

# INDEPENDENT LADDER



ASK QUESTIONS

THINKING SPACE

GOAL SETTING

SELF-REGULATION

GOOD CHOICES

OPPORTUNITIES

OWN THOUGHTS



## HOW MIGHT YOU THINK ABOUT INDEPENDENCE WITH YOUR CHILD

As adults, we can too easily superimpose our own experiences onto our children. When we say “don’t worry, it will be fine”, that is because we have experienced ‘it’ and suspect that, in all likelihood, it will be just fine.

But are we missing an important opportunity to scaffold experiences for our children when we do this? By stripping out all of the learning experiences in-between and fast-forwarding to the end.

I think it is critical to paint a picture for children of the route ahead: how do they recognise and experience the different layers that lead them to ‘independence’ and what actually does independence look like?

I find that the attached model can work well for children. It explains, in simple terms, each step and children are adept at recognizing where they are on the ladder and what they need to practice) to become proficient on the next rung.

It is possible to be an independent 4-year-old if one recognises that the expectations of younger children are different and this also helps to endorse those children who are engaged in wanting to demonstrate their own independence.

**Own Thoughts:** The first step is to encourage our children to have, and importantly, to share their own thoughts. They should be encouraged to explain the reasoning behind these thoughts (give them space to practice this - it might not come easily at first). I found that older siblings might want to step in and sometimes finish their younger sibling’s sentence....resist this if you can.

**Opportunities:** If I had to chose, this would be perhaps the most important factor of them all. Courage, resilience and open-mindedness are all hidden on this rung. Encouraging our children to choose things that do not come naturally is such a vital life skill: it is easy to excel at the things that come naturally (this is what gives us a sense of identity), but our character comes from how we adapt to and overcome challenges. I believe that acting in this way also makes us more cognizant of other people’s strengths and gifts, particularly when we might have struggled in these areas ourselves.

**Good Choices:** It is easy to make the right choices when others are watching, but what if they are not. Knowing in our own minds that we have the independence and moral certitude to do the right things is so valuable later in life we others question us.

**Self-Regulation:** Establishing routines are part of being independent, organized and dependable. Being able to trust in ourselves and to have others able to trust us too is important.

**Goal Setting:** Is one of the hardest things to do and if we are honest, we have probably all, in the past, set ourselves reasonably achievable and comfortable goals. Do we have the determination and resilience to set ourself honest goals that are just out of sight and do we have what it takes to chase these down?

**Thinking Space:** As we get older, the importance of having time to reflect on our own lives and how we interact with others becomes hugely important. Showing gratitude for the opportunities we have is also vitally important. Even 5 minutes a day to replay the day will throw up all sorts of questions and observations that will help us live tomorrow more purposefully.

**Ask Questions:** Many of us are passive learners, we learn from listening and observing others. How much more successful would our learning and understanding be if we were actively involved in and responsible for our own learning?