

Mental Fitness News and Tips

When teaching responsibility at home, focus on what you can change

“My children need to be more responsible. They never do their homework,” you say.

That is a situation that should concern you. But in order to correct it, you need to focus on what you can actually change. You cannot make a child suddenly become more responsible. But you can change specific behaviors. Here is how:

1. Make a list of the things you would like your child to do. Be specific! You want them to come home from school with their homework...EVERY DAY. You want them to have a regular homework time. You want them to do their homework without your nagging. Share this list with them and post it in the home.
2. Offer support and ask how you can help. Do they need help organizing their backpacks? Do they need a little break before starting their homework?
3. Give simple organizational tools. Create a checklist of what they need to bring home each day. Set a schedule so that they have time for both after-school play and homework. Create a quiet homework area.
4. Offer praise and recognition when you notice changes. “You brought home all your assignments for the week. That’s great!” Over time, by focusing on what you can change, you will also help your children become more responsible.

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Learning to Say “No”

Learning how to say “no” is a crucial skill for your child.

You are probably aware of the peer pressure your child will face when he or she gets to middle or high school. But even in elementary school, kids can feel a pressure to fit in...to do what everyone else is doing.

Sometimes, that means going along with teasing or bullying on the playground. Sometimes, it means watching a movie at a friend’s house that you would not allow.

So start teaching your child “refusal skills” now. Help them learn to say “no” to things that do not fit with your family’s discipline rules or values.

Here are some sentences that they can repeat to themselves:

- I can say “no” to things that would put me in danger.
- I can make good choices for myself.
- I can say, “You’re my friend, but I don’t choose to do that.”
- It is okay if I make choices that are not the same as the choices my friends make.



Adapted from The Parent Institute®
www.parent-institute.com

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