



Early Learning Digest

Research-based information provided through a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Education and the Working Family Resource Center

January/February 2011

Helping Children Become Responsible

Responsibility in children develops over time when parents are intentional about teaching it. Children learn when they help with necessary work and activities in the home. This creates a sense of belonging to the family, a sense of being needed, and a positive self-concept due to growing feelings of independence.

Children benefit from being taught responsibility through:

- Gaining skills needed to get a task completed.
- Working with others.
- Learning new skills.

Although at first it may seem easier for parents to do tasks themselves, in the long run they benefit from teaching children responsibility. By sharing the workload, parents serve as role models and balance work and time for the entire family.

There are three questions parents need to ask themselves when teaching a task. Does the child understand the task? Does the child accept the task? Does the child have the ability



to motivate him or herself to do the task? If the answers are not “yes”, try teaching again. Stand by the first time a child does a chore to answer questions and offer encouragement. Then let the child complete the task in an age-appropriate manner.

Children learn parents’ attitudes toward responsibility without them ever discussing it. Parents and children can work together as a team to get work completed, contribute their share, and become confident in their skills and abilities.

For more information, visit <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/W00006.html>

Many Anxieties Are Normal

Anxiety usually occurs when there's no immediate threat to safety or well-being, but the threat feels real. Dealing with anxieties can prepare young children to handle the future unsettling experiences of life.

Typical childhood fears change with age. They include fear of strangers, heights, darkness, animals, blood, insects, and being left alone. Kids often learn to fear a specific object or situation after having an unpleasant experience, such as a dog bite or an accident.

Some common anxieties occur at particular stages of development:

- Babies experience stranger anxiety, clinging to parents when confronted by people they don't recognize.
- Toddlers around 10 to 18 months old experience separation anxiety, becoming emotionally distressed when one or both parents leave.
- Kids ages 4 through 6 have anxiety about things that aren't based in reality, such as fears of monsters and ghosts. This age-appropriate fear often appears as being afraid of the dark.

Parents can usually tell when their child is feeling excessively uneasy about something. Staying calm, providing reassurance, and talking about the fear may help a child move beyond it.

For more information, visit: <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/anxiety.html>



Get **FREE** messages each week on your cell phone to help you through your pregnancy and your baby's first year.

text4baby™ Text **BABY** to 511411

Or visit <http://www.text4baby.org/index.html> for more information.

To Work or Not to Work

Choosing to work or not to work after having a baby can be a difficult decision. Either way, you need to think carefully about what kind of parent you want to be and the conditions under which you are most likely to be that kind of parent.

Some parents find that caring for their children is all the job they need, particularly when their children are very young. Many parents relish the opportunity to give themselves fully to building a close relationship with their child, especially when there is a supportive spouse, a good network of friends, and opportunities to take breaks for outside activities.

Other parents are overwhelmed with caring for children full-time. They may feel cut off from their career, longing for other meaningful activities and more contact with adults. They may determine that they can be much more engaged and emotionally available to their children if they balance their care-giving time with a job outside of the home. Then the challenge becomes finding a child-care setting that will ensure sensitive,



nurturing, and appropriate stimulation to complement the good care the parents provide during their time with the children.

The decision you make doesn't need to be all or nothing – nor do you need to make one decision and stick to it forever. Pay attention to your own feelings and to the conditions that enable you to give your children the kind of top-notch care they deserve.

For more information, visit http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/age3_5/tips/QAs/PKDEV_000899.

**JANUARY 12, 2011
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**

Good Enough Moms and Dads: Separating Fact from Fiction about Parent-Child Attachment

Reserve your Webinar seat now at:

<https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/522660562>

Test Your Knowledge about Teaching Responsibility

- T F Children often express interest in helping with household tasks between the ages of four and five.
- T F Demonstrate tasks first and then practice with your child before you turn the task over.
- T F It's important to set high standards and expectations from the start for a job your child is doing.
- T F The most important way a parent can teach responsibility is by example.

For more information on teaching responsibility visit http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/age3_5/topicsAZ/PKDEV_000433

Answers: 1) F, 2) T, 3) F, 4) T

help me



talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to