

**The Guiding Childhood Behavior Series  
has pamphlets on the following topics:**

- biting
- crying
- discipline
- going to the store
- lying
- stealing
- teaching independence
- temper tantrums
- toilet training

**Contact the Kent County Health Department  
if you would like to know more about these or  
other childhood behavior topics.**

**Kent County Health Department  
700 Fuller Avenue NE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503  
(616) 336-3040**

Copies of this brochure are available on the Kent County  
Health Department web site at  
[www.co.kent.mi.us/health/publications.htm](http://www.co.kent.mi.us/health/publications.htm)

# **TEACHING INDEPENDENCE**

**Guiding Childhood Behavior Series**



**This pamphlet tells you:**

- how to make separation easier for your child.**
- how to help your child do things for herself.**

## Saying Goodbye Is Hard To Do



Leaving your child, for even a little while, can be hard to do. Have you ever tried to leave for work, or the store, with your child wrapped around your ankles crying? This happens often to many parents, and it feels bad. You can help prevent this common scene by preparing your child for separation .

Try playing "out-of-sight" games with your child starting around nine months. Hide your face with a blanket, or hide behind the sofa. Let your child know that you exist when out of sight.

When you have to leave your child, do not try to slip out without being noticed. Say "Goodbye! See you soon. Mommy's going to work now." By doing this, your child will learn to trust you.

Your child will naturally learn to separate. The best thing that you can do to make separation easier for your child is to provide a secure and loving home for her. You can also help her to form strong bonds with other adults.

## It's Part Of Growing Up

Your child needs to learn to make choices and do things for herself. She will let you know when she is ready to do things herself by saying "No!" and "I want to do it myself."

This is a normal part of growing up, though it can be hard for parents. Give your child the chance to make choices. Respect the choices she has made. Does it really matter if she wants to wear

a striped shirt with plaid pants? Most likely not. Try some of these tips when it's time to let your child make choices:

- Limit the number of options to two so that she will not be confused. For example, "Would you like to wear your red shirt or your blue shirt today?"
- Only give her choices to make in areas where she really has a choice. For example, "Do you want to go back to school tomorrow?" is not a choice for a child to make.
- Do not let your child make choices that would be unsafe.
- Praise your child when she has made a good choice.
- Once she has made a choice, be sure she does what she said she would do.
- Encourage her to do things for herself. For example, "You can get that toy out all by yourself."



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