
Ways to Encourage Self-Help Skills in Children

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, “Ways to Encourage Self-Help Skills in Children,” from Extension Alliance for Better Child Care. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Discuss ways to support toddlers’ independence as they develop self-care skills.
- ◆ Identify strategies for partnering with families to support toddlers’ self-care skills at home and in your learning environment.
- ◆ Develop a plan to partner with families in supporting toddlers’ self-care skills.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to reflect on ways to partner with families to support toddlers’ self-care skills.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support toddlers’ self-care skills.

“The secret to success is to give children age-appropriate experiences and provide the appropriate supports to help children be successful.”

Extension Alliance for Better Child Care

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ Educators can help young children become more independent by allowing and encouraging them to take responsibility for themselves whenever possible. Reflect on your beliefs and current practices in promoting toddlers' independence during self-help activities.
 - Describe the opportunities that children in your care have to practice self-care skills (e.g., handwashing, feeding, dressing).
 - Are there times when you encourage children to use self-care skills and other times when you take a more active role in these routines?
 - How might your support impact children's independence and confidence during self-care tasks?

- ◆ The article highlighted the importance of giving children the tools they need to be successful as they engage in self-help tasks independently. For example, bowls that attach to the table, child-sized utensils, and small cups with handles and spouts (such as measuring cups) for pouring.
 - Think about the resources available in your learning environment. What additional resources may be needed to support children's independence during activities such as feeding, toileting, and dressing themselves?
 - Consider the unique strengths and needs of the families you serve. How do families currently support children's independence? What sorts of self-care routines do they encourage children to engage in?
 - What additional resources may families need to support children's independence in self-care routines? How can you support the sharing of ideas among families while encouraging respect for cultural differences and norms?

- ◆ Reflect on the needs of a toddler in your care who may benefit from additional support with self-help skills.
 - What are some specific challenges the child experiences in your care? Do they experience these challenges at home?
 - What are some strategies you may implement to support the child's individual needs?
 - What specific steps can you take to partner with the child's family in implementing these strategies?
 - Develop an action plan to partner with the child's family to implement strategies to support the child's unique self-care needs at the learning environment and at home.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about encouraging toddlers' self-care skills

- ◆ **Source:** NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
- ◆ **Article:** Self Care
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/self-care/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article offers ways caregivers can help young children develop the skills needed to become independent in self-care activities such as dressing, toileting, and feeding.

- ◆ **Source:** STRIDE For better mental health
- ◆ **Article:** Ways to Encourage Self-Help Skills in Children.
- ◆ **Link:** <https://stride.com.au/ways-to-encourage-self-help-skills-in-children/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article outlines the importance of self-help skills and shares ways caregivers can encourage independence during activities such as dressing, feeding, hygiene practices, and simple chores.

- ◆ **Source:** Parenting Exchange
- ◆ **Handout:** Self Help Skills and Chores Help Build Children's Identity and Confidence
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.easternflorida.edu/community-resources/child-development-centers/parent-resource-library/documents/self-help-skills-chores.pdf>
- ◆ **Description:** This handout highlights practical ways to engage children in age-appropriate self-help activities, as well as strategies for using teachable moments to develop children's self-help skills.