



Chores

GOLDIE GROSSBAUM

“CHILDREN SHOULD DO CHORES IN THE HOUSE.”

“CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO DO JOBS IN THE HOUSE, THEY SHOULD WANT TO.”

“IT’S OKAY TO BRIBE CHILDREN; THEY WILL SLOWLY GROW OUT OF IT.”

“YOU SHOULD NEVER BRIBE CHILDREN.”

“KIDS SHOULD NOT BE REWARDED WITH MONEY. IT MAKES THEM GREEDY.”

“CHILDREN SHOULDN’T BE ASKED TO HELP, THEY SHOULD BE TOLD TO.”

“WE SHOULD NOT PUT DEMANDS ON CHILDREN; WE SHOULD CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT TO MAKE THEM WANT TO HELP OUT AT HOME.”

“GIVING KIDS AN ALLOWANCE TEACHES THEM HOW TO MANAGE MONEY.”

Walk into my house this past Thursday morning and you will see my 10-year-old sweeping the kitchen floor, seven-year-old washing dishes and five-year-old making lunches and zipping lunch bags.

Wow, you marvel. *How does she get her kids to do that? I wish my kids could do that too!*

I've done that before; walked into someone else's house, seen kids sweeping, washing dishes and vacuuming and felt like a dismal failure. *Why don't my kids ever do that, I'd wonder. What am I doing wrong!?*

I pondered all different systems, job lists, incentives, and charts. But since I wasn't sure what my policy was, to bribe or not to bribe, I never got anywhere with it.

What is the law of the land? I read articles advocating all sides of the argument and continued to wash the dishes alone.

Finally, after 10 years of trying to work it out and my kids rarely offering to participate in household chores, I had an epiphany.

My house is *my* land; my husband and I are the rulers and *we* make the laws! And we know the citizens of the land best so we make laws that work for them.

And so after a quick meeting of the powers that be, we came up with a plan.

And if you walked into my house last Thursday, here's the part you didn't know:

It was the first day of the new system, and the system works as follows: Each day there are eight different chores you can sign up for and each one is worth a quarter. When you reach \$5, you can cash it out. And if there's one thing all my kids like, it's earning money.

The kids shouted with glee as they reserved their

chores for the week.

And now, a week later, it's still working. They're washing dishes and folding laundry. My husband gave free training on how to wash down the table after meals and I gave step by step guidance how to put in a load of laundry.

Forget the myriad books, contradictory articles and various tidbits of advice on kids helping in the house.

This is my house, so my opinion counts most.

But I do admit, somewhere in the recesses of my mind, is that little voice taunting, "But what if..."

What if a grumbly camp counselor calls me in a couple years complaining my child won't do his laundry unless he's rewarded?

What if I get a phone call from an agitated daughter-in-law in 15 years accusing me of mis-training her dear husband, who will only do the dishes if he gets paid?

What if an annoyed boss calls me in 20 years that my son won't clean his desk at work unless he gets a bonus?

What if I'm ruining all their ethical and moral values? Making them greedy?

What if, what if...

There's plenty more what ifs, but I'm learning to ignore them. I have to deal with the present.

For the first time they're actually doing real jobs in the house, earning money, saving me loads of work and we are all happy. And for right now, that's good enough. ■

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