



Family & Educator Partnership



Self-Determination Tips: What are my Strengths and Challenges?

Ideas on how parents and teachers can work on self-determination skills every day, a little at a time.

Know yourself

As you go about day-to-day activities, parents can talk to their children about things that family members do well. Teachers praise students in the classroom both publicly and privately. Acknowledge achievements big and small.

In order for a child/student to recognize his strengths, he needs to have opportunities to use his skills, to make choices, try things and learn from experiences. Kids need opportunities and practice.

Whenever you can, have children identify their own skills and how they used them. An example might be after the child has considered options and made a good choice. This could be a decision as simple as what clothing to wear on a chilly day. You could talk about how he considered his options, how his preferences came into play (does he like the red shirt better than the blue), and how the weather made a difference.

If the child needed help with something, talk about his success in figuring out what he needed, how he asked for the help appropriately, and how he was successful in getting the job done.

For older students you might even want to write out a list from time to time of the strengths and abilities demonstrated by the child/student. Have the individual do the same thing. All of us need reminders sometimes, and a list is something we can look at whenever we need. A similar approach of having the student identify his areas “in need of development” may be useful in both identifying those issues and creating a plan for action.

The important aspect of these activities is helping the child/student recognize his strengths and his challenges within the context of focusing on his capabilities.

For more information contact FEP Coordinators: Loni Jorgenson, 641-355-4242/ 800-392-6640 or
April Wooldridge, 641-485-9166/ 641-753-3564/ 800-735-1539.



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