

INDEPENDENCE

need to be taught

At birth each of us is completely dependent on others. Childhood is then an apprenticeship that gradually prepares us to handle adulthood. From infancy, children naturally reach out to the world; beginning with mom and dad. As that attachment is cemented, children seek more achievement and competence.

The major goals of a 2 years old is, controlling their body, making it do what they want it to, and getting what they want. Gradually they practice skills to help them reach those goals, such as walking and talking.

Sometimes parents have mixed feelings about children's flowering abilities. On one hand we applaud their determination to spread their wings. On the other, we cling to the closeness, dependence offers.

However encouraging developmentally appropriate self-help skills, helps children in the long run. They become more self-assured, accountable and responsible as they grow towards adulthood.

Independence contributes to the development of self-esteem, identity and wellbeing. Doing something for yourself produces a powerful sense of success. When children have opportunities to make choices, to attempt tasks for themselves, and to take on increasing responsibilities, their sense of themselves as competent members of the society grows.

It is important that a Child Care center provides children opportunities to develop the confidence to explore their world, to ask questions, to express ideas, to get things right, but also to understand that you can be wrong and that one learns from their own and others mistakes. Curiosity, creativity and imagination, and learning processes such as inquiry, experimentation and investigation all belong to child-independence.

Teaching children self-help skills is no magic. It's most often a matter of patience and following your child. Simple self-help skills for children include attending to their own cleanliness, grooming, clothing and toys.

By including children in these activities, they will learn to contribute to the family and to take care of themselves and their personal belongings.

Self-help Skills for Children ages 2+:

- Wash hands before eating, after toileting and playing outside.
- Use toilet as development allows, including flushing and wiping.
- Cover mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue.
- Use grooming supplies, such as a toothbrush and comb, help bathe self.

- Eat independently, using utensils and cup as abilities allow.
- Clean up own spills and messes with paper towel, sponge or child-sized broom.
- Put own garbage into trash container.
- Help make bed.
- Put dirty clothes in laundry basket; choose clean ones from drawers or on low hooks.
- Get personal toys, such as puzzles and blocks and put away after play.
- Keep track of favourite blanket or stuffed animal.
- Help with simple toy repair, like taping torn pages in a book.
- Cooperate getting into safety seat or belt.
- Cooperate with medical care, like taking temperature.
- Help put items in child care cubby.

Home Chore Options for Children Age 4+:

- **Morning preparation:** help with tasks such as packing child care/school backpack items or clearing breakfast dishes.
- **Evening preparation:** put on pajamas, lay out clothes for morning, turn off TV.
- **Meals:** help set table, help with simple food preparation like cleaning vegetables, clear dishes, help to do the dishes.
- **Household cleaning:** dust, shake rugs, help water plants, rinse bathtub with water, wipe down counter top.
- **Garage care:** sort recyclables, sweep garage, dust car interior and wash outside with sponge and water.
- **Pet care:** feed, water, groom, exercise, put clean litter in cat box, help calm pets at vet visits.
- **Yard care:** rake leaves, sweep walk, fill birdbaths with hose.
- **Clothing care:** collect dirty laundry, sort and fold dry laundry, clean and organize shoes.
- **Errands:** get mail or newspaper, help make shopping list, help grocery shop, carry light bags.
- **Gardening:** plant, water, weed, harvest, clean fruits and vegetables.
- **Celebrations:** make gifts wrap, decorate, write invitations and "thank-you"s, help plan and prepare snacks, clean up after party.

Promoting the development of independence enables children to become active participants in their own learning as well as active and valued members of a group. Such experiences form the foundation for long-term successful learning, positive esteem and future success.

Ref.: "childcare exchange" and "early childhood Australia"

