

Raising Little Helpers

From around 14 months to age 6, kids show **an innate eagerness to help** with adult activities (this is known as ‘the helper stage’), but if their offers to help are not welcomed and supported, research shows that this eagerness starts to fade *.



Children benefit from becoming little helpers, in a bunch of different ways**:

- a stronger sense of **connection** and belonging
- feelings of being **needed** and **valued**
- the development of **collaborative skills**
- a sense of being **capable** and feeling **proud**
- a sense of **contribution** and **purpose**

What can parents do?

- Shift YOUR mindset: value helping & contribution in your child as much as play & learning;
- Let your child see domestic work: don't only do chores when they're asleep or when you're home alone;
- Keep child-sized tools handy and visible;
- When they offer to help, give them small, satisfying tasks;
- Encourage your child (when under 6yrs) to offer to help, but don't force them to;
- Allow them to wander into and out of helping behaviours;
- Make time and space for them to help beside you, pay them some quality attention;
- Tolerate unskilled help (accept imperfection!) but guide improvement;
- Express appreciation for their contribution (but don't exaggerate!);
- Notice and comment on their progress;
- Don't re-do their work afterwards where they can see you doing so;
- Speak as though they are genuine contributors (i.e. don't belittle their role);
- Eliminate the competition: avoid giving your child a device in these early years (it makes helping & contribution seem like an unappealing alternative to screentime);

Backed by research: * Lancy, 2020; ** Noell et al 2019; Silke, Brady, Boylan & Dolan, 2018