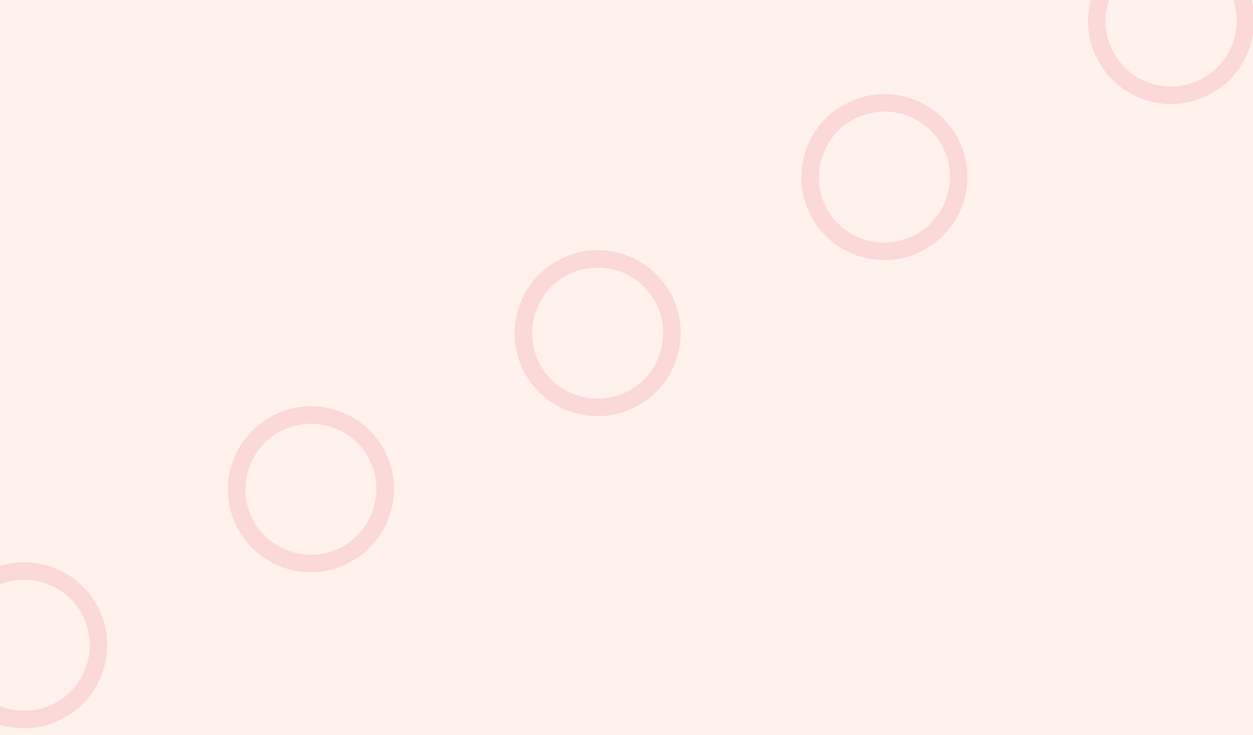




ways to encourage independence in young children



Compassionate
Conflict Coaching



Place their dishes in an area they can reach.


Designate a drawer or cabinet for their cups, plates, bowls, and silverware. Encourage them to get their own items. This also empowers them to choose their own (no more "I wanted the red one!" meltdowns).

Talk (a lot) about the home as a unit.

Emphasize that we all play a role in taking care of our home and making things run smoothly. "Mikey fed the dog to make sure she didn't get hungry." "Mom tidied up the living room so it can be cozy for our movie night later." This decentralizes one person as the primary "doer" and creates an element of teamwork.

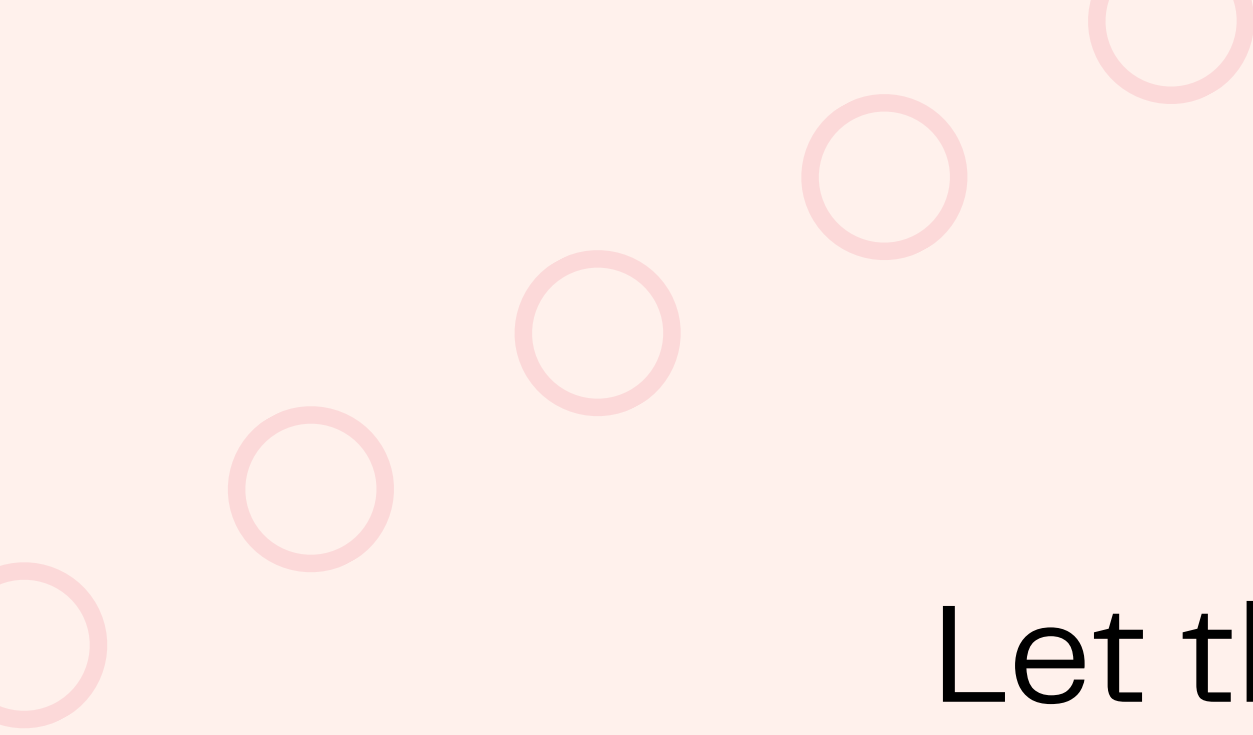
Ask for their input...

Say things like, "What do you think about this?" "How does that sound to you?" "What ideas do you have?" Do this when you're discussing family plans, meals, changes around the home, and more. When you ask them, give them your full attention while they answer.



...and take it into
consideration.

If they say, "Can we do _____ instead?" resist telling them No right away. Try, "That's a great idea! I think we can try to make time for it next weekend," or, "Whoa, that would be awesome. How would we do that? What would it look like?" Validate their input, even if their desire is not possible. And really ask yourself, **is it possible to incorporate their idea?**



Let them dress themselves.

Set reasonable limits (we can't wear bathing suits to school), but try to allow them to make their own clothing decisions as much as possible. It may be tacky. It may be the opposite of what you would have chosen. It may even embarrass you a little... explore those feelings without projecting them onto your kids.

Explain things to them.

Help them understand why things are the way they are, and allow them to ask questions about things. "Why do we have to eat dessert AFTER dinner instead of before?" "Do we really need to go to school every single day?" "Why does my big brother get to stay up later?" Answer as honestly as possible and follow up with, "Does that help?"

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