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PREFACE

Self-care learning is an essential element of child development. Under normal circumstances, children are able to gradually master self-care skills, such as feeding, toileting, dressing and grooming, through their life experiences. During the learning process, children will not only learn to take care of themselves, but also be able to build self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Hong Kong is a multicultural society that comprises families of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Despite ethnic and cultural differences, we face similar parenting problems. As affluence grows, parents are now showering their children with more love and care. Moreover, some children are now being looked after by domestic helpers. These factors may hinder children's development of independent self-care skills. As a result, children may become less responsible and very dependent on others. For children with developmental problems, learning daily self-care skills is not as easy as we think. They face challenges when they eat, go to the toilet, dress and groom themselves, which directly weakens their self-care ability and self-confidence. This in turn will increase the burden on their families.

Regardless of our ethnicity and cultural background, all of us living in the same place should work together and help children develop their self-care skills at a young age to nurture a new generation that is independent and responsible.

With this in mind, the Occupational Therapy Team of Heep Hong Society has created this Guide to Enhancing Children's Self-Care Skills for parents. Heep Hong Society publishes this parental guide in four different languages, including Chinese, English, Nepali and Urdu (Pakistan). We hope that this guide will capture the attention of parents of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds so that they would take note of the development of their children's self-care skills, as well as offer children of different ethnicities and backgrounds equal learning opportunities.

This book consists of five chapters. The first chapter Understanding Self-care Skills Training features the basic concept and rationale of self-care skill training. Chapter two to five further explore topics on feeding, toileting, dressing and grooming skills. Each chapter presents the developmental stages of the corresponding self-care skills and highlights some common problems encountered by children in daily life. After which, we examine the possible causes of these problems and provide parents and caregivers some hands-on tips and specific training strategies. We hope you find the information in Guide to Enhancing Children's Self-Care Skills useful, whereby it aims to provide parents of different ethnicities appropriate and practical guidelines to address their parenting concerns, and improve the lives of children with special needs and their families.



Occupational Therapy Team

Heep Hong Society

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協康會
HEEP HONG SOCIETY

UNDERSTANDING SELF-CARE SKILLS TRAINING

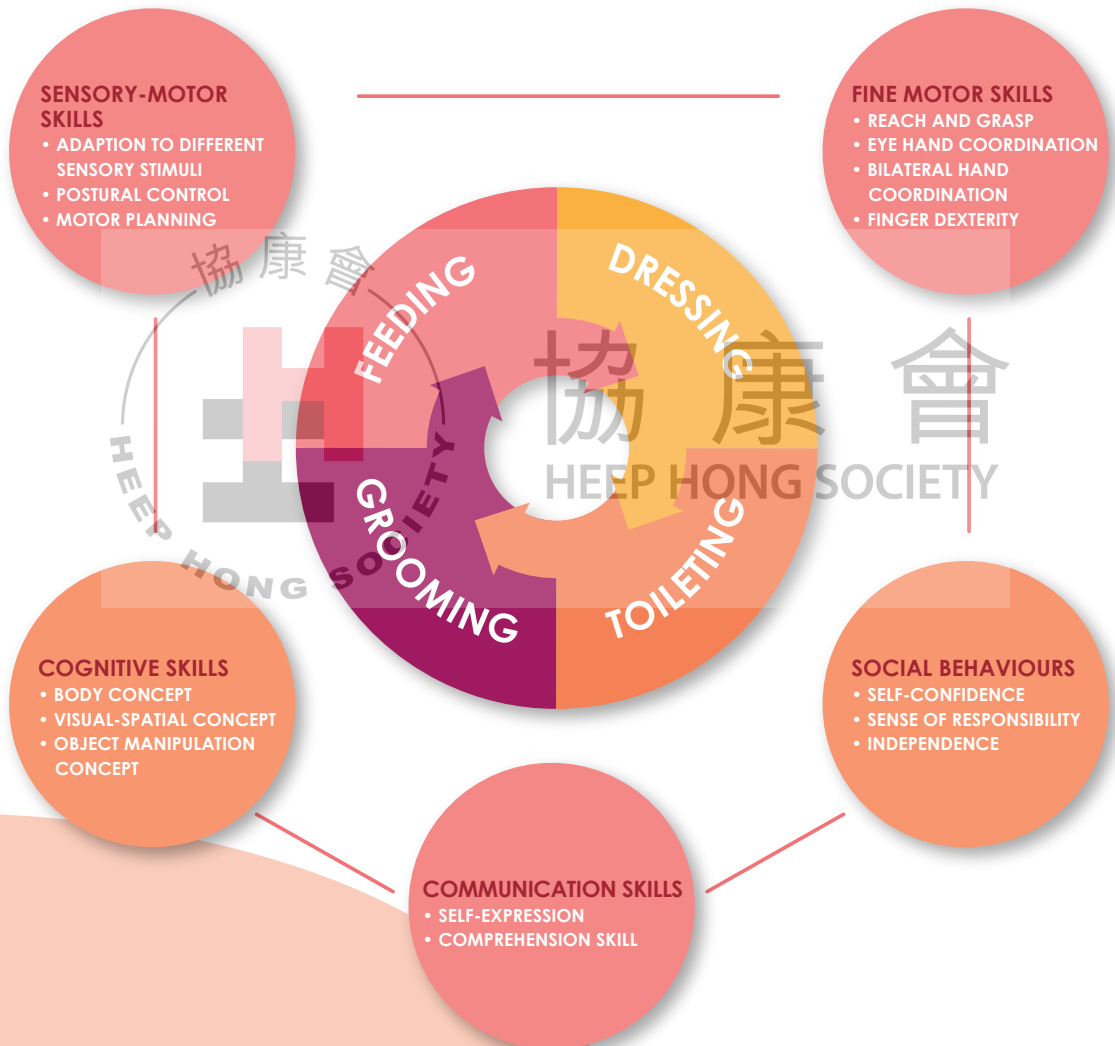


Why Are Self-care Skills Important?

'Self-care' refers to children's ability and habit to take care of themselves in their daily life. The main self-care skills children would develop at their growing stage include:



Self-care development is closely linked to the psychological, physiological, physical and mental development of a child. By incorporating different self-care activities into the daily life, children can learn an array of foundational skills, including sensory-motor skills, fine motor skills, cognitive skills, communication skills, as well as proper social behaviours, which are all very beneficial to their development.



Foundational Skills Related to Self-care Activities

Sensory-motor Skills

During self-care activities, children will experience different sensory stimuli and react accordingly. Allowing children to take part in self-care activities at an early age not only enriches their sensory experiences but also enhances their postural control and motor planning skills. For example, eating food of different temperatures, textures, tastes and colours will enhance children's touch, taste, smell and visual experience. Besides, teaching children to sit properly and eat with utensils independently will enhance their postural control in sitting and help them develop motor planning required for eating.

Fine Motor Skills

Learning different self-care activities will help improve children's fine motor skills in various aspects. For example, buttoning and zipping can strengthen a child's eye-hand coordination, bilateral hand coordination and finger grip strength.



Cognitive Skills

During self-care activities, children must look at, touch and use different parts of the body to manipulate different objects, such as clothing items and utensils. Participating in different self-care activities in daily life can enhance children's concentration, visual space concept and object manipulation, and help them establish body concept. For example, when putting on a jacket, children can learn how to identify the front and back, as well as the inside and outside of the jacket. They can also acquire spatial concept, body concept and object manipulative skills while they move their body and master the various steps involved in the process.



Communication Skills

While engaging in daily self-care activities, children will learn to express different needs. For example, they will learn to say sentences such as 'I need to go to the toilet', 'I am thirsty' or 'I would like to eat some fruit'. They will also learn to comprehend different instructions from adults. For example, 'Please use soap to wash hands', 'Please use paper towels to wipe the mouth', or 'Please sit down to wear socks and shoes'. Such learning experiences can help children to conduct self-care activities more efficiently. Moreover, they can also promote children's development of communication skills.

Training young children in self-care skills, such as dressing themselves, wearing socks, shoes, or organising their personal items helps to reinforce their self-confidence, sense of responsibility and independence. At the same time, their social skills and adaptability are expected to improve.

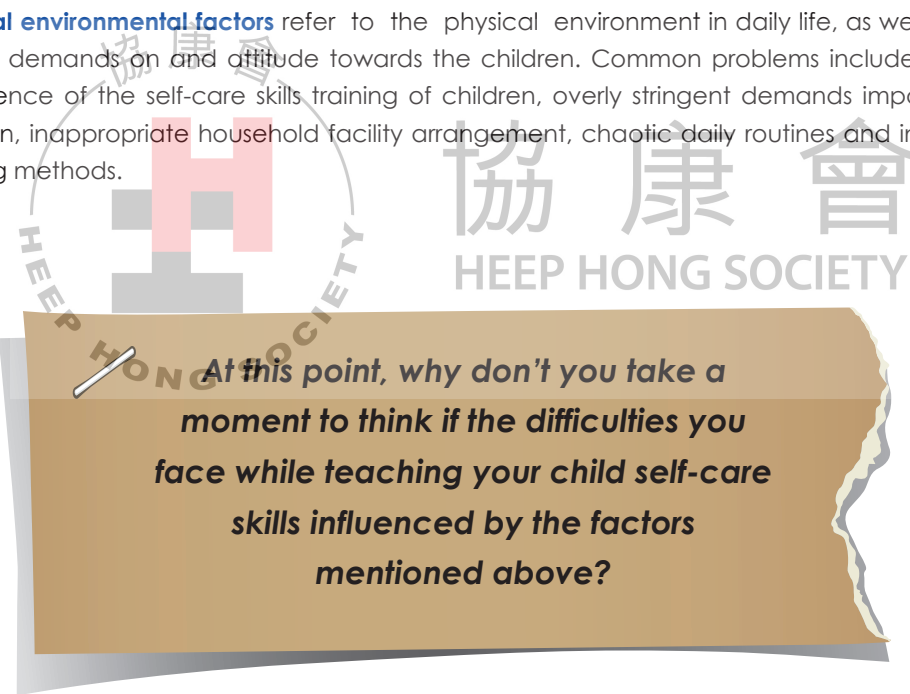


Factors Affecting the Development of Self-care Skills

Why are some children fed by adults even when they are six years old? Is it because they do not know how to use utensils? Are their parents overprotective? Are there any other reasons? If we take a closer look at these problems, we will notice that there are many factors affecting children's development of self-care skills. The factors can be classified into two broad categories: individual developmental factors and external environmental factors.

Individual developmental factors include children's physiological, psychological and sensory-motor development. More specifically, the development of proper sensory responses, postural control, motor planning, fine motor skills, as well as cognition, communication skills and social skills.

External environmental factors refer to the physical environment in daily life, as well as the adults' demands on and attitude towards the children. Common problems include adults' negligence of the self-care skills training of children, overly stringent demands imposed on children, inappropriate household facility arrangement, chaotic daily routines and incorrect training methods.



At this point, why don't you take a moment to think if the difficulties you face while teaching your child self-care skills influenced by the factors mentioned above?

Self-care Problems

External Environmental Factors

Inappropriate household facility or furniture arrangement

Adult lacks understanding of children's self-care skill development

Adult imposes inappropriate demands or uses unsuitable training methods on children

Chaotic daily routines

Individual Developmental Factors

Sensory-motor Skills

- Inadequate sensory experience
- Weak postural control
- Poor motor planning

Cognitive Skills

- Weak body concept
- Poor visual space concept
- Weak object manipulation

Social Skills

- Lack of flexibility
- Poor adaptability

Fine Motor Skills

- Poor reach and grasp
- Poor eye-hand coordination
- Poor bilateral hand coordination
- Poor finger dexterity

Communication Skills

- Poor expression
- Poor comprehension



For example:

Learning to wash hair

Method 1: Forward chaining

Training in the natural order

STEPS					
01 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
02 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
03 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
04 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
05 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry



Unassisted



Assisted by parent

Learning to wash hair

Method 2: Backward chaining

Training in reverse order

STEPS					
01 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
02 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
03 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
04 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry
05 STAGE	 Wet Hair	 Squeeze Shampoo Out	 Shampoo Hair	 Rinse	 Wipe Hair Dry

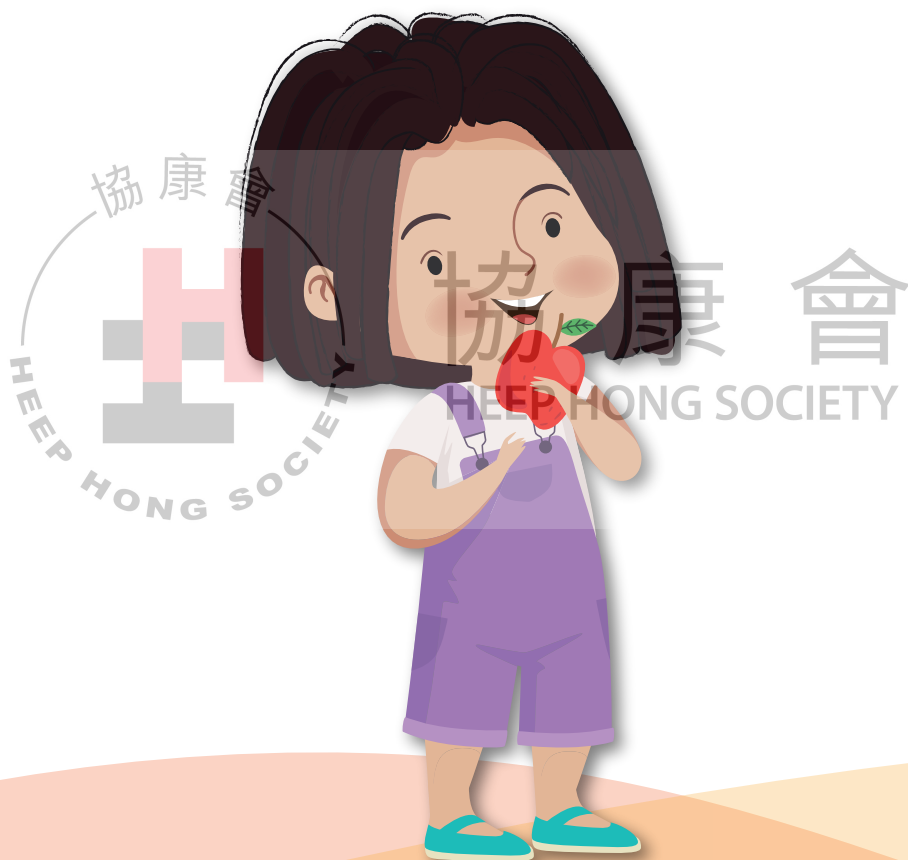


Unassisted



Assisted by parent

FEEDING



02

CHAPTER

Feeding Skills Development

Children are born with the ability to suckle and swallow liquid food. At six months old, children will begin to develop the ability to chew. Through practices in daily routines, at around five years old, children will be able to use different utensils to eat various kinds of food and handle different types of food packaging. To understand more about children's feeding skill development, parents may refer to the following table:



Age

Feeding Skills

0-3 months old

- Drink liquid from milk bottle
- Swallow liquid food

3-6 months old

- Swallow mushy food, such as soft rice cereal and soft fruit puree

6-12 months old

- Swallow sticky food, such as porridge and potato puree
- Chew crispy solid food
- Hold milk bottle with both hands while feeding
- Sip liquid from a spoon

1-2 years old

- Chew soft solid food
- Use fingers to put food into the mouth
- Drink from a straw

2-3 years old

- Drink with a cup without spilling
- Pick food up with a toothpick
- Pick food up with a fork

3-4 years old

- Eat hard and chewy solid food
- Eat with spoon
- Drink soup with a spoon without spilling
- Transfer food into the mouth with chopsticks
- Spit out seeds or bones in food
- Handle carton drink without spilling

4-5 years old

- Pick food up with chopsticks
- Spread butter or jam on a slice of bread with a knife
- Use hands to eat chicken wings
- Pour drink out from small water bottle without spilling
- Tear off food packaging

5-6 years old

- Open sealed food packaging, such as cup jelly
- Open canned drinks without spilling

Common Feeding Problems

When children eat, the following problems may occur, which can be challenging to parents. Does your child have any of these problems?

- () Picky eater and only prefer certain types, taste, temperature, colour or texture of food.
- () Refusal of unfamiliar food.
- () Insists on using certain utensils or tableware.
- () Does not like to chew food and would try to force it down by swallowing.
- () Easy to choke on food, even to the extent of vomiting.
- () Food remains can often be found inside the mouth.
- () Unable to spit out the seeds or bones in food.
- () Inappropriate handling of utensils.
- () Clumsy handling of utensils.
- () Not being able to sit still and wandering away at meal .
- () Shows lack of appetite and eats slowly.
- () Refuses to self-feed and relies on parents' assistance.