

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE IN YOUR CHILD



The key to fostering independence is to respect your child's efforts to do things themselves and to be there to help when the task seems overwhelming.

An important part of growing up is becoming independent, learning self reliance, and gaining the ability to solve one's problems. Here are some ways to help foster self-esteem and independence in your child:

- Encourage your child to make choices. Give real choices, and make sure you can accept what your child decides. For instance, do not ask a four year old, "Do you want to go to bed now?" Say instead. "It's bedtime. Do you want to brush your teeth before or after the story?"
- Set realistic goals and help your child succeed in completing tasks. For example, while two year olds can pick up toys, they need help and encouragement.
- There will be times when children need extra support or comfort, and may need you to do things that they could do themselves. A tired child may find putting all the blocks away overwhelming. By lending a hand instead of demanding that she do it all herself, you get the task done cheerfully.
- Pose little problems to give your child practice in finding solutions. For example, "What would you do if it started to snow, and you did not have your boots?" or "What would you do if you fell on the playground and hurt your knees?"
- Share your pleasure in your child's good decisions. As your child matures, point out the things he can do for himself. "You noticed it was getting colder, and decided to put on your sweater. That's really taking care of yourself!"