MESSAGE IN A BACKPACK™

Helping Your Child Learn Responsiblity

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To be responsible, children must notice what needs to be done, think of useful options, and take pride in their contributions. Here's how to encourage responsibility.

Notice and narrate

Draw attention to strategies that work. "Moving your puzzle to the table is a good idea. It's easier to keep track of the pieces," "You and your sister made up great rules."

Ask instead of tell

Support your child's independent actions. Ask, "What's a safe place to put your cup?," instead of saying, "Put your cup on the counter." Note, "I see toy cars in front of the stairs. Where should they be moved?," instead of insisting, "Someone could trip on the cars. Please move them."

Put your child in charge

Ask questions that inspire your child to solve problems. "We need a good way to get everyone to the table for dinner. What do you think we should do?" and "We need to find a better place for the boots [bikes, socks, mittens, toys] so we can find them easily. Where do you think they can go?"

Celebrate success

When you notice your child being responsible, show your appreciation. "Hurray! All the coats got hung up today," "Awesome work setting the table! Dinner was *very* elegant," "Thanks for putting the snack wrappers in the garbage. I loved working on a clean counter."

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