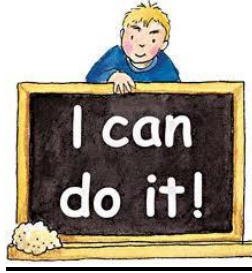


## **Building the Self-Reliant Child**



**Citizenship is the Pillar of Character for November.** Citizenship means cooperating with others, obeying the rules and law, helping our home, school, and community, and protecting the environment. With this in mind, there are things you can do as parents to help your child become a model citizen.

As seen on: Good Morning America, ABC Nightline, The Today Show, and others, Dr. Robyn Silverman, a Child Development Specialist has taught millions of parents how to build children's self-reliance and responsibility. The following information is summarized from Dr. Silverman's research on "You can do it! 7 Ways to Teach Your Reliance and Responsibility:"

Letting a child go and learn from their mistakes is an extremely difficult task for parents to do. We never want to see our children experience any kind of discomfort, challenge, or threat of failure, but there is a great value in making mistakes and learning from them.

As children get older, it becomes developmentally appropriate and natural for children to become more independent, self-reliant, and responsible. Although we want to keep our children young forever, there comes a time where we need to step back and let our children try something on their own and learn from it. Of course, it is important to find the balance between letting your child try new things on their own and supporting and mentoring your child through this challenge.

Here are some ideas:

**1. Allow your child to make some decisions.** The earlier you start to give your child the opportunity to make decisions, the more likely they will be able to make sound decisions as they get older and with less guidance. With younger children, it is best to give your child only a few choices so that they know what to choose from. These choices can be what they would like for dinner, what chores they would like to do, or even what activity they would like to do over the weekend.

**2. Encourage your child to try tasks on their own.** Children love to feel successful. A child may be successful the first time they try something while other times, success may come after several attempts. Although it's easier and quicker to do a task for your child, by giving them the opportunity to try on their own (while overseeing what they are doing) they will be able to feel confident and proud of themselves. You should start by showing your child how you do a certain task then have your child model how you did it. You could try having them do the laundry, folding clothes, matching socks, packing their own way, making their lunch, tying their own shoes, feeding the pet, taking out the

garbage, cleaning or making the table, and even making their own bed. Your child may even have other ideas of what they can try on their own, and if it's safe, let them give it a shot. Be sure to praise their efforts and their initiative and allow your child to try again. Eventually your child will be older, and we want your child to be able to cook, do homework, and navigate routines on his or her own.

**3. Model responsibility and self reliance:** Let your child see the kinds of responsibilities and tasks you do on a daily basis. When you have something that needs to be done, verbalize what you need to do and how you plan to complete it. This will show your child that adults have chores to do too and are able to get them done by thinking out loud and problem solving.

**4. Coach your child rather than give them the answers:** Children have many questions. Instead of providing the answers for them, why not have your child try to devise answers or even explore the answers together. Sometimes answering a question with a question might help them retrieve the answer. By doing this, your child will better remember to solve similar problems in the future.

**5. Be a good support system:** Your child needs to know that you are proud of them no matter what. When they accomplish something, they want to see that you are celebrating with them, and when they still need to work on something, your child wants to see that you are there to encourage them to try again. By letting your child know you are there for them, they are more likely to not give up and to persevere.

**6. Provide your child with responsibilities:** Adults have tasks to do, and so should your child. Chores are a great way to teach your child to be responsible and self-reliant. You can start by making chores fun or making a game out of it. Once it seems fun to your child, show them how to complete a chore. You might even want to make a check list for your child; this is a strategy that will help them keep organized in the future. Please refer to some of the possible chores presented above.

**7. Encourage healthy risk-taking.** Encourage your child to get back on the horse when they fall off it. We all make decisions and we all make mistakes. Mistakes are okay. The most important thing is that your child tries. Most obstacles take time to learn; explain this process to your child. You could even give them a personal example of how you had to work at something until you got it right. You may feel the urge to protect your child from failing or making a mistake, but this will not teach them how to overcome and to persevere. Learning from our mistakes is a powerful tool.

Your child is relying on you for support, encouragement, and the opportunity to tackle challenges on their own. This means encouraging your child to figure it out on their own and being there for them when they need you. One day, they will become self-reliant, independent, and responsible young men and women.

-Article summarized by Ava Laera, School Counselor, VES

For more information please visit:

<http://www.drrobysilverman.com/parenting-tips/you-can-do-it-7-ways-to-teach-your-children-self-reliance-and-responsibility/>