

Developing Independence in Children

Both in society and within our families we value creating self sufficient young adults who are capable of leading their own lives and becoming independent yet still connected with their families. To this end we provide public education to ensure that they have the education and skills to support themselves. We encourage volunteer and work opportunities so that they may learn to become part of a productive team. We model self-sufficiency skills by teaching ethics, integrity, communication and team work. Yet are children struggle with the ability to be independent and self-sufficient. How do we foster these skills to ensure that children have both the skills needed and the motivation to become independent?

- 1) **Encourage children to care for themselves at each stage of their development...**from the baby struggling to walk to the teenager seeking his first job. Independence is an innate drive yet we often stifle it in young children by doing for them what they can do for themselves.
- 2) **Provide children with age appropriate responsibilities.** Responsibility foster confidence and a sense of capability. It also encourages team work and belonging. These are important attributes for future independence.
- 3) **Allow children to fail and experience the consequences.** We learn more from our mistakes than from our successes. Rescuing children from failure robs them of the ability to learn from their mistakes and overcome challenges. Both experiences develop confidence and self assurance necessary for independence.
- 4) **Allow children to explore and develop their own goals and future plans.** When we determine for children what their future should be we stop them from learning about their own talents and following their passion. Both are necessary for self-motivation.
- 5) **See our children as separate individuals not an extension of ourselves.** When we really see them as their own persons with unique talents and capacities we are able to encourage them to follow their own dreams and pursue their own interests.
- 6) **Praise and encourage sincerely and honestly.** Even young children know exaggeration and extreme praise. When this occurs they learn to distrust both their own capabilities and their relationship with the caregivers who they should be able to trust. Both foster inaccurate self-awareness and hinder self-confidence.
- 7) **Love unconditionally.** Children develop their sense of self through the reaction of adults on whom they depend. Feeling secure, consistent, unconditional love from birth provides children with the security in which to explore their world, master skills and become independent adults