

Welcome to the Science of Parenting, a podcast dedicated to sharing scientific information with parents. I'm Lori Hayungs, Human Sciences Specialist Family Life for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Do you want your child to succeed in life? What parent doesn't? Parents are going to extremes to sign their children up for tutoring, enrolling in private lessons, and getting their children in to the "right" schools. Parents are preoccupied with achievement and success. Yet few understand the impact that starting chores starting at age 3 or 4 can yield! Chores, yes, chores. Plain, simple, old-fashioned household chores. But the results are as relevant and important today as they were in our grandparent's age.

Mastery, responsibility and self-reliance are important skills for young people to learn. According to Dr. Marty Rossman, Professor emeritus at the University of found that young adults who began chores at ages 3 and 4 were more likely to have good relationships with family and friends, to achieve academic and early career success and to be self-sufficient, as compared with those who didn't have chores or who started them as teens. And what is most amazing, is that doing chores do not cost a parent a dime and the result can be a household that is organized and clean with children who are contributing and learning at the same time!

Chores can help children learn what it means to be kind, caring, and concerned about family member's needs. Dr. Richard Weissbourd, psychologist with the Harvard Graduate School of Education surveyed 10,000 middle- and high-school students and asked them to rank what they valued more: achievement, happiness or caring for others. Not surprising, the majority choose either achievement or happiness over caring for others. But research tells us that personal happiness comes from strong relationships not from high achievement. Dr. Weissbourd acknowledges that parents need to readjust priorities, and helping children learn to be kind and helpful at home should be a priority.

If you are thinking that your children are too busy for chores, you may want to reevaluate their schedules. Completing chores may actually be a better strategy for long-term positive social and academic outcomes than whatever additional activities your kid are involved in. Isn't it ironic, that many parents have stopped encouraging family household chores when it is an actual predictor of life time success?

Join us this month on the Science of Parenting as we discuss ideas on how to prevent chore wars in your household. We'll discuss age appropriate tasks and ways that you can encourage compliance without resistance. The topic of rewards for doing chores will be addressed as well as how to acknowledge their successes and how to address consequences for uncompleted tasks. As always, we look forward to hearing from you and what you have learned about the value of teaching and encouraging household chores.