

Chapter 13

Reproducible Master D

Help, But Only a Little!

You can help your toddler achieve a healthy degree of autonomy by staying out of his or her efforts much of the time. Watch and stay close to help a little when he or she needs it. Here are some pointers:

- Let toddlers feel as independent as possible and even say “No!” Although some limits must be firmly set, no person wants to be directed and commanded all the time.
- Allow toddlers to make their own decisions on how to do certain things. Decision making should begin early.
- Provide options on tasks a toddler likes to do.
- Keep toys and clothing accessible for toddlers. Self-help skills are becoming very important to them.
- Allow trial-and-error learning with just a few pointers. Toddlers have a positive “I can” attitude.
- Be patient. Toddlers do not have a sense of time and cannot complete tasks as quickly as you can. Begin tasks long before you need them completed. For example, putting on shoes can easily take half an hour. To speed up a task, try to trade off tasks, such as “You do one shoe, and Mommy will do the other shoe.”
- Let toddlers continue to practice tasks they can do to increase efficiency.
- Allow toddlers to keep trying as long as they are not too frustrated.
- Encourage toddlers’ efforts.
- Acknowledge toddlers’ feelings when they become frustrated. Recognize tantrums often begin when toddlers’ desires for autonomy are thwarted by adults or the tasks are too difficult. Respond with compassion.
- Reduce toddlers’ frustrations by keeping their areas free of too much background noise and clutter. Store toys that are beyond the ZPD of the toddler. (Quality, but advanced, toys can always be used later.)