

# Parent Engagement



## Come along with me

You've got a to-do list as long as your arm. How will you get everything done and keep your school-agers entertained?

As parents we can sometimes be tempted to think that our kids need to be entertained all the time. In fact, kids benefit when they contribute to the household in meaningful ways. Chores are important, but doing tasks together not only builds competence and self-esteem, it can also deepen the bond between you.

Here are some tips for staying on task:

**Keep it cheerful.** If you have a negative attitude to the stuff that needs to get done, chances are your child will as well. Chat about what you're doing, and perhaps include a little reward. "That lemonade will taste good once we've gotten this porch tidied up."

**Check your expectations.** Yes, it will take longer to weed the garden if your five year old

"helps," but you'll both enjoy the experience if you can be patient and show him the best way to pull up the plant roots and all. The payoff? You might just have an expert weeder in a few years.

**Tailor the task to ability level.** Most projects can be adjusted for any age. If you're making dinner, even a really young child can tear up lettuce for the salad. An older child might like to be in charge of measuring and adding the spices to the curry.

Finally, try to keep in mind that the whole list might not get done when you've got a child in tow, but the benefits of being included in what's gotta get done will last a lifetime. And that means you're doing a great job at the most important task of all.

## Handwashing

Children share many items including books, puzzles, computers, water bottles and sports equipment, throughout the school day and at home. During the cold and flu season, this sharing can spread germs that can cause sickness. Handwashing, when done correctly, is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.

- Encourage children to sneeze into the bend of their arm rather than into their hands.
- Make time for handwashing, especially before eating.
- Always have soap, paper or hand towels within easy reach.
- Remind children (and adults too!) to wash their hands:
  - Before eating, preparing food or visiting someone who is sick
  - After using the bathroom, blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing, handling garbage, touching animals, playing outdoors, or visiting someone who is sick
  - When they look or feel dirty

## Mental Health Minute

**What is mental health?** People have mental health concerns or mental illness when challenging thoughts, feelings or behaviours get in the way of functioning at home, school or work. Everyone feels sad or upset from time to time. But when these feelings are so strong that it's hard to carry on at school, or home, then there may be a mental health concern. From a child or teen's point of view, mental health concerns could mean some or all of the following:

- I feel that others don't care about me.
- I feel sad, irritable, worried or angry a lot.
- I don't like myself.
- I don't feel good about the future.
- I feel powerless, and not in control of my life.

