

Essential Eight Skills: Completing daily living skills related to health and safety

Why is completing daily living skills related to health and safety important?

As adults we all complete multiple tasks on a daily basis which contribute to maintaining our health and safety. This is part of living life. Therefore it is important that young people learn these skills so they understand what they need to do to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle. Most daily living skills have a sequence of steps that you go through to successfully complete the task.

Sometimes this can be overwhelming for a child with a learning disability or Autism. Some reasons could be, too many steps to remember, motor skills making it difficult, not understanding why they need to do it.

Once they are able to complete these skills, it will also help to build routines in daily life. This should make day to day life more predictable and tolerable.

What does it look like in daily life?

- Brushing your teeth
- Bathing
- Washing hands
- Eating meals
- Exercising



Essential Eight Skills:

1. Making a request
2. Waiting
3. Accepting removals/transitions/sharing/turn taking
4. Completing tasks when requested
5. Accepting 'no'
6. Following directions related to health & safety
7. Completing daily living skills related to health & safety
8. Tolerating situations related to health & safety

Armstrong, H., Denne, L. D., & Bailey, T. (2021). The role of key skills as a risk marker for the development of challenging behaviour in children and young people who have an intellectual disability. *The Journal of Positive Behavioural Support*, 11(2), 3-14.

How to learn and practise

- Invite your child to the bathroom with you to play while you brush your teeth or wash your hands. Encourage them to hold their brush in the same room as you to start off with.
- Use backward chaining, where you complete the task and get them to join in for the last action. The next time get them to join on the last two actions and so on.
- It is very helpful to make these activities fun and silly. Brush teeth while dancing or wash hands while playing in the paddling pool
- Make up songs to go with the activity e.g. “this is the way we brush our teeth”.
- Show the different steps involved. It might be easier to start with photos and then move to symbols. Remove the pictures as you go through each step so that the child can see they are getting near to the end.

How to support learning

- Keep language simple
- Use key phrases highlighting what they are doing well
- Use lots of praise so they associate the skill with positivity e.g. ‘well done’ or ‘good listening’
- Gradually increase the difficulty of the tasks e.g. start by showing the child you washing your hands, then get them to just splash the water, then introduce the soap etc.
- Take into account your child’s sensory needs. Some of the activities may be very unpleasant or over stimulate them.

Please visit our website for videos explaining in more detail how to practise these and other essential skills

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