every day that your child completes his/her homework, he/she gets closer to a prize. Every time your child fails to complete his/her homework satisfactorily, assign a chore. Your child will come to realize that discipline and hard work yield far better results than laziness. Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool.

Give a Conditional Allowance: Too many children today just get an allowance every week- there's no such thing as a free ride in the real world, and children who learn this early are much less likely to be spoiled and entitled. If your child wants an allowance, he/she needs to earn it. Doing chores will give your child a sense of accomplishment, and will make he/she more careful with money he/she's earned, as opposed to money that Mom or Dad just hands out. Good money management is an important skill, especially in this difficult economy and an allowance is a good way to introduce the subject.

Discuss dreams and aspirations with your child: When your child realizes that future success depends on the success they cultivate today, he will be more motivated to do well. Try to tie in the skills being taught in school to your child's dream career. If your child wants to be a police officer and hates English class, explain that a big part of being a police officer is writing up reports that will be read and reviewed by superiors, as well as judges and lawyers. Poor writing skills will make this job much more difficult and possibly hold him/her back.

Get your child a pet: Caring for a pet is a great way to teach your child about personal responsibility. Your child's age and maturity need to be taken into account, but there are many low-maintenance pets available, from goldfish to hermit crabs to hamsters. If you're worried your child will lose interest and you will end up caring for the pet, you may wish to start with something very simple to care for. Once your child has proven his/her dedication to your satisfaction, you can discuss a more permanent addition to the family.