

# SAMVEDANA

## “Making Our Children Self Sufficient”

‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyan’ is being followed religiously and passionately in our school. Morning assemblies, special activities are being conducted to help children understand the importance of playing a proactive role in keeping the surroundings clean. It is a common sight to see our children with a mop or broom, cleaning up the walls etc. in the corridors, classrooms or playgrounds.

During this process we came to know that many of our children did not know how to dust, broom or mop. They informed us that the helpers at home did it for them or their parents did all the work. Unlike in the West, where children are allowed to be independent from very young, in India we do not allow even our teenage children to try and carry out some chores on their own. Our ancient Gurukuls propagated the idea of each and every pupil carry out all their daily activities themselves. Why was that? This prepared the child better to face the world when they grew up and become more independent. Then why is it that the present day parents have become so cautious and protective about their children?

I am a big believer in involving young children in household chores (that are suitable to their level of development) as I believe that these early experience can help to instill positive habits for healthy living for many years to come. And toddlers, preschoolers and primary school children make fabulously willing cleaning helpers when you make the cleaning experience fun!

Here are four ways to make cleaning time fun...

1. Make it a game: Adding a playful element like seeing who can match the greatest number of sock pairs or having a race to see who finishes their respective packing away chore quickest, helps to make cleaning and packing away interesting and engaging for young children.
2. Give your child fun tools to use: Giving a colourful broom or a dustpan makes the task more attractive.

3. Add music or singing to your cleaning tasks: Turn up the volume on some catchy music or sing a simple song like, “This is the way we mop the floor, mop the floor, mop the floor,” which can be adapted to almost any cleaning task.

4. Use a timer: set an old fashioned timer for three minutes and set a simple cleaning challenge for your child.

What sorts of tasks can young children do?

Children from the age of two can be involved in any of the following tasks, with varying levels of assistance and supervision depending upon their age. This helps to teach them the value of work and strengthen up their fine and gross motor skills.

1. Dusting.

2. Putting dirty laundry into a hamper

3. Folding laundry: Folding small items like napkins, matching socks or even finding separating all of their own underwear from a big pile helps to reduce the time you need to spend with the laundry.

4. Putting away laundry: Make it easy for your child to put away their own clothes by making it clear which drawer is for which type of item of clothing and not having too many clothes in each drawer.

5. Tidying up toys: Separating toys into their own containers and labeling the containers can make packing away toys easier for young children.

6. Sweeping up mess: Spending a little time teaching your child how to use a dustpan and brush now can save lots of time in the days to come.

7. Cleaning up spills: Keep a basket or drawer in the kitchen (which is easy for your child to access independently) for cleaning clothes that can be used for wiping up drink spills. A small spray bottle of water kept nearby might be useful as well.

8. Setting and clearing the table: Allow the children to set and clean during table. Toddlers and preschoolers can help to clear the table of dishes and condiments as well.

9. Cleaning in the bathroom: Wiping down sinks and counters, scrubbing and bathroom and cleaning the shower screen are all tasks which your children can help with.

- Start them early: As soon as they show an interest in what you are doing why not give your child their own duster, get them to help put away their toys and explain to them what you are doing and why. Have a regular de-clutter of their toys and

encourage them to help you choose whether toys should be binned, kept or recycled. Helping your child to adapt cleaning skills and take ownership of certain tasks early on will teach them a valuable life skill that they can carry with them throughout life. Start small and build up gradually-children as young as two can understand the importance of putting away toys and taking their used dishes to the sink and if you praise them each time they tidy something, they will be more likely to want to help again.

- **Keep it short:** It's important to set realistic goals for a child. You aren't going to get a five year old to spend an hour cleaning, so focus on tasks they can easily do such as tidying away their toys, helping with the dusting or pegging out washing. If you do a little each day (rather than saving it all up for the weekend) they're less likely to get bored and it will be less of a task for you to get everyone involved.

Domestic chores are a great way to teach them about responsibility and the importance of keeping the house clean and healthy. Cleaning is often perceived as one of those jobs that everybody will do their best to avoid but if you approach it in a positive light, it can be turned into something fun.

#### Ideas for age appropriate cleaning

##### *Under 5 yrs.*

- Help tidy their room/put their toys away in other rooms
- Help make their bed
- Put their clothes in the laundry hamper
- Help dust.
- Put clean towels in the bathroom
- Help set and clear the table

##### *Aged 5-10 yrs.*

- Tidy their room/put their toys away in other rooms
- Make their bed daily.
- Match socks
- Peg out washing /bring washing in
- Put the bins out
- Dust
- Help clean the car

*Aged 10 yrs. to adult*

- All of the above
- Load the washing machine
- Clean bathrooms
- Clean windows
- Clean the car

Hope these tips will help us organize the schedule of our young ones better.

A little involvement of ours will see our child evolve into a beautiful independent human being.

Happy Parenting and Wish You and Your Family a Very Happy New Year!

AnupamaChand

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