

Your Possible Home

Building Meaningful, Enduring Family Bonds in the Age of AI


www.YourPossibleHome.com

The Family Agency Map

A worksheet for parents

The Family Agency Map exists because most of us were taught to think about chores as something children do for their parents, and that framing quietly hides what's actually happening. When a child contributes to the home they live in, they're not helping you. They're building a self that knows how to show up. This worksheet helps you see where each of your children actually is on that path, and what the next step looks like for them.

There are four stages, and they don't map cleanly onto age. A seven-year-old can be in ownership of a task that a fifteen-year-old is still learning to participate in. The point isn't to rank your children. The point is to see them clearly so you stop expecting more than they're ready for and stop accepting less than they're capable of.

The four stages

Participation is the earliest stage and the loudest one. You're working alongside your child, narrating the task, fixing what they miss, and finishing what they start. They're not really doing the work yet — they're learning what the work is. This stage is where most parents accidentally get stuck, because participation feels safe. You're still in control, the task still gets done, and the child still feels included. The trap is that participation can last for years if you let it.

Ownership is the shift that changes the home. The child does the task without you in the room. You may check the result, but you don't hover, narrate, or rescue. Mistakes happen here, and that is the point. A child cannot move into ownership while a parent is still finishing the work behind them. If you redo the laundry every time they fold it wrong, they will stay in participation forever.

Leadership is when a child starts running a piece of the household on their own and bringing other people into it. They notice when the dog needs feeding before you ask. They organize the dishwasher rotation among their siblings. They tell you the laundry detergent is almost out. They're not just doing their part — they're holding part of the home in their head.

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Independence is the last stage, and it's the one you're aiming for the whole time. The child can run a household task — or eventually a whole household — without prompts, without supervision, and without your emotional involvement. This stage prepares them to leave home. It also tells you, every time you hit it, that the work is done.

Map your children

Pick three or four household responsibilities that matter in your home right now. Write each child's name across the top, the responsibility down the side, and mark which stage they're actually in for each one. Not where you wish they were. Where they are this week.

Responsibility	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
Their own laundry				
Cleaning their room				
Loading or unloading the dishwasher				
Caring for a pet				
Preparing a meal				

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Managing their own schedule				
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Write **P** for participation, **O** for ownership, **L** for leadership, or **I** for independence in each box.

Three questions to sit with

The first is honest: where am I keeping a child in participation longer than I need to? Most of us have at least one task we won't hand off because we're faster, or because we like doing it, or because the child does it badly and it bothers us. Notice the one you don't want to admit.

The second is harder: where have I confused ownership with independence? A child who does a task when reminded is in ownership, not independence. That's fine — ownership is a real stage and worth celebrating. But if you've been telling yourself they're independent because they comply when prompted, the work isn't done yet.

The third is the one I come back to: what would it look like to move just one task forward by one stage in the next month? Not all of them. One. Pick the task. Pick the child. Plan the handoff. Then watch what happens.

A note before you start

You will be tempted to fill this out about your children. The exercise gets more useful if you also fill it out about yourself. Pick three responsibilities in your own life — financial, professional, relational — and ask which stage you're in. Most of us have at least one area where we're still in participation, waiting for someone else to take the lead. Children notice that more than we think. The fastest way to teach ownership is to be in it yourself.