



## MONTHLY PARENTING TIP FROM THE ACFC

April 2010



### Tips for Building a Positive Work Ethic\*

Developing a positive attitude about work at an early age will benefit children for a lifetime. Teaching them that work is valuable and rewarding for its own sake, and not just a means to earn money, can be a wonderful gift. The following tips can help you instill an appreciation for doing “an honest day’s work” and reaping the satisfaction work can bring.

1. **Encourage your child’s efforts with schoolwork.** School is your child’s first “job” and can set the stage for whatever follows. Point out the positives with such phrases as: “I like this work”; “Nice job with this. You really did some good work”; “I like how hard you are working”; “Your hard work really paid off on that test”; “This is very interesting.”
2. **Encourage your child to work with you around the house.** Chores are a great way to teach responsibility for work. To get off on the right foot, teach young children how to do chores by working together. Start with chores that are fun, such as running the vacuum cleaner or folding the towels (well, they are fun to kids, anyway). As you work together, be generous with your encouragement, saying such attitude-building comments as: “You are doing such a nice job with this”; “It feels good to do a good job, doesn’t it?”; “I sure appreciate your help”; “You are a really good worker.” As your child gets older and takes on more responsibility, continue to look for ways to encourage the effort and the result. Show them what is expected and make sure they follow through.
3. **Read books together about careers.** Help your child begin developing a wide frame of reference for work through reading together and talking about various types of work. Ask about these careers with questions like: “What do you think it would be like to be a marine biologist?”; “That sure sounds like an exciting career to me. What do you think?”; “He sure seemed to enjoy his work. Why do you think he did?” Don’t forget to include parenting as a career. Many women (and men) still choose this essential career as their only job. Others prefer to pursue both a parenting career and a job that pays a salary. Your own values, as always, will come into play on this issue. However, it is important to stress the importance of parenting as an essential job in our community, and one that, like all jobs, requires education and training to do well.
4. **Encourage kids to start a business or get a job.** Kids derive a lot of satisfaction from earning extra money. Many a successful entrepreneur started out with a lemonade stand or a shoeshine business. As kids get older, baby-sitting and yard work are great ways to earn and learn. Make sure that they do not just focus on the money by talking about how responsible they are and how much good their work is doing. Finally, do not let these jobs interfere with schoolwork. Money is immediate, and can become very seductive, but school opens up many more career opportunities in the long run. It is up to parents to set limits on how many hours a child or teen can work. Besides keeping a close eye on grades, a good rule of thumb is no more than twenty hours a week outside work even for older teens.

\*Excerpt from “*Getting Through to Your Kids*”, by Michael Popkin, Ph.D.

Learn more about developing strong work ethic and ways to develop courage, responsibility and character in your children by joining an Active Parenting Online Group. This six-week, video-based interactive class is being offered free to CWA represented employees in DE, MD, PA, NJ, VA, WV, Washington, DC, or can be purchased at a discounted rate for non-CWA represented employees.

Visit [ACFCcares.com](http://ACFCcares.com) for more information and to register for the next available group.