



Psst! Your Child Secretly Likes Chores... Really

By Kelly Nault, M.A.

Despite what you think, children (even yours) like to do chores. This may be tough to believe when the majority of children fuss when asked to clear the table, “forget” to pick up after themselves and throw a “hissy fit” when you ask them to clean their room.

The Secret Truth About Chores and Children

Many children have simply forgotten how fun chores can be. Instead, they’ve learned that chores are something they “have” to do.

To a young child, chores are an adventure. The vacuum is awe-inspiring, dishwashing is as thrilling as a bath, and the washing machine is fascinating. Children start out believing household tasks are fun, but slowly lose their enthusiasm when they are repeatedly told: “don’t touch,” “move out of the way,” and “go run and play.” Soon all those cool appliances lose their appeal.

Training youngsters in the art of chores can be exhausting, especially since it takes children ten times as long to complete tasks, with results that are often less than satisfying. The folded laundry may look like a messy heap, the swept floor was somehow cleaner before they started, and the dishes are now covered in streaks and bubbles. Thus, parents often deter their little ones from lending a helping hand, and send them off to play.

Then a funny thing happens, though. As our children grow, we begin to *expect* them to help out around the house... but when we ask them to help out they turn their noses up and say, “Nope, I’m going out to play.” We really shouldn’t be surprised! We have been training them for years to do just this.

Ideally, child chores should start at the toddler stage (when they first show interest), but luckily, they *can* start at any age! Training (like parenting) takes time and energy, but once kids equate chores with fun—face it, you’ve got it made. More importantly, chores also help develop children’s self-esteem. Children who are involved in maintaining the household feel a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Three Simple Parenting Ways to Make Your Child's Chores Fun

So let's start motivating our children to love chores, with three simple parenting tips:

1. **Use “positive child chore talk”** – Children model what they see. Bite your tongue and refrain from groaning about chores yourself. Instead of complaining, “*I have to do so much around here*”, use an enthusiastic comment such as, “*Yippee! I get to do my chores.*” Sure, it sounds corny (especially if it's time to scrub the toilet), but mustering up genuine excitement can make a tremendous difference to your children's view of chores. Try it – you may even convince yourself!
2. **Turn chores into a game** – Make cleaning a fun challenge by timing how quickly you and your kids can do your chores together, thoroughly (this is critical to add!).
3. **Make chores a team effort** – Dance your way to spotless by playing uplifting tunes. Share stories and talk about your day—watch how quickly “chore time” can become “quality time”!

By making your child's chores fun, and using chore time as a way to connect as a family, what were once annoying tasks can become the stuff that happy family memories are made of.

Kelly Nault-Matzen, MA, family counselor, corporate parenting spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You* shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! To gain access to more parenting tools and to access your free online parenting course visit <http://www.ultimateparenting.com>

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