

Talking About Mental Health: May 2021

Let's talk about AUTONOMY

Autonomy, our theme for May, is our ability to make decisions and have a say in the direction of our lives. Autonomy helps with the development of independence and trust and is an important part of our individual growth and development. As a parent nurturing autonomy, we aim to create a cooperative bond between ourselves and our children while also paying attention to secure and reasonable boundaries and expectations. Autonomy goes beyond teaching independence and is about supporting our children in a way that allows them a sense of comfort in themselves.

Why is autonomy important?

- Helps to create a sense of mastery – over body, mind and environment
- Supports independent and critical thinking
- Encourages intrinsic motivations
- Inspires confidence
- Allows for individuality and uniqueness to emerge

So what can you do? (adapted from Dr. Shenfield, What is Autonomy Supportive Parenting and How to Practice It, 2019, article)

- Involve your child/ren in household decision making – age appropriately of course!
- Give your child the opportunity to have input in their daily routine when possible
- Help your child to express their own emotions and opinions within safe boundaries
- Keep loving them! Let them know through your actions and words that you love them.
- Respect their preferences and choices when possible. And when they can't be met you can still acknowledge that you heard their preference/choice.
- Really listen to your child and help them label and express their feelings.

Social Justice

You can use this month's focus to look at what your child/family are interested in in terms of the broader community. What is important to each of you? Where do they see that they could make a difference? Be creative and have fun while making a difference.

I think there's great potential for autonomy, but we have to remember that we live in a world where people may have free will but have not invented their circumstances. Thomas Frank



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