

Tips for Sharing Household Responsibilities While at Home



Being at home more often can make sharing household responsibilities more challenging. Below are some tips to help you manage sharing responsibilities at home.

Tip 1: Set clear expectations as a family

- **Include everyone in the process of creating a list of specific, concrete tasks that are expected to be done daily and weekly.**
- **Together, discuss and delegate who does each task. Err on the side of designating a few, necessary tasks rather than many, ideal tasks.**

How to set clear expectations:

1. Break each task into smaller components, if appropriate:

For example: Instead of “Do dishes” try:

- After each meal, take all the dirty dishes to the kitchen.
- Rinse each dish.
- Put each dish into the dishwasher.
- Put soap into the dishwasher.
- Turn on the dishwasher.

2. Identify the time when each task should be completed:

Work with times that fit into each person’s current schedule to increase the likelihood of the task getting done.

- For example: If someone in the house does not get up until noon each day, consider delegating tasks to him/her that do not need to be completed until after noontime.
- This removes the additional barrier of having to change an existing routine (wake up time).

3. Link tasks to existing routines:

- For example: If someone has a bowl of cereal every day around 2:00pm, that may be a good time for him/her to then load the dishwasher after he/she is done with the cereal.
- Related to this, for household members who have difficulty completing tasks at specific times, consider delegating them tasks that are not time sensitive

4. Be clear about what “done” looks like:

- Make sure there are clear expectations around what a task looks like when it is “done.”
- For example, if there are differing opinions about what the kitchen looks like when it is cleaned up after a meal, work together to come up with a way to objectify it.



Try: Hanging up a photograph of a clean kitchen or creating a checklist of the tasks that must be done to ensure cleanliness.

5. Make a clear plan for when and how to check-in and communicate about the task and any progress:

- This helps everyone in the home feel like they can predict the conversation around their task engagement (which may be a difficult conversation for those that are having trouble completing their tasks).
- You could plan to check in about it at the end of each day at a certain time, on a certain day/time of the week, or whatever makes sense for the task.
- Structure the check-in time so that it is predictable: i.e. each person shares one aspect that is going well and one aspect that could be improved upon.
- Include a discussion about a plan to make any necessary changes and ensure that the plan is very specific. People are most likely to follow through with plans when they include specifics related to the day, time, place that the task will be done.

Work together as team to create realistic expectations; resist aiming for perfection!

Tip 2: Make sure the task is achievable.

- When choosing tasks for each family member, ensure that they know how to do the task.
- Rely on a combination of an individual's report of their competence and objective observation.
- Remember, unless someone is *very* motivated to learn something new during this time, stick with familiar tasks to increase the likelihood of follow through.

Tip 3: Set expectations for what will happen if someone does or does not complete the task at the designated time.

- Work together to determine if and how task completion will be tracked.
- Talk as a group about whether an incentive would be helpful, and choose an incentive that is motivating, meaningful, and realistic for everyone (i.e. pizza take out at the end of the week).
- Try to come to an agreement together about how it should be handled if the task is not completed.

Tip 4: Try to reframe “all or nothing” thoughts or statements whenever possible.

- It is easy to get caught in thoughts or statements such as “This is never done” or “Nothing is clean.” This is called “all or nothing” or “black and white” thinking, and it can make the situation even more stressful. (Plus, most things are not so black and white.)
- When this happens, see if you can view the situation in a more balanced way.
- Identify the responsibilities that have been completed, or at least pieces of the tasks that have been started.
- This can help reframe these thoughts and statements to create a more balanced thought or statement.
 - Ask yourself: “Where can I see the gray areas?; How can I make this thought more balanced or productive?”

Tip 5: Don't be afraid to abandon a plan if it's not working and start fresh!