

Backwards Chaining

You will have seen the well-being poster on the Local Offer Facebook page and excellent suggestions for weekly activities there too. Well, the skill suggestions aren't just a great way to occupy youngsters (and get jobs done around the house!)... They are also great ways to increase confidence and mental well-being and decrease stress and anxiety.

Feeling useful and capable is really empowering for us all so let's help our youngsters to learn a new skill!

What is backwards chaining?

Backward chaining is often the most successful way to teach and has shown particularly effective for teaching self-care skills.

It starts by giving the young person the 'success' part of the job at the beginning. This is usually the very last step, for example putting the top slice of buttered bread on the sandwich. Start by listing the steps with the young person, breaking the task down in to smaller tasks (it is always a good idea to try and follow the list yourself to ensure that you have not missed anything out, such as cutting the tomato before putting it into the sandwich!). Once you have your list, you may want to write it in the reverse order for the young person to complete so that they can see the order in which they are trying to master each smaller task.

Once the task is broken down, the adult would do all of the steps apart from the last one which the young person would complete themselves. Once the young person has mastered the last step, the adult would do all steps apart from the last two, which the young person would do themselves. Once the young person has mastered the last two steps, the adult would do all steps apart from the last three, which the young person would do themselves and so on.

What skills could you teach?

As we said, there are weekly ideas on the activities sheet. Lots of things we want to teach our youngsters to do may be linked to their self-care and for older children these may really boost their confidence. Having more time at home may be an ideal time to learn these skills. However, the 'helpful' skills suggested in the sheet may have an additional benefit in combining a new skill with giving to others which will make them particularly good for boosting your youngsters' well-being.

And if your child can already do these skills think about extending them – they may be able to make a bed already but could they change a duvet cover!

Useful Links:

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/249067/backward-chaining-information-sheet.pdf>

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/backward-chaining-3105608>

Learning new skills + giving to others = improved mental wellbeing

Examples

Here are some examples of teaching skills through backwards chaining:

Making the Bed

To teach a child to make a bed, you might break down the steps as:

1. Remove the pillow
2. Pull up the top sheet
3. Tuck in the top sheet
4. Pull up the comforter
5. Put the pillow back in place

To start, the parent would do steps 1 through 4, allowing the child to put the pillow in place at the end. When that can be done reliably, the parent would do steps 1 through 3, and the child would pull up the comforter and put the pillow in place. When the child becomes comfortable with each step, the step before it is introduced, always with the goal of having the child finish the task successfully.

Tying a shoelace

There are different methods to tie shoelaces, you can substitute your own steps for alternate methods:

1. Tie a knot.
2. Pull the knot tight.
3. Form the left-hand lace into a loop.
4. Form the right-hand lace into a loop.
5. Tie a knot with the two loops.
6. Pull the knot tight.

The parent would start by tying the shoe but allowing the child to pull the knot tight at the end. Over and over, the parent demonstrates the steps of shoe-tying, slowly, describing the procedure. With time, the parent fades back a step at a time, allowing the child to complete the ending steps instead of having to start with an untied shoe and remember what to do.

(Taken from verywellfamily)



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