

# VALUES to TEACH OUR CHILDREN



When adults hold agreements involving child care practices and educational processes, the result is a stable environment conducive to healthy and happy child development. Such agreements represent values to teach our children.

**Values of self-reliance and independence** are encouraged through providing spaces which are child scale, safe, comfortable and interesting for each age group. The child environment will have as few rules and limitations upon the child as possible, while also teaching “daily living skills” such as cleaning up and self-direction. Self-reliance is encouraged in the child when adults practice “active listening” to aid the child in recognizing and communicating feelings, and in generally supporting the child’s articulation. Children are taught to be able to recognize and avoid dangerous situations, to say “no” to adults or other children who are threatening them, to call for help when they need it, and to otherwise preserve their own rights, and to respect other’s rights to be safe, strong & free.

**Values of self-motivation, initiative and competence** are encouraged through the provision of a learning environment which maintains individual interest in and pursuit of learning. The “prepared environment” is one which meets the child at their own level, which permits development at their own speed, and which presents a noncompetitive atmosphere. Trying to do one’s best, or better next time, however, creates a valuable sense of competition with oneself, or of self-motivation. Persistence in the face of failure is encouraged when additional effort is recognized as a means to overcome failure. As personal effort is understood as enhancing one’s chances of success, personal initiative becomes rewarded by pride in one’s accomplishments.

**Values of freedom, autonomy and inner discipline** are taught as a child is supported in being aware of, and in organizing one’s environment in terms of, one’s own needs or desires, and in developing one’s own unique personality within a socially responsible context. Children are given as much autonomy as possible, invoking few rules, and expressing many directives as preferences rather than as musts. The child’s opinions, desires and rights are respected, giving them choices in what affects them, and forewarning them of things over which they have no control.

**The value of a positive self-concept or self-image** is conveyed as the child is shown respect by talking with them and explaining things to them. Children’s questions are treated seriously, answered honestly and completely to the degree which they are likely to understand. Appropriate expression of feelings (anger, sorrow, joy) is encouraged rather than stifling emotions. A child’s self-assurance is nurtured by stressing positive reinforcement whenever possible rather than only giving negative attention when necessary. Positive things about individual children are appreciated when they are noticed, and laughing at children’s frustrations is avoided. Children are not talked about in their presence as though they can not understand. Over usage of “no” and “don’t” is avoided through creating alternative means of telling a child what is not wanted, then following up with reasons why (health, safety, etc.), thus preserving the child’s self-image. By speaking of negative behaviors as separate from the person, a child is encouraged to change their behavior without conveying to them that they are bad. Each child is valued independent of comparisons with other children.

**Values of cooperation, responsibility, caring and empathy** for others are taught by encouraging children to share, take turns, be polite, listen, and to be considerate of others’ person and property. Children are asked to consider how they would feel in an other’s position, and to be aware of their own and others’ needs. The concepts of exploitation and oppression in relation to sexism, racism, ageism, etc. are explained when appropriate. Children’s awareness of environmental and ecological concerns is encouraged in relation to a lifestyle of responsible consumerism and the sharing of material resources. Children are encouraged to take appropriate action to help themselves, each other and other living things.