

Chores: How to make kids want to help

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Does your three-year-old put her clothes in the hamper when she undresses? Does she help set the table? Does your nine-year-old dust and take out the trash? Can your 12-year-old iron?

You might be surprised at what are considered age-appropriate chores. The challenge, as every parent knows, is making children do the work without whining or fighting.

Management guru Dorothy Kudla had plenty of tension with her own kids over housework. Then she applied the management skills she shares with companies and it was smooth sailing. “When we talk about developing adults as leaders, we talk about empowerment, and empowerment creating accountability. It’s the same thing for children,” says Kudla, founder of Toronto-based consulting firm Full Circle Connections.

The key is to figure out a child’s personality type. Kudla uses the DISC assessment, based on four behavioural types – dominant, influential, steady and conscientious. It’s a popular tool for getting the best out of managers and corporate leaders.

Kudla explains how to make it work at home.

Dominant

If this sounds familiar: “They might just say ‘No,’” Kudla says.

Then do this: “Patience. Talk about the importance of doing it, but be direct. Don’t negotiate around it.”

Influential

If this sounds familiar: “Most likely to show some emotion. ‘No, I’m not doing it and this is not fair!’”

Then do this: “You want to let them vent. Let them talk it through. And then we sort of redirect by saying: ‘Here’s why I’m asking you to do this. Why is that frustrating to you?’”

Steady

If this sounds familiar: “This personality will agree to do it. They might do it, but they might not be happy, and so resentment can build.”

Then do this: “Not taking the ‘yes.’ They’ll acquiesce,” Kudla says. “We would want to make sure we have the patience to say, ‘Okay, I appreciate that you are saying that you are going to do it, but let’s talk about it. I’m feeling that you might not be okay with doing it. Here’s why it’s important that you do that.’”

Conscientious

If this sounds familiar: “Someone who is an indirect communicator. They might not agree with [the chore]. They might not tell you they don’t agree with it, and they might not do it.”

Then do this: “Actually, get a solid agreement before you can make the assumption that the child has bought in.”