

Dear OU Parenting

How do you recommend implementing chores for a family of five children? The oldest is going away to a dorming high school and will be out of the house from Sunday to Thursday. The other children are aged 12,10,8 and 5. We have tried connecting allowance to chores and also tried incentive charts. Some kids do the work and some kids either don't do it or take forever to get it done. Hoping for some insights. R.T.



Michal Silverstein, MS

Dear R.T.

Firstly, Kudos on your commitment to teaching your children to be responsible. It's no easy task! Teaching kids to take responsibility builds their self-esteem, allows them to feel capable and is an important life skill. Sometimes however the process of teaching this life skill is draining and overwhelming and leaves us wondering why we don't just do it ourselves! Obviously we know that wouldn't be a great choice as the demands of a family are too great to just fall on the parent.

Since you're asking kids of all ages with very different personalities to do a job, things get complicated.

I will offer a few suggestions that I hope will make the process easier.

Leave a lot of room for choice. Give each child a few job options and ask which one your child prefers to do.

Some kids become oppositional when they are told exactly what to do and when, so give them a window of time by when they have to complete the job. This way they feel like they have a certain amount of control, deciding when exactly they will do their job but within an acceptable time frame.

Start with small "easy" jobs and then thank your child and praise them for doing it. This positive attention and feedback will probably encourage your child to do it again the next time.

Once you give your child a specific job or chore, it's very important to accept how they do it. Even if you show them, they will do it their own way.

This process will be more successful if both parents are on the same page and back each other up concerning what they expect of their child.

Finally, if you feel that your child needs a reward / incentive for doing their job let them have a say in what it will be. It can be in the form of praise, quality time with a parent, affection, treats or toys. Every person has their "love language" which makes them feel loved and appreciated.

The most important thing is to encourage a child to feel competent. Even if the job is

small and beneath his age level, if he's willing to do it, praise him. It's all about taking baby steps, being successful and building upon that.

A child often feels proud of pitching in and being an integral, capable part of the family unit.

Be'hatzlacha

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Gail Mauer a"h גילה גרשונה בת שמואל ■

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.

Feel free to send in any parenting questions you may have to parenting@ouisrael.org (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).



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