



therapyfocus

Parent Power

At Therapy Focus we believe that parents are the experts when it comes to their child. We recognise that family is central to therapy and provide knowledge about the child's needs, strengths and goals.

Educating and empowering families is an important part of our holistic approach to service delivery. We strive to support children and families to reach their goals and live life to the fullest.

Our Parent Power brochures are a starting point for discussion about your child's goals and development. It offers tips, activities and strategies for a range of topics commonly faced by parents and carers.

PARENT POWER :

> Mobility

> Communication

> Behaviour and Routine

> Augmentative and Alternative Communication

> Life at Home and in the Community

> Social Relationships

> Self-Care >

> Play and Community

> Daily Learning

> Transitions



> Self-Care

Self-care skills are the personal activities we perform on a daily basis to look after ourselves.

These include activities such as:

- Dressing
- Washing
- Teeth brushing
- Toileting or indicating the need for the toilet
- Managing puberty
- Eating
- Drinking
- Sleep

Each activity involves a number of steps that require a variety of skills. Just as brushing teeth and tying laces are necessary skills for your child to acquire, breaking down the tasks and organising them in a way your child can manage is a necessary skill for parents.

Breaking down self-care skills into smaller steps and supporting your child through each step will, in time, provide your child with greater

independence as they do more for themselves.

As we have to wash ourselves, eat and drink, and get dressed every day, most self-care activities can be planned to fit into a daily routine. Here is an example of a child's daily schedule with the types of self-care activities that would fit into each routine:

Breakfast time: Eating breakfast and drinking. Getting ready for school: having a shower, getting dressed, teeth brushing, hair care, putting on shoes and socks, tying shoelaces.

Lunch: Eating, drinking and going to the toilet.

Bath time: Washing, putting on deodorant and dressing into pyjamas.

Bedtime: Washing face, teeth brushing and going to sleep.

Consider the following:

- What is the best time to focus on developing your child's self-care skills?
- Does your child have the opportunity to practice their self-care skills within their routine?
- What self-care activities can your child already do?
- How can you build on the skills your child already has?
- Is your child motivated to complete their own self-care skills? If not, consider incorporating their interests into the activity to increase their involvement.





TIPS TO ASSIST WITH SELF-CARE

- **Use every opportunity** to encourage your child to participate whenever possible throughout their normal routine. This allows them to improve their skills through regular practice in everyday activities.
- **Practise** doing a small part of an activity each day. Children find it easier to learn new skills in smaller sections.
- **Be consistent** with the words and signs used to instruct your child, and try to keep instructions short and simple.
- Ensure that there is enough **time** available for your child to complete the self-care activity without feeling rushed.
- Allow your child to **observe** other family members performing the activity. Modelling how to do the activity helps your child learn.
- **Use encouragement** to let your child know they are doing a great job. This will help them to keep motivated and boost their confidence.
- **Being patient and calm** is important when teaching your child new skills.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Body Awareness: allows us to know what our body consists of, the names or parts and how to control them.

Crossing the Midline: the ability to reach across from one side of the body to the other.

Fine Motor Control: the ability to perform small, precise movements quickly and smoothly.

Motor Planning: is the ability to plan the position and movement of the parts of the body to produce a desired movement.

Postural Control: the ability to hold the body in a stable position to allow for movement.

Proprioception: gives us an awareness of our body position. It uses information from our muscles, tendons and joints to let us know about our body position and the force of our movements. This information is used to plan our movements.

Sequencing: the ability to order and complete one activity or task before another activity or task.

Spatial Relations: the ability to see the position of objects in relation to ones self and in relation to each other.

COLE'S STORY

Cole is an 8 year-old boy with Down Syndrome who has difficulty putting on his school trousers. Cole's mother reports that Cole does attempt to dress himself but gets frustrated when he gets his trousers tangled. As Cole is unsteady on his feet, dressing whilst standing is difficult. To help Cole develop the skills he needs to dress independently, the following strategies were implemented:

- Start with shorts which are easier to put on
- Practice putting shorts or trousers while sitting down to help maintain balance
- Use 'backward chaining', which involves breaking the task down into small, manageable steps:
 - 1 Pick up the shorts by waistband
 - 2 Lower the shorts and lift up the left leg
 - 3 Put the left leg into short hole
 - 4 Lift up the right leg
 - 5 Put the right leg into the short hole
 - 6 Pull the shorts up to the knees
 - 7 Stand and pull the shorts to the waist

Cole is supported to complete the final step (step 7 – stand and pull the shorts to the waist) first to encourage success. Over time, Cole is encouraged to complete steps 6 back to 1, focusing on one step at a time. For example, completing steps 6 and 7 until Cole can complete both steps independently before getting him to complete step 5. After 6 months Cole was able to put trousers on before school independently while seated.

> RESOURCES FOR SELF-CARE SKILLS

Visual supports or visual prompts can be used to remind your child how to complete a series of steps. The visual support may be a photo, a series of animated pictures, illustrated stories or picture symbols representing an instruction.

There are a range of **aids and equipment** that may improve your child's independence with self-care activities, including bath or shower chairs, dressing stick, tooth brush adaptations and modified cutlery and drinking equipment. This helps to make the activity easier for your child.

Social stories are short stories individualised to your child to describe how to behave in a specific situation. It is best to use only one social story at a time and include photos or pictures that illustrate the situation. For example, a social story may be used to teach your child when to go to the toilet and what to do in the toilet.

HELPFUL/USEFUL SERVICES

Disability Services Commission (DSC)

The Commission works in partnership with service providers and other government departments to provide information, supports and services to people with disability, their families and carers.

www.disability.wa.gov.au

Pebbles Continence Management Service

Service provides specialist advice, aids and support for children with disabilities who experience bladder and/or bowel issues. The service is targeted at children aged 0-16 years.

therapyfocus.org.au/services/pebbles-continence-management.aspx

Sleep solutions

A support service for people of all ages and their carers/family who have difficulties with sleep.

www.cptech.com.au

SECCA – Sexuality, Education, Counselling and Consulting Agency

SECCA is a not for profit organisation designed to support people with disabilities, learn about human relationships and sexual health across the lifespan.

www.secca.org.au

ILC – The Independent Living Centre

A not for profit service that provides expert advice on equipment, access and resources for people with disabilities and their families.

www.ilc.com.au

Visit the Useful Links page on the Therapy Focus website at www.therapyfocus.org.au for links and contact details of more useful services.

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