

Kids' Life Skills

Introduction

All parents want their children to grow up to be resourceful, independent and well balanced young people, but we all know that this doesn't happen overnight - children need support and encouragement in order to develop the essential skills they need along their journey to adulthood.



Have you ever thought about the following?

- Can my children make informed decisions for themselves?
- How resourceful are my kids?
- Can they assess risks in their environment?
- Do they experience adventure?
- Do they know how to dress a wound or help an injured friend?
- How good are they at making new friends?

Family first aid brand Elastoplast has teamed up with child psychologist Dr Mandy Bryon from Great Ormond Street Hospital to provide expert advice, information and practical activities both you and your kids can enjoy together.

Download this pack and find out how you can support your child's social and emotional development:

1. Encouraging independence
2. Learning through adventure
3. Activity Time!
4. Health and safety
5. Developing friendships

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1.

Encouraging independence

Letting your children make their own decisions and judgements can boost confidence and increase awareness and perception of their environment. Here are some top tips on how to encourage your child to be independent:

- Allow your children to make discoveries for themselves
- Encourage them to find ways to do things and keep themselves occupied
- Give your children confidence to make informed choices and decisions
- Allow your children the freedom to make mistakes and find solutions
- Use encouraging talk when your children have done something on their own, eg "You did that really well; I'm really pleased with you; that was very helpful; that's one less job for me to do."



So how can you put these into practice in every day situations? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Let your children pay for their own sweets and toys in a shop
- Let your children take some risks in a controlled way to build confidence e.g. let them go to the corner shop while you follow some distance behind

- Encourage your children to order their own food in a café or restaurant
- Allow lots of time for free play with other children - not just adult-supervised activities
- Encourage good communication regarding boundaries and activities your children can do with their friends
- If your child's afraid of trying new things, work at developing a 'can-do' attitude, slowly working up to the outcome you both want
- With more adventurous children, explain that some risks are just too dangerous and negotiate safe, agreed boundaries
- If possible, get together with other adults in your neighbourhood to take active steps to look out for the safety of each other's children
- Encourage your children to do small tasks for themselves around the home, e.g., dressing themselves (choosing their own clothes), making a sandwich, unloading the washing machine, hanging out laundry. It doesn't matter if they don't do it perfectly - they have done it their way and achieved something

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2. Learning through adventure

Encouraging your children to try new experiences or activities will help build their confidence and ability to make judgements. Activities such as climbing a tree, building a den in the back garden or going on a nature trail in the woods may involve an element of risk - but allowing your children to experience new adventures helps to build their resilience and ability to make judgements.

Exposure to well managed risks helps children build confidence and improves their ability to face risks in the future. Adventure activities are an ideal way of developing this skill. And adventure doesn't have to be a challenge! We've included some simple ideas in this pack but you can also download the Elastoplast 'Kids Adventure' pack from this site for more ideas to encourage your children to use their judgement, observation and imagination.



You might be worried that your child will come to harm and so over-protect. To encourage independence you can follow a simple plan:

1. **Take a risk, let your child do something they have never tried before**
2. **Set some rules, so they don't go too far**
3. **Reward your child for achieving something themselves**
4. **Rescue - think ahead of potential risks and put in some safety nets in case all doesn't go according to plan. If it goes wrong, modify for next time, but allow more adventures!**



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3. Activity time!

Go on a nature trail

You don't have to go on an official trail to enjoy the hidden wildlife on offer outside your front door. You can do your own nature trail either at a familiar spot or a new outdoor space you haven't yet explored:

- Encourage your children to take notice of their environment:
 - The weather, temperature and season
 - Colours and textures of the plants and trees
 - Sounds of birds and wildlife
 - Signs and tracks of animals
 - Names of plants, trees and animals
- Why not go on a scavenger hunt and give your children a 30 minute time limit to gather objects from the environment. Here are some ideas:
 - A feather
 - A red petal
 - Rubber band
 - Bottle top
 - A stone
 - A coin
- Give your child a notepad and pen so they can draw and write down the names of all the different things they see on their trail around the park - you can look up each animal, insect, plant or flower on the Internet when you get home to find out a little more about them
- Take a camera with you and let your child capture of the day's activities
- Print these out and make a poster or collage out of the images

Build a den

Building a den is a great activity to encourage children's imagination. It is challenging both physically and mentally.

- Making a den allows children to experience a sense of danger in a secure environment and let's them use their imagination

- Encourage your children to build a den in your back garden or for even more adventure why not go to your local wood or park if there's one nearby
- Building a den helps to teach your children to be more aware of their natural environment and encourage independent and challenging play so they will be able to assess the safety of the den themselves. If it falls down they can build another!
- To get started you will need some large sticks, branches or dead-wood and strong string
- Help them to bind the tops of three long sticks to form a tripod, then fill in the sides by weaving in long strips of foliage or even fabric
- If you don't have a garden or park nearby let your kids build a den in the house. You'll be amazed what they can do with some chairs, old table cloths, cardboard boxes, string and clothes pegs!

Stargazing

This is a late-night activity, so younger kids may need an afternoon nap beforehand. But for many small children, the excitement of staying up past their bedtime is really exhilarating. Stargazing gives your children a sense of just how large the universe is and can be a good educational and social event for a group of children

- Why not let your children camp out in the back garden with friends and encourage them to pitch their own tents in teams
- If possible, borrow some binoculars or a telescope so you can see the stars and moon close-up
- Do some research on the internet and teach your children some basic things about the stars and moon above - like the phases of the moon and its orbit around the earth
- Let each child tell a story about flying into space around the stars and solar system!
- Summer is the perfect time to plan an adventure that children will remember well into the start of the next school year, so why not plan a stargazing sleepover party in your back garden for your children and their friends, and help them begin to unravel their place in the cosmos

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4. Health and safety

A child's health and safety education always begins at home, and you can start teaching them from a very early age. Even a child as young as age three or four can learn how to make an emergency phone call. Also encourage your children to learn their home address and telephone number so they can contact a responsible adult if they get lost.

It's good to give your child self-confidence, but at the same time make them aware about the potential for danger. A good way to do this is by reassuring your children that you will protect them whilst at the same time teaching them the skills to deal with situations and to protect themselves.

The basics

- Show your child where the first aid kit is and what is inside the first aid kit
- When they have an injury, talk them through how to clean wounds, apply plasters, simple bandages and antiseptics
- Create an emergency response flow chart with your child, and show them how to ask for help. Perhaps start with a well known neighbour or relative, then list telephone numbers that your child can access in case of an emergency
- Reassure your child that there's no reason to be afraid or scared during times of emergency and that staying calm is very important
- Make sure your child knows what to do in case of a fire or flood
- Encourage your children to identify responsible adults they could turn to for help in an emergency e.g. people in uniform such as a policeman or shop assistant
- Download the kids adventure pack for fun and educational first aid activities you can do together



To the rescue!

Encourage your children to be safety aware through games and role play. This game will help your children learn more about first aid and encourage them to care for others. It also helps them develop their teamwork skills

- The game ideally works with 4 children or more. Two children hide in the house and pretend to have an injury (e.g. broken arm, cut, burn etc) The other two children have the task of locating their injured friends, identifying their injury and taking the appropriate first aid action
- Take a look at the kids adventure pack for more details. Teach your children how to treat various injuries e.g. how to put on an arm sling, run a burn under cold running water, apply pressure to a bleeding wound or cut and how to put someone in the recovery position

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5. Developing friendships



Childhood friendships provide kids with much more than just people to play with. Learning to make friends as well as learning to be a good friend is an important part of a child's social development skills that will help them to find success in both their personal and professional lives

- Allow your children to play with their friends in and around the house / garden without continual adult supervision
- Set a good example. If you and your partner are polite, respectful and caring to each other, your children will learn to act in this way
- Make an effort to talk to other parents at school - this encourages children to get to know each other
- Find local activities, where your child will have opportunities to make friends outside of school, such as a drama group or swimming lessons
- Show love - this is invaluable as it helps bolster your child's confidence, even if there are occasional friendship difficulties
- Try not to interfere too much in matters connected with your child's friendships – give them the chance to sort these out in his own way whenever possible
- Falling in and out of friendships is a natural and invaluable part of social development - it isn't a problem if your child stops playing with certain friends
- Try helping your child see the positive in the negative – help them learn something about their own personality or the personality traits of others.

