

I WANT TO DO IT BY MYSELF!

Useful life hacks to survive at home with a very independent toddler



INDEPENDENCE

We all want our children to be independent. We are all happy when they start walking and feeding themselves, but then when we are in a hurry trying to get to work on time and our toddler decides that they will zip that coat on by themselves or change the clothes they were already wearing, the whole independence doesn't look so good and we get frustrated. Waiting for a toddler to put shoes on for 20 minutes when we could do that for them in 3, doesn't strike us with pride anymore but turns into frustration and inconvenience. We are rushing them, doing things for them that usually causes toddlers to rebel and cry and throw tantrums. It is a vicious circle. On one hand we want them to become independent adults on the other hand we don't have time for watching them struggling to zip that coat on.

So, how can we promote independence and develop that very important skill and stay sane at the same time? There is a trick, but first let's look closely at the need of being independent and how important it is for child's development.

INDEPENDENCE



As your toddlers motor skills develop and his understanding about the world gets better, they want to become more independent and do things for themselves. It is a developmental milestone and the one that is very important to nurture, as through doing things for themselves children will learn so much and develop all useful life skills. So, don't think that your child is stubborn, he is just responding to his internal developmental need of being independent. If we support that need and provide opportunities for toddlers to feel they have control over their decisions and choices, they will be less frustrated and more likely to cooperate with us.

If we don't let toddlers to be independent, if we don't nurture that need, they will be frustrated, they will be throwing tantrums and will be misbehaving. They have less chances of becoming successful and independent adults. When children are left to do things for themselves their brains are forced to use logical thinking and problem solving skills!



Create opportunities

If you remember that independence is something that your toddler really needs in order to develop properly, it will be easier for you to accept some of the behaviors and create opportunities so your toddler can make choices. If that need is not being met in a controlled environment, then your toddler will be seeking it in the most inconvenient moment for you! Decide when your toddler can make independent decisions that don't affect you as much. Is all about give and take, so of course your toddler cannot run your household and decide no sleep time today but they can make loads of small decisions. Have a look at our every day examples of how can you implement the independence easily:

AT DINNER TIME ask them :

- **Would you like it in a bowl or on a plate?**
- **Would you like 3 or 4 potatoes?**
- **Would you like a big spoon or a small one**
- **Would you like a pink or green cup?**
- **Which chair would you like to sit on?**
- **Would you like more meat or more veggies?**

AT SLEEP TIME:

- Which book would you like to read?
- Which teddy would you like to hug tonight?
- Would you like to wear red or blue pyjamas?
- Will I switch off your night lamp or will you do it?
- We are going to bed now do you want to jump in by yourself or do you want me to carry you?

GOING FOR A WALK

- Which coat will you wear today?
- Would you rather walk or take your scooter?
- Which way would you like to go now? turn right or go straight?
- Do you prefer playground or park today?

Golden rules for offering choices

- Don't give too many choices as it can be overwhelming
- Give choice of two mostly three things: which coat red or blue?
- You decide the main thing (its dinner time, walk time, sleep time) but you are giving a choice of how its done (big spoon, go right etc)
- Don't change options. If you already decided that its only an option between red or blue coat - stick to it!

Ask them to help you



Ask your toddler to help you in many tasks around the house even if you don't need that help and in fact it will be quicker without it:) when you are making dinner call her over and ask to mix things for you- even if its just some water with salt it doesn't matter but what matter is that your toddler will be there in the kitchen with you, thinking that he is so important and can take part in such a big thing as dinner preparation.

I will always find some things for my toddler to do at home and I will call her over before she starts asking me. So for example I will hand her a cloth and say I need your help in washing doors then I know she is busy, her needs are met and I can continue doing something else without her "help". It doesn't matter that she doesn't wash the doors properly as I wasn't even planning on washing them anyway and if I was I can just do it properly after. It's about finding ways of keeping them busy and thinking that they are doing something important.

