

# Parents Make the Difference!



## Help your child develop a sense of responsibility

It will take your child years to fully develop a sense of responsibility and to follow through on everything he needs to take care of. But this is a lesson he can begin to learn now.

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher of responsibility. To build responsibility, remember to:

- Let your child do as much as he can on his own. Many preschoolers can dress themselves, do most of their self-care and perform simple chores.
- Understand that none of his chores will be done perfectly.
- Resist "rescuing" your child by swooping down to do it yourself. Instead, give your child gentle suggestions, such as "Sometimes it helps if you start from the bottom when you button a shirt."
- Try not to introduce new responsibilities on a deadline. Young children need time to complete tasks, especially new tasks.
- Let your child make mistakes. Your child must make many mistakes, and practice many times, before he can learn.
- Let your child face consequences when he fails to complete responsibilities. If he leaves a toy outside and it rains, it will get wet and may be ruined. This is a consequence. Your child will be disappointed. But the experience will teach him more than if you had gone outside at the first hint of bad weather and brought the toy in yourself.

### What you say and how you say it influences kids' development

As your child's parent, you are the most important person in his life. His views of himself will be shaped in large part by what he hears from you.

It is important to communicate with your child in a positive manner. Even when you must discipline your child, use words that will teach him what to do the next time, not words to shame him.

When having a conversation with your child:

- Use words that validate your child's feelings. Young children have big emotions. These feelings are perfectly okay--it is the actions that go with them that may not be okay. For example, you could say: "Tommy, I see that you are very excited because Jimmy is coming to play. That will be fun! But beds are not for jumping on, even when you are excited."
- Use words that tell your child you are listening. This also encourages him to tell you more. For example, say things like: "Wow, I didn't know that!" or "Oh, that is interesting!"
- Avoid the word don't whenever possible. Young children tend not to hear this word, and often will do the opposite. Instead of, "Don't throw your coat on the floor," try, "Please pick up your coat and hang it on the hook."

### Research shows that sleep boosts academic performance

Everyone knows how great it feels to get a good night's sleep, and studies show it boosts school performance, too. Growing evidence suggests if kids don't get enough sleep, thinking skills--along with physical and emotional well-being--can suffer. Experts say:

- 25 percent of kids have trouble with sleep. This number is even higher in elementary school. It's helpful for families to maintain good sleep habits and relaxing bedtime routines.
- Most kids who don't get enough rest are going to bed too late, getting up too early or both. Set consistent tuck-in and wake-up times that provide enough sleep.
- The earlier kids develop good sleep habits, the better. But it's never too late! If your child is groggy in the morning, sunlight may help. You don't have to throw open the curtains, but try to serve breakfast in a bright, pleasant location.