Choosing the Right Kind of Chores for an ADHD Child

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ADHD and Family Chores

We all know that household chores are a necessary but dreaded part of everyday family life. In a “perfect” world, all members of the family would be assigned their own weekly and/or daily chores and they would be more than willing to do them!

However, we also know that this is not always the case. Grumbling and griping are commonplace in any modern family. Siblings invariably complain that their sisters and/or brothers aren’t pulling their weight while they have to do absolutely “everything”! Sound familiar?

Mom and Dad often get to the point in which they think it is much easier to just do the chores themselves. Then, life would be a whole lot simpler and more peaceful. However, in actual fact, you are doing your child a distinct disservice if they are not assigned their share of jobs around the house. It is a proven fact that having chores to complete teaches a child self-discipline and responsibility and chores help to develop independent living skills.

When a child has ADHD, doing jobs around the house can actually assist in counteracting behavioral problems associated with the condition. Completing chores can make a child with ADHD feel like an important, contributing family member.

Often, an ADHD child experiences more frustrations, failures and life disappointments than an average child does. Thus, it is important that he or she knows that they really are needed at home. It is also very important to pick appropriate chores that a child with ADHD has a good chance of succeeding at in order to build his or her self-esteem.

Choosing the Right Kind of Chores for an ADHD Child:

When you are assigning household tasks, always remember to consider the child’s age and interests as well as his or her ability to perform the chore. Then, teach your child how to complete the task by breaking it down into small, easy to manage steps.

Take the example of showing a 7 year old child with ADHD how to set the table for dinner:

- Count out the total number of plates required. Do this together.
- Show your son or daughter where the plates should go on the table.
- Count out the total number of knives, forks and spoons needed.
- Together, put the utensils in their proper spots.
- Repeat the same process with the glassware, cups and napkins.
- After completing the task a few times together, your child will be able to set the table without any help.
- Always remember that praise is essential, even if the results are not perfect!

Regardless of the chore to be completed, always clarify what is to be completed one step at a time. It can also be helpful to post pictures, showing the necessary steps on the refrigerator door to use as a visual reminder until such time as the chore becomes part of your child's everyday routine. In the case of an older child, verbal instructions will likely be sufficient.

Understanding the basics of the job does not necessarily mean your child is ready to take complete responsibility for the chore. No doubt, he or she will need a few gentle reminders and supervision before being able to finish the task independently. As mentioned earlier, praise and encourage your child for his or her efforts even if the finished product does not totally measure up to your expectations.

Establishing Deadlines and Giving Rewards:

Establishing a set timeframe for completion of a chore will motivate your child to get the task finished. If your child is too young to tell time, set a timer to let him or her realize that when it rings, the assigned chore should be finished.

Chores should be done on a rewards system whether it is a small amount of money, a favorite treat or going to a movie. All children need to learn that they have to work for what they want.