1-2-3 Years Milestones
Article

An Independent Toddler

MAY 26, 2022

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After having spent the last few months doing absolutely everything for your child, it may come as a surprise (or relief) to start seeing him wanting to be more independent and pulling away from you a bit more. As toddlers grow, they start to become determined to do things themselves, which may lead to some frustrations (on both ends), but will certainly play an important role in his development.

Suddenly, your child will want to pour his own milk, put on his own shirt, open his own door, and press every button on the elevator. That's just the culmination of months of learning to be independent, a process that started around 6 months, when he started realizing he was an individual, separate from his parents (remember separation anxiety?). When your baby learns to walk, the path to independence has been paved and there is no stopping it now.

By the time your child is 18 months young, he realizes that there are a number of tasks he can do, and he doesn't need your help doing them. At this age, a number of skills he has been developing suddenly come together, and an increasing vocabulary means he can now say what he wants. With that, a boost in confidence makes him feel like he can master his environment.

This is all good and healthy, except that your child is unable to determine what tasks he can or cannot do, and he doesn't have a handle on his emotions yet to be able to deal with obstacles to his independence. Every day becomes a battle between what he wants to do and what he can do. Every day is a challenge for him to determine who's in charge: him or people around him.

All of this can seem like too much to handle at times, but here are some tips to help through this transition into independence

Let him decide: Some things are easy to control, yet can still allow him to feel independent. Let him choose what he wants to wear, or give him a choice on what he gets to eat. You can also compromise, for example, let him climb into his chair, but you buckle him in.

Control the environment: Create safe spaces where he can build on his confidence, without you having to worry about him breaking things or getting electrocuted. Put items that he can play with within easy reach, and he'll play with those, instead of those other fragile items you have around the house.

Adapt to his skills: Simplify things for him by placing cupboards and toy boxes within his reach, so he can put away his toys and choose his own clothes, without your help. Give him simple tasks that will make him feel like he's helping you, such as removing laundry from the washer.

Let him do it: It will be tempting to jump in whenever you see your child is failing at doing something, but he will learn best by failing then trying to do it again, in a different way. Of course, you can step in and help, but don't do the task for him. Let him figure it out.

Reference:

http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/discipline/improper-behavior/toddlers-declaration-of-independence/