



# Kinship Link

Volume 16, Issue 11

November 2020

## Pro Kinship for Kids

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## Helping Children Become Responsible

The dictionary defines responsible as “personal accountability or the ability to act without guidance or higher authority”. Obedience is “submitting to or complying with the restraints or commands of others”. Most parents want their children to become responsible. This characteristic develops over time with continued parental guidance. Children are taught responsibility when they help with necessary normal work and activities in the home. They learn to do things they may have to do even when a parent is not present.

Benefits of children’s increased responsibility are numerous. Helping children become responsible offers benefits to both children and their parents.

Children benefit by:

- Developing a sense of belonging to the family - they feel they are “needed”.
- They learn to become independent.
- They gain organizational skills needed to get a task completed.

- They work with others.
- They learn a new skill or improving on existing skills.
- They get prepared for adulthood.

Parents benefit from teaching responsibility by:

- ◆ Sharing the workload given to children.
- ◆ Serving as a role model.
- ◆ Balancing work and time for the entire family.

Making the transition to responsibility is important. Parents and adults are very important role models for children. Our attitude toward responsibility may be learned quickly by our children without even discussing it with them. We want children to become confident in their skills and abilities as they grow and mature. It is always a challenge for parents to know when to involve a child. The easiest way is to watch for signs of development in the child. For example, the child may do some physical lifting, climbing, or fixing of a toy that looks similar to what a task requires.

You want to ensure successful added responsibility in your child. So what do you do to ensure your children will be successful with the added responsibility is as follows.

Ask these three questions about any new task or chore:

1. Does the child understand the task?
2. Does the child accept the task?
3. Does the child have the ability to motivate him or herself to do the task?

If you answered “yes” to the above questions, take things slowly with the new assigned task or chore. Stand by the first time a child does a chore to answer questions, offer encouragement or reassurance, and just to know the child can handle it be there. Encourage a child to assist you with the task to compare the child’s capabilities with the task. Parents and children can work together as a team in getting work completed and contribute their share in an age-appropriate manner.

## Health Tip for 2020

For your health and your family's experiment with plant-based meals. Not only can plant-based meals help your health, but it can help your pocket book. Expand the variety in your

menus with budget-friendly meatless meals. Many recipes that use meat and poultry can be made without it. Eating a variety of plant foods can help you boost your vitamin and mineral intake.

Vegetables, beans, and lentils are all great substitutes for meat. Try including one meatless meal per week to start your family's variety in their diet.

## Tips for Monitoring Your Children

You should start monitoring children early, in ways that are age appropriate. This will help children accept this as part of life. If you wait until the teen years to begin monitoring your children it will feel too much like you are trying to control them. Teen will turn the issue into a power struggle.

Monitoring infants and toddlers means making sure that they are safe and that their needs are met. Three to five year olds need limits that don't change and parents who show them how to behave. As school age children begin to step out into the neighborhood and community they will need to know how far they can go, with whom, and when they must be home. Teenagers need increasing freedom to begin their road to independence and parents who monitor their behavior in a respectful and appropriate way. Starting early may be the best strategy in monitoring your children, but it is never too late to begin.

It seems so simply, stay connected. Why make a special effort to keep in touch with your kids? As children begin school they spend less time with parents. Their relationships with friends become more important. It is necessary to talk to your children and to know their friends, their school experience, and what their world is like. Parents busy with work and children busy with school activities have very little time to interact. That's why it takes special effort. Here are some suggestions for connecting with your child:

- \* Be a sounding board. Make it clear that you are willing to listen.
- \* Use everyday family activities to stay close. Making dinner,

running errands, taking a walk can all be turned into quality family time.

- \* Build in extra time to "check-in" at bedtime. Do not assume your child has outgrown this important bedtime ritual.
- \* Use notes and bulletin boards to communicate with each other.
- \* Get to know your child's friends by inviting them to your home and on family outings.

Model behavior to children. When it comes to influencing youth, the things you say probably are not as important as the things you do. If parents expect children to let them know where they are going, when they will be home, and how they can be reached, parents need to model this behavior by providing the same information to their children. It is important for family members to let each other know where they are. There are three ways we teach our children: The first is by example, the second is by example, and the third is by example.

Parents cannot always be present to monitor their children and have to learn to monitor from a distance. Simple family rules will help parents monitor their children when they are out of sight. A phone call to a parent at home or at work at an agreed upon time or when plans change will help parents know where their children are. If the parent is not available by phone, a neighbor or relative can serve as the connection.

Once children reach the age where daycare or after school programs seem like "kid stuff", it becomes harder to provide the structure and supervision

they need. Some communities offer a wealth of programs after school and in the summer, while other communities have little available. This is the time when many parents consider leaving their children in self-care for part or all of the workday. The decision for children to be on their own is a family decision based on the age and maturity of the children. Consider the safety of the neighborhood, availability of the parent by phone or a neighbor nearby, the time of day and the ages and number of siblings. Self-care can give the child opportunities for independence, new skills, trust, and feelings of self-worth. But if the child is not ready for self-care, the risks can be both physical and emotional.

Monitor with the help of others is an important part of raising healthy and responsible young people. Monitoring by neighbors and other adults is also effective in preventing negative behaviors. The positive involvement of other adults is a key factor in the healthy development of young people. As children develop, they become more influenced by what other children are doing. They need to know the boundaries and expectations involved in getting along with and playing with others. They need neighbors who keep an eye out for them and reinforce healthy boundaries. Talk to your neighbors about what you expect of your child and their friends (when at your home) and ask for help in reinforcing them. Organize or become involved in parent groups to support and agree on limits for your children. This minimizes the effect of that familiar cry, "but all the kids are doing it"! "It takes a village to raise a child" is what we need to remember.