

Training Module*

Self-Help Skills

PURPOSE

To explore the meaning and importance of self-help skills as they relate to young children ages two to five.

DEFINITION

Before we begin, let's take a minute to define the term *self-help skills*. This term can be defined as "those basic skills needed to take care of one's own needs." Examples of self-help skills include brushing teeth, washing hands, using a tissue, buttoning/unbuttoning buttons, etc. To help you better understand this concept, let's take a look at these skills in more detail.

EXAMPLE

All of the two year olds in Ms. Duncan's class are preparing for lunch. Before the children are permitted to sit at the lunch table, they must wash their hands. Becky, Tamara, and Josh are the first three children to reach the sink. Becky squirts some soap onto her hands and begins washing. Tamara dips her hands in and out of the running water and is quickly finished. Josh just watches Tamara and Becky. Ms. Duncan must help him wash his hands.

In the above example, Becky, Tamara, and Josh were all working on the same self-help skill, washing hands. However, each child demonstrated a different level of competency with this task. Becky obviously has a strong grasp of this self-help skill. Tamara, on the other hand, understands some of the procedure but not all of it. Josh has not yet demonstrated this skill on his own. As you can see, even though all of these children are working on the same self-help skill, they are working on different levels.

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-HELP SKILLS

The development of self-help skills is a step-by-step developmental process. Between the ages of twelve months and six years children work on a variety of self-help skills. For instance, a twelve-month-old child may be working on the self-help skill of feeding him/herself a cracker or cookie. On the other hand, an older child (four years old) may be working on buttoning buttons or lacing shoes. Some common self-help skills for young children (ages two to five) include drinking from a cup, zipping a zipper, using the potty, washing hands, brushing teeth, pouring water or milk from a pitcher, using a tissue, getting a drink from a water fountain, and putting on/taking off a coat. These are just a few of the self-help skills young children are striving to acquire.

It is fairly obvious why self-help skills are important – these are skills a child will use for the rest of his/her life. In a sense they are life skills. It is important for parents and educators of young children to realize that just like numbers, colors, and shapes, self-help skills deserve to be included in the curriculum. Self-help skills need to be introduced and reinforced through a wide variety of hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities. Later in this module we will explore some specific materials that can be used to introduce and reinforce self-help skills. But right now, let's take some time for you to try what you've learned!

* ATTENTION TEXAS CUSTOMERS: This training module is considered self-instructional material.

TRY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED!

Observe the children in your group during a routine handwashing time, such as preparing for lunch or snack. Note each child's procedure for washing his/her hands. Record your observations on a sheet of paper. Focus your observations on the following questions.

Did the child use soap?

Did the child rub his/her hands together to help remove the dirt?

Did the child use a towel to dry his/her hands?

After completing this exercise you should have a fairly clear understanding of each child's knowledge of washing hands. If most of your children are already proficient in this area, you may want to explore a different self-help skill following the same procedure (e.g., pouring milk/water or using a tissue).

Now that you are more familiar with the concept of self-help skills, let's take some time to see how you can build this skill through hands-on materials in your classroom.

MATERIALS THAT PROMOTE SELF-HELP SKILLS

There are many different materials you can use to promote self-help skill development. The following are just a few.

Lacing Cards (four+ year olds)

Many different types of lacing cards are available commercially. When purchasing commercial lacing cards, look for those made from sturdy material with large holes. They will last longer and be easier for the children to handle. Keep in mind that the first time a child uses lacing cards, he/she will probably not go in and out of the holes in a normal lacing pattern. That's okay! As the child works with the materials over time, he/she will begin to understand the concept.

Pitcher for Pouring

Add a few small plastic measuring cups or pitchers to the water table. The children can fill these with water and then practice pouring the water into small cups or bowls. This activity also works well with sand or rice. Once the children display progress with this skill, let them help pour their own milk or juice at lunch or snack. Once they achieve this self-help skill, they will be very proud!

Dress-Up Clothing with Buttons and Zippers

Adding shirts, pants, jackets, etc., to the DRAMATIC PLAY area that include buttons and zippers is a great way to help children practice this self-help skill. Make sure that the buttons and zippers are large. This feature will make them easier for little fingers to grasp.

SUMMARY

Young children begin to develop self-help skills early in their lives. It is important to keep in mind that young children of the same chronological age are often on many different developmental levels. As the teacher you will need to observe each child carefully to meet individual needs. In addition, be sure to provide the children with a wide variety of hands-on activities that encourage them to practice self-help skills. It is through this exploration that they will develop strong self-help skills.

ATTENTION CDA TRAINERS: Have each CDA candidate complete this Follow-up Evaluation individually after your group presentation. Evaluate his/her performance and then discuss the results together. This evaluation does not need to be reviewed by HighReach Learning.

Follow-up Evaluation

Self-Help Skills

Name _____ HRL Customer Number _____

Address _____ Phone _____

School Name _____ Phone _____

School Address _____

Who is responsible for payment? Self Other _____

1. Define self-help skills.

2. List two self-help skills the children in your group are working on right now.

3. What activities/materials do you currently use with your children that are designed to reinforce self-help skills?

4. Choose one of the materials listed on page 2 and explain how it could be used to develop self-help skills

5. Explain why self-help skills are important to young children.

6. Look through the curriculum you use in your classroom and identify two activities the children worked on this month that helped build self-help skills. If you cannot find two, design two yourself.

7. Observe the children participating in one of the following self-help activities. Record your observations below. Choose either handwashing or using a tissue.

This Training Module is designed to be used in conjunction with the curriculum you are currently using in the classroom. Prior to completing the module, explore your curriculum plans and think about how the topic of the module fits into those plans. Throughout the coming months, consider ways in which you can apply the training topic to a variety of classroom activities. As with children, practicing new skills on a daily basis makes a big difference.

In order to receive credit:

1. Read the Training Module and complete the Follow-up Evaluation.
2. Enclose check or money order in the amount of \$18.00 (payable to HighReach Training Program) and your completed Follow-up Evaluation.
3. Mail to:

HighReach Learning
Attn: Training Department
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