



# Independence

**NZDSA**  
resources



A guide to teaching your child with Down syndrome how to be independent.



# IS YOUR HOME A HOTEL OR BEEHIVE?

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**How are we preparing our children for adult life? Do we work FOR THEM, waiting on them as in a hotel? Or do we work WITH THEM, expecting them to contribute as in a beehive?**

Around a quarter of people who live in group homes do not participate in any domestic activities at all. This underactivity can lead to boredom, behaviour problems, physical health problems or depression.

How many times have we decided it is quicker, easier and less bother to do a thing ourselves rather than get our child to do it? Each time we do

this we are conditioning our children into 'learned helplessness' where they expect other people to do everything for them as in a hotel.

The easy way out can actually deprive our children from their rights to be individual and self functioning people. We tend to dominate their lives, validating this learned helplessness. We sell our children short. They do have capabilities. Doing nothing in life is an unjust and unacceptable situation.

**So what can we do to encourage them to contribute as in a beehive?**

- Forget their limitations and concentrate on the positives.
- Start with what they can do, no matter how small and build from there
- Parents make pretty good teachers and home is a good place to begin.
- Look at the checklist below with your child and decide together what to work on.
- Remember "If you don't teach your child to cross the road, he'll never know what's on the other side AND NEITHER will you. "



Here are some ways to teach your child independence through everyday tasks around the home and when they're out.

#### How to teach

- Carefully choose what to teach
- Make a plan
- Be creative
- Be interesting
- Use simple language
- Take small steps
- Give lots of encouragement
- Keep going
- Celebrate what you achieve

#### Hygiene

- Coping in the toilet unaided
- Coping in public
- Showering or bathing unaided
- Cleaning their teeth
- Washing their hair
- Using anti-perspirant
- Shaving
- Remembering to do these things everyday

#### Clothing

- Buying contemporary and appropriate clothing in the right size
- Wearing appropriate clothes
- Knowing when clothes are dirty and should be changed
- Using the washing machine
- Hanging out wet washing or using the drier
- Ironing, folding and putting away clothes

#### Food

- Making healthy food choices
- Planning a menu
- Choosing to eat meals at appropriate times
- Using the electric jug, toaster and microwave
- Making a packed lunch
- Preparing a simple meal
- Making a shopping list
- Shopping for food

#### Around the home

- Taking the rubbish out
- Washing up or using the dishwasher
- Tidying up
- Vacuuming
- Cleaning the bathroom
- Wiping surfaces

#### Out and about

- Using public transport
- Crossing roads safely
- Knowing when and how to get help
- Greeting people appropriately
- Handling money
- Using a public phone or cell phone
- Holding a conversation
- Being polite
- Going to work
- Doing what the boss tells them

#### Free time

- Planning use of free time - using a diary, telling the time
- Choosing reasonable activities
- Contacting friends and arranging activities with them
- Behaving appropriately
- Being happy

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## NZDSA resources

### Want to know more?

The NZ Down Syndrome website can provide more information and link you to many more articles and organisations.

[www.nzdsa.org.nz](http://www.nzdsa.org.nz)



0800 693 724

[nzdsa.org.nz](http://nzdsa.org.nz)

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