



Q: All our children have jobs to do, from cleaning the rabbit hutch to helping to wash the car. With five children, we need them all to help out, however our middle child, who is 10-years-old, complains all the time about having to do chores. He needs lots of encouragement and cajoling to get them done and it has become very frustrating that he just won't do what we ask without argument. We are at the point when sometimes we just give in and do it ourselves - what can we do?

A: Getting children to do chores can sometimes be a struggle. There are many tasks that need to be done every day just to keep a household ticking over. Apart from the practical benefits of children making a contribution, it is important that they grow up realising that they should be helping others and not expecting to have everything done for them.

Of course, not all chores are fun, however if we only give children the jobs which are boring, they will be de-motivated and unlikely to do them. If you have certain jobs to be done, you can, to some extent, let the children choose what they want to do. But remember, you have to have the final word, and they may not like all the chores they have been allocated. Sometimes we have to do things which we don't particularly like, and that should be pointed out to children.

Listening to your son complaining about doing chores may make you feel like letting him off. Instead of releasing him from the chores, make it clear that you won't tolerate the complaining. Tell him you expect the chores to be done without any moans or groans. Then, if he does start again, ignore it. If he persists you will need to put some consequences in place for refusing to do his chores and these consequences should apply to all your children.

At the same time, make sure you praise him for the jobs he does do. He may have got used to the attention he has been getting for the complaining. Therefore, by withdrawing attention for that negative behaviour and giving more attention when he is pleasant, the behaviour should stop.

Parenting NI offers a freephone helpline and appointment services throughout Northern Ireland. If you would like to talk through a family problem or make an appointment, contact freephone on 0808 8010 722 or e-mail help@parentingni.org

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