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Should I Pay for Chores or Not?©

This question, “Should I pay my kids for doing chores or not?” is a very common and perplexing question. There are at least two sides to this issue:

- “Of course not, the kids should do chores as a member of the household and there’s no way I’m going to pay my kids! Nobody pays me to do chores”.
- “Yes, paying kids for chores is a good idea. It gives them good motivation, and increases the chance they’ll help out around the house...which I desperately need”!

There is merit to both of these points of view. I’d like to add a third one for you to consider.

- Giving children a weekly allowance and requiring them to do chores appropriate to their age level. Their allowance is not tied to whether they do their chores or not, at least not directly.

Hmmmm, interesting, well how does this work? This is how we did it in our family with our two kids, who are off to college now. Consider this possibility, while at the same time checking in with yourself whether or not this fits you, and your outlook on this topic. Ok, here goes...

- Kids get a weekly allowance (25¢ for preschoolers increasing with age of child through high school). You can dispense this every Sunday evening, or whichever day you want to, or do it monthly like we did because I never had the right amount of money in my purse.
- Kids have daily and/or weekly chores they are required to do by a certain time. An example might be “No dinner until the dog is fed, the trash is taken out, etc” or “Chores must be completed by 5:00PM for the week, or you won’t be able to go out to our weekly family dinner at 6:00 each Saturday” (we did this every Saturday to an inexpensive place). Check in with yourself on what would work best for you and your family. We tried the daily chores routine, but went to weekly chores because it took too much out of me to monitor daily chores. Make this so it fits you and your life. (For more tips go to my website www.KimFredrickson.com on the articles page and download my free article *Helpful Hints for Helping Your Kids Do Chores*).
- It will of course be normal for your kids to test the limits on this new system, so be prepared to carry through on your consequences. Have a friend who will volunteer to watch your kids while the rest of the family goes out to the family dinner, for example. We had this happen once. It was so awful for our son to miss the dinner that he never did it again. Also make sure that the place they are going isn’t very fun or else it will backfire!

- Don't try to reinvent the wheel. Use www.chorechampions to take most of the guesswork out of this. You probably don't have extra time to figure this out. The minimal cost will be worth your sanity, as well as your child's development of moral character, skill building, and responsibility.
- If your child chooses to not do their chores, you can have them use some of their allowance to pay a sibling to do it. This is how they are loosely related, but more in a real world way. Most kids would rather die than hand over their money to a sibling, so it can be quite effective. Remember to state this option in a very neutral, non-punitive way:

Joe, it appears that you have not yet taken out the trash or picked up your toys. You've got a choice here, and either way you go is fine with me. You can finish these two chores in the next half-hour before the deadline and go to our family dinner as well as get your full allowance, or you can miss the dinner and go to Mrs. Jones house and use \$2 of your allowance to pay your little brother to do these chores. If you haven't completed them by 5:00PM I'll know your choice. Thanks.
- In my opinion, allowance is very important for kids. Why? Because kids desperately need to have LOTS of experience managing money. This best way to do it is to start early. They need experience learning:
 - 💰 To delay gratification
 - 💰 To save \$
 - 💰 To save for a bigger item
 - 💰 To set aside some amount to give to others
 - 💰 That if they spend it now unwisely they will suffer later

The ONLY way a kid learns this is from EXPERIENCE. It is a rare child who learns it from an eloquent lecture or lesson from a wise parent. Give that one up. They aren't much different from us! Most, OK almost all, of the lessons I've learned have been through from painful experiences. You want them to learn this before they get a job and are handling larger amounts of money. You definitely want them to have had 10+ years of experience before they go off to college and/or get a full time job. **Think about this, try it out, make it your own! It's worth the effort!**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

© Kim Fredrickson, M.S., Marriage and Family Therapist (CA MFC 22635) and Life, Parent, and Relationship Coach is the author of many popular CD's and articles that will help you build encouraging relationships in your life. To learn more about Kim and sign up for more FREE Relationships Tips like these, visit her site at <http://www.KimFredrickson.com>.

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