



## Chapter 8

# Teaching Everyday Activities

Your child is young now, but someday he will be an adult. A child who is blind or cannot see well can grow up to be a capable, contributing member of your family and community. Like other children, he must learn how to:

- take care of himself
- help with the family's work
- be independent
- be well-behaved

### Taking care of himself

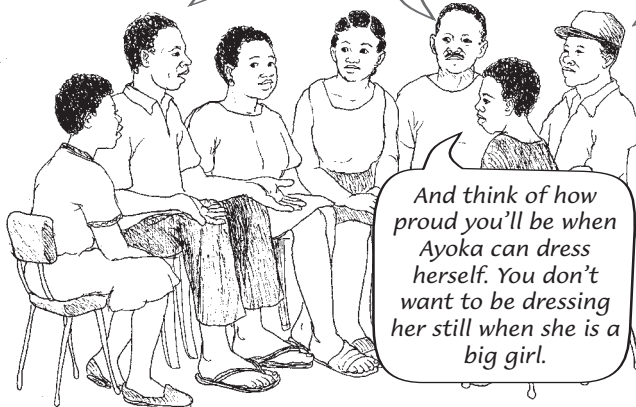
Daily living skills include eating, dressing, using the toilet, and keeping clean. A child who cannot see well needs to learn all these skills so that he can take care of himself. As he grows up, if he can take care of himself it will be much easier for him to go to school and earn a living.

*It's so much easier for me to feed and dress Ayoka. It's going to take such a long time to teach her those things. I don't have time.*

*Yes, I know it seems hard now, but think of the time you'll save later. If Ayoka can dress herself, you'll have more time to do all the other things you have to do every morning.*

*My mother, Fola, is almost blind. Maybe she can tell you some things that would make it easier.*

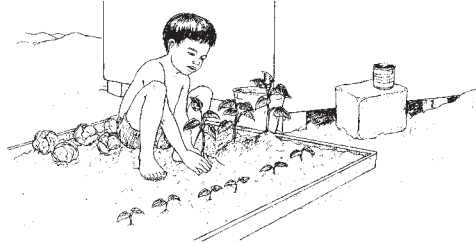
*And think of how proud you'll be when Ayoka can dress herself. You don't want to be dressing her still when she is a big girl.*



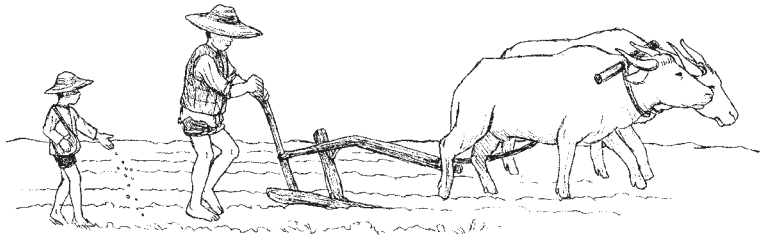
## Helping with your family's work

While he will need some help at first, a child who is blind or cannot see well can learn to help with the family's work, just as all children can. Give him small tasks at first, so he can feel successful. Then, as he develops more skills, give him more difficult tasks. This makes less work for you and shows your child he is an important part of the family. This will build his confidence and give him hope for the future.

A young child can begin to learn about farming by planting seeds and caring for the growing plants.



Later, the child can go with his father or mother to the fields and help with the planting. His feet can follow the rows made by the plow.

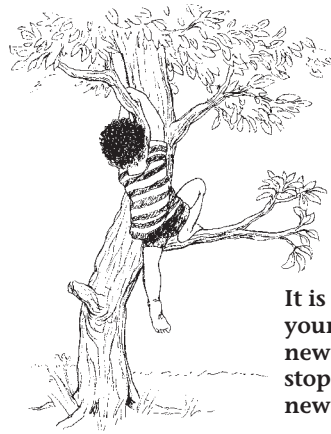


Help her understand the whole process of a task. For example, explain about a meal — where food comes from, how it is prepared, where dishes are kept, and how they are cleaned after a meal.



## Being independent

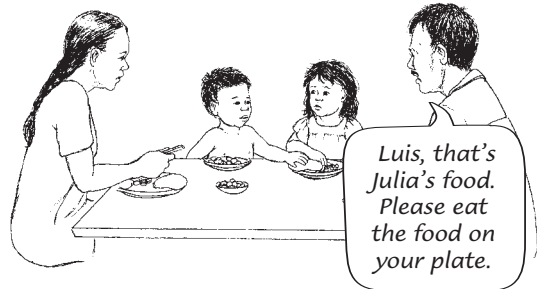
Being independent means that a child has a chance to do things by himself, without help from other people. Sometimes, because families worry about their blind child's well-being, they protect him too much. Then, when he is older, he will not know how to do things by himself.



It is better to teach your child how to do new things safely than stop him from trying new things.

## Being well-behaved

Children who are blind or cannot see well need firm, loving discipline just like any other child does. But sometimes people feel so sorry for a blind child that they do not set limits on his behavior, and they let him do things they would not allow other children to do. Try to make the same rules for all your children.



Teach her the same manners that other children learn. Although a blind child will have some different eating habits than other children — like touching her food to know what and where it is — she should learn the eating habits used in her community. Then she can eat with other people without her family feeling shame.

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## ACTIVITIES

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If your child can see a little, be sure to adapt these activities to best use her remaining sight (see Chapter 4).

### Eating

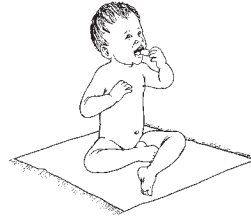
Blind children can learn eating skills at the same time as children who can see. Expect your child to do what other children her age in your community can do. These ages differ from community to community. But many children learn eating skills at about these times:



**Birth to 4 months:** A baby sucks and swallows. She also learns to open her mouth when she is about to be fed.



**6 months or older:** Along with breast milk, she begins to eat soft, mashed foods, like cereal or rice. She may begin drinking from a cup.



**6 to 12 months:** She begins feeding herself small bits of food with her hands. She should still breastfeed whenever she wants it.



**9 months to 1 year:** She begins to eat mashed foods and to use some eating tools, like a spoon.



**1 to 3 years:** She learns to better use eating tools and a cup.



**3 years:** She can eat most adult foods.

A child who cannot see well will learn to feed herself more quickly if she eats about the same time every day, in the same place, and with other people. This helps her learn that eating is done in a certain way. She will also learn the names of foods more quickly if everyone in the family uses the same name for the same food.

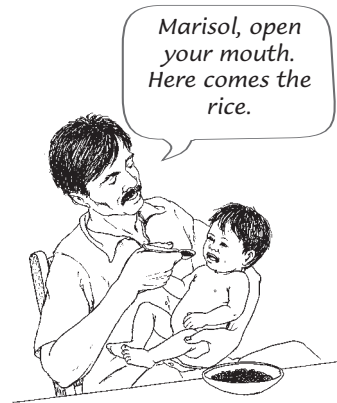
### ► To prepare your child to eat by herself

Before your child begins feeding herself, you can help her prepare to learn these skills.



When nursing your baby, give her a sign, like touching her cheek, to let her know you are about to feed her. As she feeds, place her hand on your breast. This helps her learn where the milk comes from.

When you start feeding your baby soft foods, tell her when you will be putting food in her mouth. Let her touch the bowl and keep her hand on yours as you bring the food to her mouth. Describe what she is eating and how it tastes, and encourage her to touch and smell the food. If she spits out the food, keep trying. She needs to get used to eating in other ways than sucking on a breast.



Encourage your baby to try different kinds of food. When she can eat mashed foods, feed her the same foods that adults eat. Then she is more likely to want these foods as she gets older. If she does not like foods with different textures, keep trying. Eating different foods will help her learn to swallow well.



**Let your child touch the food before you feed her.**

If your baby cannot hold her head up, hold her in your lap and support her head with your arm. To help strengthen her neck muscles, see page 37.

► **To help your child learn to eat by herself**

When she is learning to drink from a cup, first let her feel the cup and the liquid inside. Then let her hold the cup and smell the liquid as you guide it to her mouth. Encourage her to take a sip of liquid. Finally, help her set the cup back down in the same place.



Your child will eat best if she is sitting up straight.

*Where's your mouth?  
The food goes  
straight to your  
mouth, Meliza.*

When your child begins to pick up foods with her hands, let her feel and smell the food. At first she may need a lot of help putting the food in her mouth, but slowly she will be able to do more herself.

Help your child learn to use the eating tools — spoons, or chopsticks, or fingers — your community uses. Teach her how to hold the tool, how to pick up the food, and how to bring the food to her mouth. Slowly give less and less help. Sit behind her as you guide her hand. Be patient. Your child will be messy at first. It usually takes a year or more for a child to become good at these skills.

Even after your child begins using eating tools, let her touch the food so she knows what the foods are and where they are in her bowl. It also helps to put her food and drinking cup in the same place at each meal.



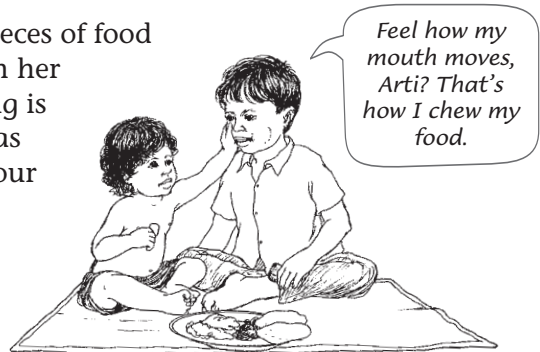
*Your beans are on  
the right, and the  
rice is on the left —  
just like always.*

Let your child eat with the rest of the family so she learns that eating is a social time. Encourage everyone to include her in what is happening.



*Uh-oh...Anita, that noise was your brother spilling his milk.*

Help your child learn to bite off pieces of food with her front teeth and chew with her back teeth. Show her what chewing is by putting her hand on your jaw as you chew. If she does not follow your example, gently move her lower jaw up and down to show her how chewing feels.



*Feel how my mouth moves, Arti? That's how I chew my food.*



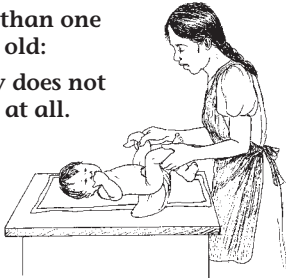
*When the water touches your finger, Irene, stop pouring.*

When your child can hold a jug or pitcher, help her learn to pour her own water. By putting a finger in the top of her cup, she will know when it is full. (Try this yourself with your eyes closed.)

## Dressing

Children learn dressing skills at different ages, depending on local customs. Many children, however, learn dressing skills at about these ages:

**Less than one year old:**  
Baby does not help at all.



**1 year:**  
Child begins to help when being dressed.



**2 years:**  
Child takes off loose clothing.



**3 years:**  
Child puts on loose clothing.



**4 years:**  
Child fastens large buttons.



**5 years:**  
Child dresses alone except for difficult steps.

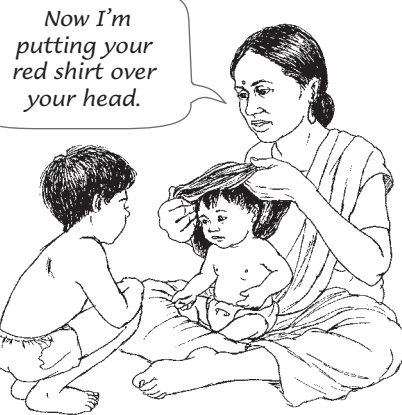


A blind child will learn to dress herself more quickly if she dresses in the same place every day. It also helps if family members use the same word for each kind of clothing, and if they give the same instructions in the same order each time. It is best to teach dressing skills when your child needs them — for example, when taking clothes off for a bath or putting clothes on before going outside. This helps her understand why she takes her clothes off and puts them on.



► **To prepare your child to dress and undress by herself**

Let your child touch what she is about to put on. This helps her get to know the feel of the clothing and how it is shaped before she puts it on. Describe the clothing and what color it is.



As you dress your child, tell her the name of each piece of clothing and the part of the body it goes on.



Ask your child to help you as you dress her. This will help her learn that she plays a part in getting dressed.

► **To help your child learn to undress and dress herself**

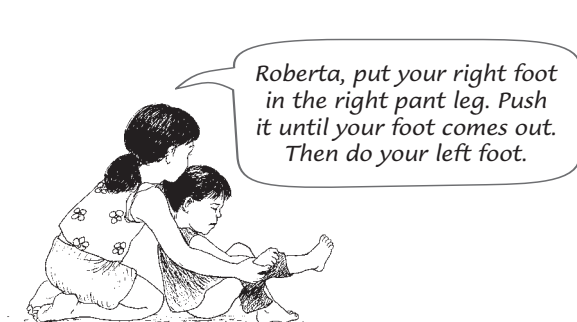
Mark the back of your child's clothes (with a knot, a small piece of material, or a safety pin) so that she can tell the difference between front and back. Also mark one of her shoes, so that she can tell the difference between the right shoe and the left.



It is easier for a child to take her clothes off than to put them on. So first teach your child to take her clothes off.

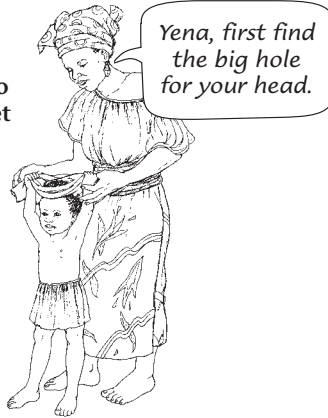


To help your child learn to put on pants, first help her find the front of her pants. Then help her put them on.

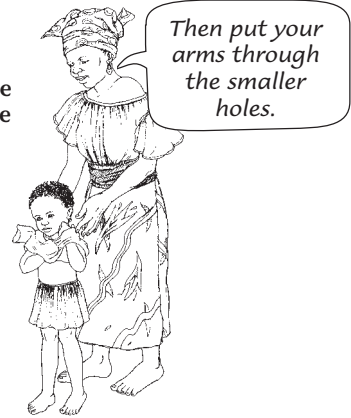


To help your child put on a shirt, explain that there are 3 holes and that the largest one is for her head. Then:

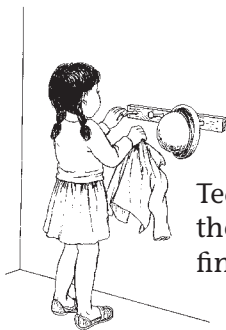
Help her gather up the shirt so she can get her head through the large hole...



...and put each arm into a sleeve and pull the shirt down.



Help your child learn to unbutton buttons. It may be easier to try this on adult clothes first, since the buttons are bigger. When she can unbutton, teach her to button.



Teach your child to put her clothes away in the same place each time. That way she can find them easily and will need less help.

After I wash the clothes, Olivia, I hang them to dry in the sun.



Teach your child how clothes are washed and dried.

## Using the toilet or latrine (toilet training)

'Toilet training' means helping a child stay clean and dry. A child is toilet trained when:

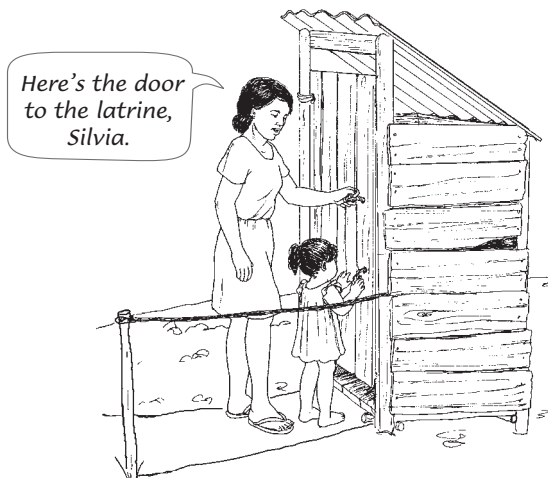
- she knows when she needs to use the toilet and has learned to wait so she does not dirty her clothing or the floor.
- she goes to the toilet by herself, asks for help cleaning herself, dresses herself, and gets rid of the waste (if necessary).

The age when children become toilet trained varies from child to child. It also varies from place to place, depending on local customs. With help, many children can stay dry by age 2 or 2½. Blind children may take a little longer to become toilet trained than children who see.

When your child can stay dry for about 2 hours, she can begin to recognize the feeling of needing to go to the toilet. This is the time to begin toilet training.

### ► To prepare your child to learn toilet skills

When changing her diaper (nappy), always use the same words to describe the difference between wet and dry diapers. Let her feel the diapers so she can tell the difference.



Take your child to the toilet with you and describe what is happening. Use the same words each time. Make sure everyone in the family uses the same words.

Use the same route to go to the latrine, so your child will learn the way.

► **To help your child learn to use the toilet on her own**

Notice when your child typically wets her diapers and take her to the toilet just before this time. Do this throughout the day, at the times she is most likely to be wet (for example, after eating, before sleeping, and before going to bed at night).

Teach your child to tell you when she needs to use the toilet. She can use a certain word or sign to tell you.



Teach her how to sit or squat on the toilet and clean herself. Praise her when she does well.



Stay with your child while she uses the toilet until she is not afraid to be alone. Show her how to hold onto the rail and put both feet on the ground, so she will not be afraid of falling in.

If your child wets herself before getting to the toilet, take her to the toilet and change her clothes there. This way she will learn to connect having dry clothes with sitting on the toilet.



## Keeping clean

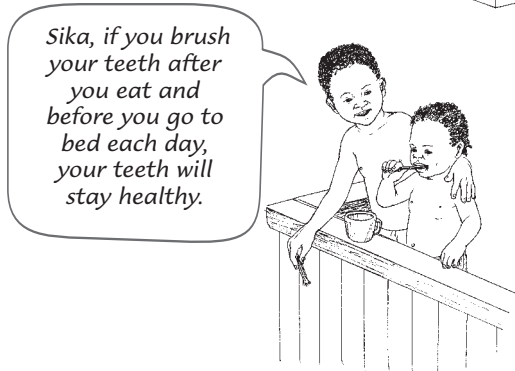
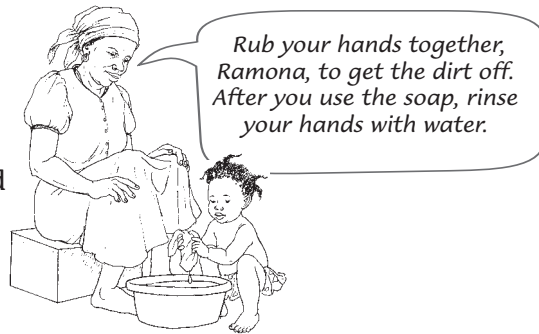
A blind child needs to learn to wash her hands, take a bath, brush her teeth, and comb her hair, just as all children do.

### ► To teach your child how to keep clean

Help her learn about keeping clean and why it is important. For example, as you wash and dry your hands, describe what you are doing and the parts of the body you use. Let her feel your movements, the water, and the towel.



Help your child do the activity herself. Work from behind and help her by putting your hands over hers. Use the same words and the same motions each time you help her. Give less and less help as she learns to do it by herself.



Do these activities at about the same time each day. This will help your child remember to do it.



Keep the things your child needs in the same place, and teach her to return them to this place when she is done. Make a special mark on things that only she uses, like a toothbrush.