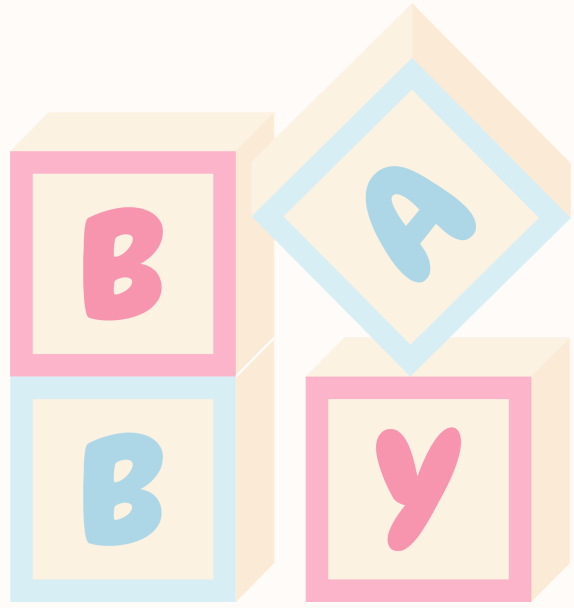


# HELP ME GROW LEARNING CIRCLE

## ADAPTIVE/SELF-HELP DEVELOPMENT



### WHAT IS ADAPTIVE/SELF-HELP DEVELOPMENT

Adaptive or Self-Help development is your child's journey toward independence. It refers to the everyday "life skills" they learn to take care of their own basic needs and participate in family routines. While these tasks might seem small, they are the building blocks of confidence and are essential for school readiness.

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- **Self-Care:** Learning to eat with a spoon, drink from a cup, brush teeth, wash hands, and use the toilet independently.
- **Dressing:** Helping to push an arm through a sleeve, taking off socks, and eventually mastering zippers, buttons, and tying shoes.
- **Safety:** Understanding basic rules, such as knowing that "hot" is dangerous or looking both ways before crossing the street.
- **Personal Responsibility:** Helping with simple chores, like putting toys away or placing a napkin in the trash



### WHY IT MATTERS

- **Builds Confidence:** Every time a child says "I did it myself!", their self-esteem grows. Mastering a small task gives them the courage to try bigger ones.
- **Develops Other Skills:** These tasks actually practice fine motor skills (using a fork), problem-solving (figuring out which shoe goes on which foot), and following directions.
- **Independence:** As children learn these skills, they rely less on adults for daily tasks, making transitions to preschool and other social settings much smoother.

### WAYS TO SUPPORT ADAPTIVE/SELF-HELP DEVELOPMENT

- **"Let Them Try First":** Even if it's messy or slow, give your child a chance to try a task on their own before stepping in.
- **Break It Down:** If a task is too hard, teach just one step. For example, you start the zipper, and let them pull it the rest of the way up.
- **Use Routines:** Consistent daily routines—like always washing hands before dinner—help these skills become automatic.

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## ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN ADAPTIVE/SELF-HELP DEVELOPMENT

### (Birth to 12 Months)

Because infants rely on caregivers for almost everything, "adaptive" milestones at this age are often tied to physical coordination and communicating needs:

#### • Eating & Feeding:

- Expressing hunger or excitement when seeing a bottle.
- Bringing hands to the mouth to signal hunger.
- Learning to hold their own bottle.
- Starting to eat with their fingers and attempting to use a cup with a lid

#### • Sleeping:

- Developing a pattern of good rest mixed with alert, awake periods.
- Learning to calm themselves with a pacifier or a favorite object.

#### • Dressing:

- Cooperating with dressing by holding out an arm or leg to help.

#### • Communicating Needs:

- Developing different cries for different needs (e.g., a specific cry for hunger vs. being wet)

## ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN ADAPTIVE/SELF-HELP DEVELOPMENT

### 12–24 Months: "The Explorer"

- **The Sock Race:** Encourage your child to pull off their own socks at the end of the day. It's the easiest piece of clothing to master and builds "finger strength."
- **Finger Food Fun:** Offer "scoopable" foods like yogurt or applesauce and let them use a thick-handled spoon. It will be messy, but they are learning the "hand-to-mouth" coordination needed for eating.
- **Wash-the-Toy:** During bath time, give them a washcloth to "wash" a plastic doll or toy car. This teaches the motions of scrubbing and self-cleaning.

## ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN ADAPTIVE/SELF-HELP DEVELOPMENT

### 2–3 Years: "The Helper"

- **The Coat Flip:** Teach the "Montessori Flip"—lay the coat on the floor upside down in front of them, have them put their hands in the armholes, and flip it over their head.
- **Self-Serve Snack Station:** Place healthy snacks and a small water pitcher on a low shelf. Let them practice pouring and choosing their own snack.
- **Toy "Parking Lot":** Use masking tape to make boxes on the floor. At the end of the day, have them "park" their toys in the boxes. This turns a chore into a matching game.

### 4–5 Years: "The Big Kid"

- **The Dressing Routine:** Pick out two outfits the night before and let them choose one. This builds decision-making skills without the morning rush.
- **Kitchen Assistant:** Give them a dull butter knife to cut soft things like bananas or cooked carrots. This builds the fine motor skills needed for using a fork and knife properly.
- **Pet Care:** If you have a pet, let your child be responsible for a simple task, like checking the water bowl or giving a treat. This teaches them to care for others while following a multi-step routine.

## DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

The Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) is considered a "gold standard" tool because it relies on the person who knows the child best: you. It typically takes only 10–15 minutes to complete. It lists specific things your child can do, helping you recognize and celebrate their progress. See where your child is at developmentally by scanning the QR codes

