



# TO THE POINTE

PARENTING EDITION / SUMMIT POINTE - NUMBER 9

## Happy Independence (Day)!

*Jennifer Myles, LPC*

Teaching independence to children is one of a parent's most important jobs. This is a responsibility that lasts a life time.

Children need directions and affirmations in different ways depending on the current age or stage of life that they are in. Teaching this skill starts very early on in life and parents often can help nurture a child's independence based on their own responses to different situations. In this edition of To The Pointe we will help identify different stages of childhood and what parents can do to assist in fostering healthy independence in their children.

### **Early Childhood (Birth to 8 years old) we will focus on 2 years old and older for the purpose of independence.**

- Give appropriate choices starting around age 2. (Give 2 choices both of which you feel are acceptable options and allow the child to decide.) Example: Would you like peas or carrots with your dinner today? Allowing children to weigh in on family decisions that are age appropriate foster good decision making and self-advocacy.
- Age appropriate chores teach important skills that will continue to build their ability to be independent. (2 year olds can pick up their own toys, 5 year olds can help with dishes by rinsing, 7/8 year olds can pick up their rooms when broken down into small achievable steps.) Keep in mind that children of this age often struggle with following multiple step tasks without lots of reminders.

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- Pre-teach any skill that you want your child to be able to complete. It is our responsibility to teach and reteach as many times as it takes for our children to pick up necessary skills to become independent. You can make a game out of teaching a skills, create a chart, role play, and/or role model new tasks. The more ways you engage your child in learning a skill that is made fun and interesting the more likely the child is to remembering and engaging in the task. Working alongside your child will increase your child's ability to retain what you are teaching them.

### Middle Childhood (8 years old to 12 years old)

- Children at this age still need choices sticking with 2 acceptable choices decreases the likelihood of creating conflict. This age group can begin to make some choices that may have larger effect on their family such as "You get to pick a family activity for this weekend; we can go to a movie or we can go swimming, which one would you like to do?" (Keeping in mind that both choices still need to be acceptable/appropriate/manageable)
- Chores for this age group can begin to increase in complexity, 2 to 3 step tasks can begin to be acceptable. (Writing down the chores, having a check list, or inviting reminders may help increase compliance and maintain a teaching/learning environment.)
- This age group continues to need the Pre-teaching from their adult counter parts. They continue to look up to their parents for guidance and affirmations. Adults can continue to use chart, role modeling, and role playing to make learning new skills fun.

### Adolescence (12 years old to 18 years old)

- Children in this age group will generally make choices that provoke consequences, both imposed (parent gives a consequence for a behavior or choice) and natural (cause and effect situations). Example of a natural consequence would be "If your child does not do their homework they get a failing grade on the assignment." Allow your child to experience consequences for their choices. Avoid interfering with consequences provided by other adults especially those in authority such as teachers, the other parent, or healthy adult family members.
- Teach children to make small meals or cook for the family. Use cooking as a time to build positive experiences and enjoyable interactions.
- Increase chore expectation such as child may become responsible for their own laundry, packing their own lunch, and getting themselves up on time for school. (Remember to teach and reteach each task and ways to manage the task such as setting alarms or reminders for meeting time expectations.)

As you can see when parenting your child(ren) you may use the same type of skill throughout different stages of development and just need to adjust the way that you are using the skill to meet the child's individual needs. Children will always need choices that are age appropriate, they need appropriate amounts of responsibilities, they all need continued teaching and reteaching of skills through adult modeling, and every child needs lots of positive affirmations. (5 positives/compliments/praises to every 1 time a child needs to be corrected provides the child enough good experiences to appropriately manage limit setting and consequences.)



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# Chore Chart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Week: \_\_\_\_\_



## Tasks To Do

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