

DAILY LIVING SKILLS

What Is This Developmental Skill?

Daily living skills are the practical abilities children use to participate in household and personal routines. These may include making the bed, putting away belongings, preparing simple food, completing chores, caring for personal spaces, and following morning or bedtime routines.

How Does This Normally Develop?

Children first participate alongside caregivers. A young child may place toys in a basket, carry clothing to the laundry room, or help set the table. As children mature, they learn longer routines and take responsibility for tasks that match their developmental abilities.

Skills develop through modeling, guided practice, repetition, and encouragement.

How Can Neglect Interfere With Its Development?

Some children may have had no consistent routines or expectations. Others may have been required to complete adult responsibilities, such as preparing meals, supervising siblings, or managing the household. These children may appear unusually capable in some areas while lacking basic skills in others. Daily tasks may also trigger memories of being overwhelmed, criticized, or left alone.

What Might This Look Like?

The child may:

- Need more help than expected with basic routines.
- Complete tasks in an unusual or inefficient way.
- Become overwhelmed by multistep chores.
- Refuse help and insist on doing everything alone.
- Attempt tasks that are unsafe or beyond their age.
- Care for other children instead of focusing on personal needs.
- Become anxious when routines change.

Parenting Implications

Caregivers should assess what the child can actually do rather than relying only on chronological age. Tasks should be taught one step at a time and practiced together before the child is expected to complete them independently.

Responsibilities should build competence without recreating parentification or placing adult burdens on the child.

From Understanding to Attunement

A child who appears highly independent may have learned that adults could not be relied upon. Another child may need extensive support because important skills were never taught. An attuned response might be: "You do not have to manage everything by yourself here. We can do this together, and I will help you learn each step."