



Building children's independence

Children strive to be independent from a very early age. Independence builds self-mastery which in turn builds self-confidence. We all know how it feels when we can achieve something ourselves by putting in effort, practice and determination. It is the same for children – it makes them feel competent, important, capable and confident. Every time we do something for our kids that they can do for themselves the message we are giving them is loud and clear – 'I don't believe you can do this on your own'. This then robs them of the opportunity to develop problem solving skills and the self-belief that they are capable of managing their own lives. Every time a child can manage a situation on their own, they build the foundations of resilience which reinforces a self-belief that they have the skills to manage difficulties when they come their way.

If your child could write you a letter to explain how to help them develop emotional resilience, build confidence and grow independently it would probably read something like this !

Dear Mum and Dad, Please help me to be confident and resilient...

- Let me put my bag away in the morning at school
- Let me put my reader/homework/diary out myself when I get to school
- Give me a chance to solve a problem / conflict with a friend on my own (even though I may have talked to you about it and I am feeling upset)
- Let me talk to a teacher on my own when I have not done my homework (and face the consequences!)
- Let me do most of my homework on my own (I will ask questions if I need it and if you help me can you please teach me to do it for myself and not do it for me?)
- Let me talk to a teacher on my own when I have a problem (and got some encouragement from you beforehand if I needed it)
- Let me clean up after breakfast / dinner – if I can use an iPad then I can clean up!
- Let me make my own breakfast (even in Prep I can get out the cereal box and milk!)
- Let me make some or all of my own lunch (with some guidance if making unhealthy choices)
- Please let me make some mistakes as I need to explore the world myself with some guidance from you.
- Comfort me when I am feeling sad, down, angry or any other difficult emotions, but know that I need to feel these feelings throughout life – just by being a great listener and comforting me will help me to feel better.
- Please let me choose what I want to wear so I can develop my own tastes and feel happy with just being me!
- Please allow me to solve problems on my own – it's the only way I can build resilience. (I know you are there to help me if I really need you to step in).
- Please let me explore the world and follow my own interests!
- Please give me lots of responsibility so I become confident in my own abilities!
- Please do not do anything for me that I can do for myself, this robs me of my confidence.
- Remind me when I need to calm down and do something that is fun and relaxing so I can develop my own coping skills.