

THE SEL MONTHLY™

A social and emotional learning (SEL) monthly resource provided by Frameworks of Tampa Bay in partnership with Hillsborough County Public Schools

Social and Emotional Learning and Cultivating Independence

One goal we share as a community of involved, caring, and nurturing parents, educators, administrators, and youth services professionals is that we genuinely want to see all of our students succeed. Often we jump to “fix-it mode” and try to save and solve our students' challenges for them. Being an involved, caring, and nurturing adult figure in a student's life is a critical component for their success, and research continues to show how it can positively influence a child's life both short and long term. It is also imperative to cultivate their independence for their overall social and emotional development and success. When young people are given opportunities to practice and build a skill, it empowers them to live a safe, happy and healthy life. In this month's SEL community newsletter, we will share tools, strategies, and resources that will support you on your journey of cultivating independence in your kids, and equip them with essential skills to succeed personally, academically, and one day professionally



Encouraging Independence

Encouraging independence is important for our children's overall social and emotional development. The best way to practice this is to create opportunities for them to be successful independently - this helps to promote self-awareness and self-confidence. When children attempt something for the first time on their own, they feel proud and excited and often want more opportunities to do things on their own. Here are some options for allowing them to practice being independent:

- Allowing your child to pick out their clothes and dress themselves: at first this might look like giving them a choice between two different color shirts, but allowing your child to choose their ensemble can help to strengthen their decision-making skills.
- Participating in chores or helping to cook a meal helps to give your child a sense of belonging in your family. It also allows your child to contribute in a meaningful way by showing love and care for the rest of the family.
- Allow your child to help in the decision-making process by giving them choices in different aspects of their day. For example: "Would you like a turkey sandwich or peanut butter and jelly sandwich?" or "Where would you like to start cleaning your room: picking up clothes, or putting away your toys?" When choices have options there is a greater chance of success.
- Cultivating independence creates an understanding of what it takes to be patient and flexible when facing challenges on their own. It helps children build skills like self-discipline and self-care, which are important skills that our kids will need to be happy, healthy, and safe in the long run

When can we start cultivating independence in our children?

Cultivating independence in children can start as early in life as the toddler years. Have you ever had to redirect a toddler away from a situation that may not be the safest; or tried to assist them in getting dressed, or putting on their shoes? There will come a point in time where simple activities like this could become challenging for a parent or caregiver as their toddler begins to develop their sense of autonomy and seeks to navigate those situations on their own. Luckily, we can use those moments in time to truly support and encourage our children's independence in early childhood. Some ways you can help to cultivate independence in your child is to:

1. Explicitly role model desired tasks
2. Encourage your child to try tasks that they have not done before
3. Offer realistic choices
4. Respect their efforts to complete the task

One of the simplest ways to build autonomy is by allowing your children the time and space to play and problem solve on their own. This means when you notice your child struggling with a task, take a couple extra minutes to watch and see if they can figure it out on their own before coming in to help. As much as you may want to intervene, allowing children to play and problem solve on their own gives them the self-confidence they need to continue working on their independence. As they grow, continuing to guide your toddler in the right direction without solving the problem for them will boost their self-esteem as they learn to solve problems on their own. This translates into later life situations, where your child will undoubtedly be faced with decisions that they must make on their own when a parent or caregiver is not around. Starting early and starting young is key in helping your child's independence!

SEL Resources

Children books: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, *Look! I Can Tie My Shoes!* by Susan Hood
You Are Your Strong by Danielle Dufayet

Articles: [Independent Work: 5 Strategies for Encouraging Independence at Home](#)
[Encouraging independence](#)

[Children Developing Independence: What Is the Right Balance?](#)

[These 18 Things Will Help You Raise a More Confident Child, Says a Psychologist](#)

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