

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (ADL)

What Are the Activities of Daily Living?

Adaptive behavior includes communication, social, and daily living skills. Activities of daily living include activities that includes personal hygiene and self-regulation activities. The benefits of adaptive behavior extend to individuals and their communities, but some children may face challenges in developing ADLs and may require additional support.

Activities of daily living are the routines people undertake on a regular or daily basis, and often take for granted, these include:

- Self-care: showering or bathing, getting dressed, cleaning teeth, doing hair and clipping nails.
- Toileting
- Meal times: preparing and eating regularly, including breakfast, lunch, dinner.
- Sleeping.

Performing these tasks require foundational cognitive, motor, and perceptual abilities. However, children with autism may have difficulty due to behavioral challenges like limited receptive language, and weak imitation skills. Additionally, certain behaviors can hinder ADL acquisition in autistic children, including tantrums and distractedness.

DAILY LIVING STRATEGIES FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

Because autism is a developmental difference, people with autism can often find it difficult to learn and manage everyday tasks, like taking a shower, getting dressed, brushing their teeth and packing their school bag; or daily chores like making their bed, or setting the table.

People on the spectrum often need to plan tasks in order to know that they are necessary, and as such, may need reminders and extra support to incorporate tasks into their daily lives.

You can help a person on the spectrum to develop these daily skills through the step-by-step teaching technique. This includes:

- Ensuring they are aware of the necessity of the activity.
- Breaking tasks down into simple step-by-step routines.
- Teaching them the each step and encouraging them through the steps daily.
- Gently providing prompts to support the completion of the task.
- Celebrating and rewarding success when milestones are achieved.

TEACHING EVERYDAY SKILLS TO PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

The following steps will assist you in helping your child, or dependant, to develop daily living skills.

STEP 1: DEVELOP AWARENESS

Develop their awareness of certain skills by drawing their attention to the skill that needs to be developed. Whether it be brushing teeth, dressing, independent toileting.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY A GOAL

Choose an appropriate goal that suits their age and abilities. Try not to introduce too many goals to achieve at once, and start slowly. If getting dressed in without distraction, is a skill you'd like them to develop, you could focus the goal on getting dressed, and start by just getting them to put on one piece of clothing themselves, like a pair of pants.

STEP 3: BREAK IT DOWN

Break down the task as much as you can, for example, putting on a pair of trousers has a number of steps that needs to be breakdown in simple steps to achieve ultimate goal.

STEP 4: TEACH EACH STEP

It's important to teach each step separately, so they can learn how to undertake the task incrementally. Make sure you check with their occupational therapist about the level of the task at hand, so you're not undertaking anything that is too advanced. Doing up buttons, for example, can be very challenging for young children. You can help them to learn each step by:

- Providing them with lots of opportunities to practise.
- Rewarding and praising effort, every good attempt and celebrating results.
- Visually showing them what to do.
- Helping and prompting them throughout the task.

11 TIPS FOR DEVELOPING ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

Parents should recognize that teaching their children ADLs is just as important as promoting the development of communication and cognitive skills. Parents can take simple measures to help their children develop ADLs, such as teaching them to feed a pet or help with the dishes.

Simple Ways Parents Can Teach Activities of Daily Living

- Putting away toys is an essential ADL for children, but it doesn't have to be a chore. Parents can turn it into a fun activity by creating timed races around the action to encourage participation.
- Parents can also emphasize the benefits of helping with activities like sweeping the floor. This will create value in the activity by not labeling it as an "obligation."
- Dusting is another key ADL, and it's vital for parents to stress its importance as they teach children. Parents can do this by explaining that dusting can help prevent allergy symptoms from starting.
- When the kids are old enough to help with dishes, it's important to break down the process. This can be accomplished by teaching them how to dry dishes.
- Utilizing a little creativity can help teach children the ADL of putting dirty clothes in the hamper. For instance, kids can learn to utilize a reach-and-grab tool for picking up clothes.
- When it comes to sorting laundry, it's essential to allowing children to categorize the dirty clothes. This can be done by either size, color, or fabric.

- Making the bed is an essential ADL that can be easily overlooked. To prevent this, parents could establish a monetary reward system that includes “fines” if the chore isn’t completed.
- The ADL of washing hands may be automatic for parents, but it’s not for children. To make it a routine act, parents could tape a graphic of the hand-washing process near the sink as a reminder.
- Brushing teeth is also a crucial step in maintaining proper personal hygiene. Parents can work with their kids here by breaking down the process into specific steps.
- If parents have a pet at home, they can turn the animal’s mealtime into an ADL. To do so, they can use a designated container that’s marked with a line to show how much food to provide.
- Finally, watering plants can be a useful way to develop ADLs. Parents can teach children how to help here by placing a marked Popsicle stick into each plant’s pot to indicate how much water needs to be poured.

Some children require an experienced behavior specialist to teach them ADLs, while others learn through observation and imitation. Fortunately, many techniques and strategies are proven to be effective for improving skills during childhood and adolescence.

Children without autism or with high-functioning autism may learn ADLs via imitation and communication. However, children with severe autism require special instruction, as they don’t learn well by observation and imitation. Nonetheless, teaching ADLs to these children is vital because it offers key benefits, such as contributing to their well-being and prepping them for greater independence later in life. It also contains benefits for parents and caregivers, such as reducing the lifetime cost of care.