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## **SMALL STEPS TO INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Being independent and responsible are characteristics that allow a child to feel competent, to use his/her talents more fully, and to develop a sense of power. Parents sometimes struggle with the shift from their child being completely dependent upon them to facilitating increasing levels of independence. The following list offers small steps toward increasing your child's sense of independence and awareness of responsibility.

- 1) Let your verbal child order his/her own meal in restaurants. Talk with him/her about the menu, and then ask your child to tell both drink and meal.
- 2) Have specific chores for your child, beginning when he/she is a toddler. Make a time during the day that is "chore time," meaning that everyone is working on a chore. Some examples for young children include feeding/watering pets, emptying dirty clothes hampers, moving papers to recycling, putting away washcloths, and emptying the silverware from the dishwasher.
- 3) Insist that your child carry his/her own backpack, jacket, water bottle, etc.
- 4) Allow your child to walk into school, even if the trip takes a little longer.
- 5) Encourage your child to buckle his/her own seat belt as developmental levels permit.
- 6) Expect and insist that your child be a part of clean up, including spills, dropped items, and other messes. Expect that clean up may take longer, but the pride and responsibility that develops is worth every minute!
- 7) When getting out of the car, set expectation for even young children to help empty the car of soccer equipment, backpacks, cups, snacks, groceries, etc.
- 8) Remember...when we do for children what they can do for themselves, we are telling them that we think they cannot do it or that they cannot do it "good enough."
- 9) Let your child assist you with challenging tasks. Give opportunities for him/her to offer ideas about the next step in the task.
- 10) Focus on efforts rather than results alone. For example, notice and express how hard a child worked on a task or how he/she kept trying.

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