
TEENAGE TASKS

Being a teenager can be pressured. Being the parent of a teenager can feel equally pressured.

One of the flash points can be about how much the young person takes responsibility for their own personal space and belongings. It is easy to get into the habit of having frequent battles about them not tidying their room or not dealing with their washing. Although that may get the desired result for a while it doesn't usually last.

What can work better is to give them the responsibility of looking after their room and their washing. Yes - they may live in a bedroom that looks as if it has been ransacked and yes - the smell wafting from it may not be of roses, but this is about helping the teenager to become more independent. Teenagers are always wanting to be allowed to do more grown-up activities and they need to realise that with increasing independence comes added responsibility.

If you do 'hand over' the responsibility to them for their room and washing, then you need to, except in special circumstances, stick to that. If you go in and do a clear up they will (continue to) leave it to you. The lesson is that we all have choices. If we want to live in a relatively orderly environment then we need to create it ourselves and not expect others to do it for us. It is important to remember to give lots of praise and encouragement if your teenager does make an effort.

Q

We both work out and now that the children are up we expect them to do some things round the house. They are always moaning about it. I'm really fed up and feel it is very unfair

A

Many of the tasks around the house are not very appealing and sometimes there is a tendency to give the least attractive jobs, like emptying the rubbish, to the children. Of course the mundane jobs have to be done but it can work better if you list what needs doing and then give the youngsters some choice, rotating the jobs that are unpopular. In some families there are added incentives such as additional pocket money or a DVD or carry out once a week. Certainly children will respond much better if they feel valued for what they have done.

They need to know the effect on their parents if they do nothing. And equally the benefits when they help.

Time to start negotiating!

