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Housework With Toddlers – Here Comes Trouble!

By Carrie Lauth

It's so interesting that once our babies start toddling around, creating a lot more mess in their

insatiably curious and neverending activity, we expect ourselves to have a perfectly tidy home. When your baby was younger you probably imagined that once she started sleeping through the night and playing independently you would get a handle on the chores. Surprise!

Mothering a toddler is fun but constant vigilance. Not only are you concerned with her physical safety but you are rightly concerned with her emotional health as well. You want to have fun and play with your little one but as an adult, you have a need for some order. What to do? Here are some tips that have worked for many other Moms.

Rethink Housework & Define Your Minimums

Try to lower your standards a bit. If your house could pass the white glove test before you had kids and you try to keep up that standard now, you could drive yourself nuts.

If you have a lot of trouble doing this, then think for a moment about why. Are you trying to live up to someone else's idea of what your house should look like? Are you worried about what your mother, mother in law or neighbors might think? In any case, if you're feeling judged, take a look at that and decide what's more important to you. Do you want a perfect home or do you want to have a happy toddler whose Mommy has time to play?

Decide what is important to you and figure out how to do those tasks as quickly and easily as possible. For instance, you may hate to feel dirt under your feet when you walk across the floors but a little dust doesn't bother you. Keeping that chore done consistently will make the house feel clean to you.

Make Some Lists

Grab a sheet of paper and decide which chores can be skipped, which chores can be simplified, and which chores you can get help with. Is it really essential to fold underwear or can they be placed neatly in a drawer? Can socks be tossed into a drawer and the wearer match them himself? It is really

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necessary to separate all the kid's laundry or can most things be washed together?

Clear out clutter as much as possible. Clutter makes housework more difficult, time consuming and downright dangerous (like when you are tripping over things in the basement or having items fall on your head in closets). Go through your house with a large trash bag on a regular basis and throw things out if they don't make you smile when you look at them. Donate it to charity and feel good about yourself!

I Helped!

Your toddler can do a surprising number of household chores and will probably be delighted to imitate you. When you dust, hand her a microfiber dusting cloth and let her "help". Toddlers love to splash their hands in water. Maybe she could "wash dishes" in the sink next to you. She may not be so great at folding laundry, but can she dig out all the socks and put them in a pile for you? Perhaps she can

help unload the dishwasher by handing you the spoons and forks. At this stage, the point is not to have her doing chores but rather to keep her happy and close while you get some work done.

Can you hire out some of the household chores? Don't dismiss this right away. If your budget is slim, you might know a teenager who is in need of some extra cash who could come over and help you out. Or maybe you would be willing to forego a dinner out here and there to pay for an occasional housekeeper.

Make Cleaning Convenient

Keep non toxic cleaning products and tools handy so that when you have a moment or two, you can go a quick task.

When your toddler is in the bathtub you have to be in the bathroom to supervise her anyway. Why not clean the floor, sink and toilet while you're in there? Baking soda sprinkled in the sink and toilet will scrub effectively and sweeten the air too. For an inexpensive multi purpose cleaner that you can use around little ones: fill a 32 ounce spray bottle with water, and add a teaspoon of dishwashing liquid.

Keep It Fun

Make picking up a game by asking your child to "find all the red things and put them into the toy bin". Or have them pick up 5 things then come find you for a great big bear hug or tickle. You can also plan something fun after cleaning to create a natural incentive to get things done. "As soon as we pick up all the toys, it will be time to go to the playground!" Kids respond well to quick cleaning sessions. The "10 second tidy" where everyone picks up and puts away as quickly as possible work well. And the effect is lost on me, but a lot of kids love to sing the Barney clean up song when they're tidying.

Life with little ones around is a bit like using spaghetti for bookends: fun but certainly messy. Enjoy it while it lasts!

Somehow, Carrie Lauth of

<http://www.NaturalMomsTalkRadio.com>

found the time to write this article in

the midst of picking up after 4 little ones.

Is There Housework After A New Baby?

By Carrie Lauth

Congratulations on your new little bundle! This is a precious and wonderful season in your life. But if you find yourself knee deep in laundry and scared to walk around the house without your shoes on, read on for some tips on keeping up with the housework with a new baby.

First things first

You must take good care of yourself so you can care for your baby. Experts say it takes an entire year for your body to return to normal after having a baby. Even though you've recuperated from childbirth, you're probably not getting as much sleep as you did before and you're working new sets of muscles as you lift and carry baby around.

Housework is simply is not urgent in the grand scheme of things. Many midwives have the following advice for new Moms: spend the first few days in bed even if you feel great. If you feel good enough to putz around a little after the first week, go ahead and try some light housework, but don't do anything strenuous or anything that involves a lot of twisting or that might injure your back. Remember that your muscles are still stretched out (especially your tummy muscles) and your joints loose, and your hormones are still making you a little accident prone, just as when you were pregnant. You don't need to risk hurting your back so forget cleaning the shower or mopping floors for several more weeks.

Practical tips

If you didn't do so before, do a thorough de-cluttering now. Enlist the help of your husband or a friend. It's more fun and your friend will help you let go of your attachment to things. Cleaning experts say that around 50% of the total time spent in housework involves dealing with too much stuff: moving it around, picking it up off the floor, rearranging it, dusting it. You simply can't organize clutter!

You may find that a baby sling or other baby carrier is absolutely essential if you want to get things done around the house. Using a baby sling means that your hands can be free to take care of tasks but baby is safe and happy next to his favorite person in the world. Vacuuming is especially easy while wearing a baby. If the dishes pile up at least you can have really clean floors.

Some Moms even learn the knack of breastfeeding hands free in the sling. Talk about multitasking!

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While your baby is a very young she will be sleeping a lot, so take advantage of this to finish a quick chore or two. Just don't use all of baby's sleep time to get work done. It's very important for you to nap with baby if you can manage it. At the very least, spend some time resting on the couch with a refreshing drink and maybe a book. Or call a friend and have an adult conversation. You need to recharge your batteries as much as you need a clean home... maybe more.

This too shall pass...

Remember these oft repeated words because you'll need to say them a lot during your mothering years! The newborn period is so precious. And to be perfectly honest, when it comes to housework, you ain't seen nothing yet. A new baby may generate a lot of laundry, but she is hardly responsible for

dirtying up the house. Wait until she's toddling around with peanut butter-y hands. The housework can take a backseat while you ooh and aah over your baby's tiny toes and fingers. Enjoy your babymoon!

Carrie Lauth is the host of

<http://www.NaturalMomsTalkRadio>

, a free Internet talk radio show and

podcast. For more housekeeping with kids tips, visit

http://www.natural-moms.com/homekeeping_organization.html



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