

Chores: The Secret to Childhood Happiness?

Over the weekend, *New York Times* author KJ Dell'Antonia penned [an article](#) on children and chores.

Such a subject is nothing new and Dell'Antonia acknowledges this. The problem, she notes, is the fact that many parents know how helpful chores are for child well-being, but then avoid giving them. Instead, they make excuses, arguing that children don't do the jobs right, or require too much prodding, or are too busy with other things.

But even while parents complain about the difficulties of giving children chores, they also desire the positive character traits which those chores produce in their children:

"And yet, when researchers ask parents about what qualities they care most about fostering in their children, almost all respond by saying they are deeply invested in raising caring, ethical children, and most say they see these moral qualities like these as more important than academic or career achievements."

Talk is cheap, however, as Dell'Antonia goes on to explain:

"But many kids seem to be getting a different message. Richard Weissbourd, a Harvard psychologist, and colleagues surveyed more than 10,000 students from 33 middle and high schools around the country and found that almost 80 percent said they valued their own happiness over caring for others. Most thought their parents would agree."

The funny thing is, personal happiness often comes through hard work, strong character, and a concern for others, and has been discussed and debated since ancient times.

Aristotle emphasized this concept [when he said](#):

“Happiness, therefore, does not consist in amusement; and indeed it is absurd to suppose that the end is amusement, and that we toil and moil all our life long for the sake of amusing ourselves.”

He goes on to declare:

“The man that is given up to amusement is generally thought to be profligate, but in fact he is soft; for amusement is relaxation, since it is a rest from labour; and among those who take too much relaxation are those who are given up to amusement.”

Before Aristotle, the writings attributed to the ancient Israelite king, Solomon, suggest that diligent labor brings [satisfaction](#), [leadership](#), and a [peaceful, restful spirit](#).

And by the time of the American founding, Benjamin Franklin [was adamant](#) in noting that hard work done early in life would make the later years much more enjoyable:

“In studying Law or Physick, or any other Art or Science, by which you propose to get your Livelihood, though you find it at first hard, difficult and unpleasing, use Diligence, Patience and Perseverance; the Irsomness of your Task will thus diminish daily, and your Labour shall finally be crowned with Success. You shall go beyond all your Competitors who are careless, idle or superficial in their Acquisitions, and be at the Head of your Profession. Ability will command Business, Business Wealth; and Wealth an easy and honourable Retirement when Age shall require it.”

Childhood today increasingly comes with the side effects of anxiety and depression. Would we see these symptoms disappear – or perhaps not surface at all – if more parents paved their

child's path to happiness through hard work and diligent labor?