

### *Peak at Parenting*

Tired of reminding your kids to pick up their books, DVD's, games.....? Here's a tool that I've found to be really helpful.

Find a box that can fit a fair amount of unloved items. Inform everybody that any items left out at the end of the day (or whatever time works for your family) will be put in that box. Items will only be released from that box one day a week (be sure to establish which day in advance and don't waiver from it). You can give a friendly reminder the first while, but be sure not to make it a habit. Once it's in place refuse to nag, threaten or fight about clean up. Give the box a catchy name (i.e. *The Nobody loves me- Box*; or *Oops, I forgot - Box*; or *Captured Toys - Box...*).

I have found this box to be a great way to teach kids about consequences and to instill a sense of responsibility for looking after their own things. Some might argue that in the end you are still picking up after them, but it's pretty quick and easy to set stuff in a box and its one less thing you need to nag them about. Besides, how often do you end up picking up their things now - and perhaps fuming about it?

Important points to keep in mind:

- ❖ Be clear about the rules in advance. If possible decide as a family who can capture and when capturing will take place (i.e. 10:00 p.m.; decide consequences for badgering/whining to try and get your item back early; set up consequences for sneaking items out early; determine whose stuff can be captured; etc. Be sure the adults in your home aren't automatically exempt if you want your teenager to buy in.
- ❖ The day for item release must be preset and shouldn't change unless agreed upon by the whole family (be sure the box is empty at the time of the change).
- ❖ If the box gets too full, point out that there are obviously too many unloved items in your house so some will need to be disposed of (given away...). Choose your box size accordingly.
- ❖ Anything not put away on the release date is considered unloved and can be disposed of, sold...
- ❖ Expect your family to be resistant and to test your limits (especially if you haven't always been consistent in the past).
- ❖ Remember items are not put in the box as a punishment. If your child does not seem upset by its capture, that's okay. Wait until the release date and see if they put it away. If they don't, then you have a good opportunity to get rid of some clutter.

Be consistent when it comes to capturing (even when you're tired). It is fine to tell everyone you won't capture that day and give a good reason, but don't just let it slide. The more definite the consequence the quicker the kids will catch on that you mean business.

Finally, if you find yourself fuming as you pick up items and slam-dunking them in there, then the box isn't doing its job. Some fine tweaking might be required for you to use this tool. Remember the goal is to reduce nagging while still teaching responsibility.

Debbie Pokornik is the owner of empowering NRG. She is the author of *Peak at Parenting; Natural, Realistic Guidance for the Busy Parent* (releasing late 2009) and believes all parents can use support at some point in their parenting experience. For other great parenting tips or to book Debbie for keynotes/workshops, go to <http://empoweringnrg.com>