

Kids and Money: Allowances

In parent groups when we discuss kids' chores and responsibilities some of the first questions asked are, "What about an allowance?", "How much should it be?" and "Should I pay my child for doing chores?"

Every family is different and parents will need to establish allowances based on their own values and income. The first thing to decide is whether to give an allowance simply for being part of the family, or whether the child must perform specific duties to earn it.

Rewarding a Responsibility?

One viewpoint is that no one gets paid for performing basic family responsibilities (like making your bed, washing dishes, or feeding pets). These things are expected and teach children the value of being a contributing member of the family. If you pay your child to take out the trash, he will see this chore as a job he should be rewarded for rather than a responsibility he must fulfill for the household to function smoothly. Worse, he may refuse to take out the trash if he doesn't need the money this week and doesn't feel like doing it! Rather than tie allowance to a specific act, or withhold money from a child who repeatedly fails to do chores, parents can take away privileges, such as TV time or going out with friends.



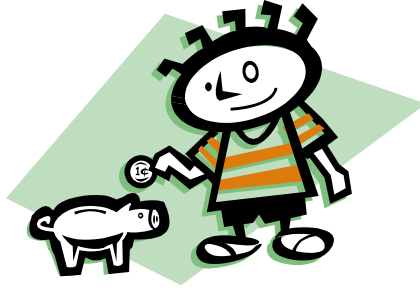
Delayed Gratification

Allowances are a great tool for teaching children about spending, saving and budgeting. Your child will learn he has the power to decide whether to spend this week's allowance right away, or to wait and save up for something big. Learning the value of patience, resisting impulse buying, planning ahead and achieving a long-term goal will result in a sense of pride and accomplishment. He also needs to learn that money, indeed, does not "grow on trees", so if he spends his allowance before the next "payday", and then yearns for something new, you can sympathize with his plight, but don't bail him out! Allowing him to experience this relatively mild grief and pain, in the protected environment of home, will teach him how to make better financial choices, a life skill that will serve him well as an adult. His future boss is unlikely to rescue him with "extra paychecks" if he hasn't learned to live within his means!

Starting Points

Start early -

Most 4-year-olds are ready and eager to learn about money and how things are bought and sold. And an allowance can be a great cure for begging in stores! Parents are amazed at how selective their children become when they must spend their own precious money!



How much? - Allowances should be a set amount given every week (or month) on time. A common formula is \$1 for each year of your child's life. When setting the amount, remember that if it is too high, your child will never be pushed to make choices... She will spend more just because she can afford it. If money is tight she will learn to be resourceful!

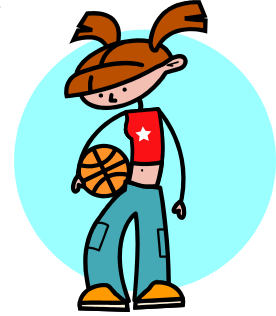
Work ethic - Additional funds can be earned for bigger jobs, like cleaning out the garage, helping with a tag sale, raking the yard, or painting the shed. In this way, children learn that extra work can supplement an income.

Creating a Financial Plan

To help your child learn fiscal responsibility, work with him to develop a formula for dividing his allowance, such as 40% for savings, 20% for charitable donations, 20% for an "emergency fund" for unexpected expenses, and 20% to be spent as they please. To encourage long-term savings, you might institute a matching program, a 401 Kids plan. For instance, you could offer to match every dollar they put into savings over the required 40%. Make it clear that once the money is in savings it is sacrosanct! Kids cannot raid their savings. That's why they have an emergency fund.

There's Peace in Making It "Right"

Allowances are also useful in disciplinary situations, where a child needs to make amends for wrong-doing. If your daughter loses something that belongs to another person, she ought to use her allowance to replace the item. She will learn that careless behavior has financial consequences. More importantly, she will know that in addition to her sincere apology, she has done everything within her power to make it "right".



A Sound Future

An allowance gives a child the opportunity to learn how to manage money, how to distinguish between wants and needs, and how to deal with limited resources. Teaching children the value of money and financial responsibility is one of the most practical and important lessons parents can offer. It is a gift that will last throughout their adult lives, enriching their relationships as well as their bank accounts!



Housatonic Youth Service Bureau

P. O. Box 356 , Falls Village, CT 06031

860-824-4720

- Crisis intervention & counseling
- Parent support
- Information & referrals
- Resource library
- Seminars & workshops
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Special events & guest speakers

Located next to H.V.R.H.S. in the Pupil Service Center. All services are free.

Who's Ruling Your Roost?

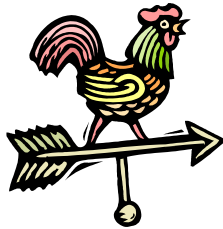
Close to 40 parents and child care providers came out on a wintry January evening to hear Family Solution's coordinator, Jill Gibbons, ask, "Who's Ruling Your Roost?" With some anxious sharing of life at home, embarrassed laughter and then the realization that they are not alone in their struggle, parents began to discuss ways to redirect misbehaving children and to bring more harmony into their lives.

The Housatonic Child Care Center in Salisbury hosted the evening's presentation validating the need for such programs. The Center's

Director, Lisa Harmon, sees daily the stress that many families are under. In many households employment by both parents is a financial necessity. Single parents often have the added stress of managing households without the support of another adult.

Too Many Demands

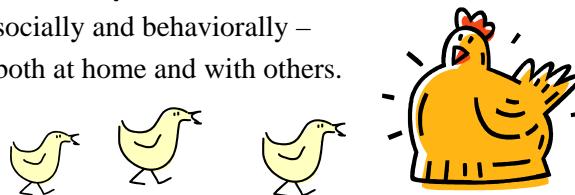
"Parents are juggling many balls in the air" Lisa reports, "and when their 3 or 4 year old is



'calling the shots,' sometimes the easiest thing to do at the time is to give in to their demands."

Jill acknowledged the shift in parenting over the years, the tendency toward indulgence and the loss of time spent with one's children as contributing factors in problematic childrearing. She pointed out that parents tend to fluctuate between being authoritarian (controlling the problem-solving process) and overly permissive (well meaning, but afraid to say 'No'). Some parents simply give too much and expect too little.

Raising kids to be loving and respectful, able to make good decisions, to resolve differences and form healthy relationships should be every parent's goal. 'Authoritative' style parenting—which is both firm and respectful—provides opportunities for healthy testing within clearly defined boundaries. Parents must take the time to help kids develop essential traits of character. Children raised by nurturing and firm parents are more likely to be successful socially and behaviorally – both at home and with others.



HYSB Offers Program on The "Tweens"

Several dozen parents gathered at the Kent Center School in February for a lively discussion about kids in the "tween" years, grades 4, 5, and 6. Jill Gibbons, Parent Education Coordinator and Abby Palmer, Kent School Counselor facilitated the discussion, helping parents gain insight into the roller-coaster of emotions and milestones of development experienced in the tween years. There was plenty of laughter and heartfelt understanding as parents shared examples of their personal experiences living with this age group.

Listening and Acceptance

Parents were encouraged to become a safe haven for their child to sound off and seek solace, and to tune into nuances like voice tone and body language that may tell more about how the child is feeling.

HYSB is happy to provide on-site parenting programs at schools and day care centers. For further information, please call 860-824-4720.

Learning to be a good listener, neither approving or disapproving while the child puts his feelings into words, helps.

Although the tween's focus is shifting to his peer group, and it may feel like a parents' influence is waning, parents are still the primary force in the child's life.

Islands of Competence

Tweens love a challenge and parents were encouraged to help them develop talents and skills that will lead to competence and result in confidence, maturity and self-esteem. Dr. Robert Brooks refers to these "Islands of Competence" as activities where a child is developing a sense of accomplishment, a reservoir of emotional strength that he can tap into later to help him face routine as well as stressful life events. These are activities children do well, enjoy doing, receive positive regard for doing and recognize as personal strengths. They are the basis for a resilient mindset!

Tips for Preventing Alcohol and Drug Abuse

This winter HYSB "Family Solutions" offered a 5-week course entitled "Positive Discipline for Prevention" where parents had the opportunity to consider ways to help children develop strengths and skills to resist negative influences and unhealthy behavior. In their Parent's Guide to Understanding and Preventing Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Stanton Peele, Ph.D. and Marianne Apostolides ask parents to consider a non-alarmist, sensible, responsible approach for raising children in a world where they confront drugs every day.

Is It Use or Abuse?

The authors point out that drug *use* differs from drug *abuse*. Statistics indicate that teenagers often use drugs as part of adolescent exploration, but only a small portion abuse drugs to escape from problems they can't handle in a positive way. Teenagers and adults abuse drugs if they rely on them or use them to excess.

Who Gets Hooked?

The most important question is: Why do some kids move from substance use to substance abuse? The answer does not lie in the substance itself. The answer lies in the way a teenager relates to him/herself, other people, and his/her surroundings. Problems arise when a teenager is not involved in activities that express positive values and does not have a supportive family and social environment. Without these anchors, some children seek ways of escape. Drugs offer such an escape, although their long-term consequences can be harmful. Teenagers susceptible to drug abuse can often be identified by "risk factors", such as poverty, emotional problems like depression or anxiety, antisocial peer groups, and a disturbed family environment. These factors in turn create low self-esteem and a desire to escape feelings like self-doubt, powerlessness, and hopelessness.

Resilience Factors

A child with risk factors is not destined to abuse drugs. He or she is simply at higher risk. Up to 70% of kids with the highest risk conditions do not become substance abusers. These teenagers can build on their strengths (known as "resilience" or "protective" factors) to prevent the negative factors from dominating their lives. Resilience factors include having a strong relationship with an adult, and confidence-building experiences at school, work, or other extracurricular activities. Such factors build self-esteem, a sense of personal control, a desire to be healthy, and a link to mainstream activities and values.

Parent Power

What does this mean for parents? It means you can help your child build resilience to avoid drug

abuse. Focus on helping your children develop skills, confidence, and decision-making abilities. Rather than panic, shutting down communication, keep dialogue open. Understanding that some kids will experiment, parents must establish clear boundaries (curfews, avoiding driving while intoxicated, upholding responsibilities at home, etc), to help their children learn to make responsible decisions and, eventually mature into adulthood. Teens do not do well with ambivalence. They need to know where their parents stand on these important issues. Parents can play an important role in preventing and dealing with drug abuse. They do so by fostering healthy and responsible attitudes in their children. The best drug prevention program is simple: supporting, educating, and caring for children. For more information, including concrete steps you can take, as a parent, go to:

www.addictioninfo.org/articles/60/1/Dont-Panic

F.Y.I. Workshops Spring 2007

Fiber Arts Series with Jill Gibbons, B.F.A.

F.Y.I. (*For Your Information*) provides fun, interactive learning experiences for children and their parents to do together.

"Heart of the Family" Basket: April 28, 2007, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the First Congregational Church of Kent, Parish Hall. Create a beautiful heart-shaped basket, certain to become a family heirloom, and memory of your special day together.

"Mothers Day" Basket: May 12, 2007, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Hollenbeck Room at Geer Village. Celebrate this Mother's Day learning the ancient art of basket-weaving! Weave a beautiful, hanging "elbow" basket perfect for floral arrangements!

"Personal Power Sticks": May 19, 2007, 1 p.m.-4 p.m. at the Sharon Methodist Church. What makes you unique? Where do you draw your special powers from? Build your own magic wand, scepter or personal power stick as a creative expression of your Self!

"Family Story Quilt": Create a keepsake honoring your family's special qualities, characters and memories. Workshop is being re-scheduled to a later date. Call for information.

Limited class sizes!

For details or to

reserve your spot:

Call 824-4720.