

## Encouraging Independence

Independent children are able to use their own judgment to make decisions and meet their own needs. They take responsibility for their actions and respect the rights of others. Children who are responsible and independent are more likely to succeed in school and in their social relationships.

Children who have too much done for them don't learn to do things for themselves and become reliant on other people which can undermine their self-confidence. When one person is continually dependent on another certain feelings arise, such as helplessness, frustration and anger.

Because of their youth we do have to do things for our children, tell them, show them. Our task is to provide support but minimise our children's feelings of dependency.

### HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME MORE INDEPENDENT

#### Communicate clearly

Tell your children what you expect of them and what the rules are. Let children know you believe in their ability to do things.

#### Encourage Independence

Allow children to do things for themselves that they are able to do. We sometimes are in a rush or don't think they will do a good enough job. This works against them learning responsibility.

When we say something is easy then if they succeed it wasn't much and if they fail, they has failed something simple. If we acknowledge that something is difficult, then if they succeed it is an accomplishment and if they fail, it's not so bad.

It can be hard to watch a child struggle. You can offer useful information rather than take over. *"A jar can be hard to open. Sometimes it help to tap the edge with a spoon"*.



#### Let children make choices

Provide children with choices to select from. This gives a child valuable practice in making decisions. *"What would work best for you, doing your homework before dinner or after dinner?"*

#### Teach Problem Solving

Avoid rushing in with advice or to rescue children. It is more helpful to teach them how to approach difficult situations.

- What is the problem
- Help child come up with solutions
- Which one would be best to try
- Did it work?
- If not, try another

#### Give children chores

Tasks should always be appropriate to age and ability of children. Begin with tasks at which the child can easily succeed.

- First, they help you do the task – you teach them how
- Then, they need supervision in doing the task
- Next, they need reminding to do task
- Finally, they do the task alone

Don't link pocket money to chores. They will expect to be paid for everything they do.



### **Help children to be organised**

Have places for everything and teach them to put things in their place. Develop good habits, such as emptying school bags when they get home from school and giving you notices.

Help children to have a routine – homework time, play time, chore time, bed time.

### **Allow for mistakes**

Let children know that we learn through mistakes. Avoid criticising a child's efforts. Point out what they did right and they will be motivated to improve.

If we re-do what the child did, we take away the value of the child's contribution

### **Allow for natural and logical consequences**

Children need to experience the effects of their actions to learn about being responsible

- if they do not study for a test, they will not do so well
- if they do not put their clothes in the laundry basket, they will not have clean clothes.

### **Don't rush to answer questions**

The process of searching for an answer is as important as the answer itself.

*"That's an interesting question. What do you think?"*

### **Encourage children to use resources outside the home**

There is help to be had when you need it. *"Why don't you have a look on the internet"*



### **Don't take away hope**

Much of the pleasure of life is in dreaming, anticipating, planning. By trying to prepare children for the possibility of disappointment we can deprive them of important experiences.

*"So you're thinking of trying out for the play! That should be an experience"*

### **Acknowledge their efforts with specific praise and encouragement**

- Describe what they have done *"I see you have set the table without being reminded"*
- Express appreciation *"I really appreciate it when you do your chores without being reminded"* *"That's what I call being responsible"*
- Let them know what they did right and they are more likely to do it again

### **Listen with empathy**

When children feel heard and understood they are more likely to take responsibility for their actions.

### **Set an example**

- Tidy up after ourselves
- Be on time for appointments
- Care for our own and other people's property
- Do something we've said we'll do
- Accept responsibility for our own behaviour including mistakes made
- Get involved in community projects such as working bees, clean up Australia, etc.

**from** *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

### **Recommended Reading**

*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen And Listen So Kids Will Talk*, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

*How To Really Love Your Child*, Ross Campbell

*Between Parent and Child*, Haim Ginott