

Q&A

Sharing the benefits of learning corners, and advice about a walker for an infant starting to stand up.

Q I would like to research on how learning corners can help foster the development of independence and resilience in young children. Do you have advice that can help me get started?

Dr Craig: Resilience, or 'grit', is increasingly viewed as a non-cognitive skill that is essential for children to develop in order to become healthy, well-adjusted and successful adults. Children need to learn how to overcome adversity, rebound from disappointments and setbacks, and develop a belief in their own capacities. It is vital that we begin to help young children acquire these traits as they're most effectively learned while still young. Learning corners are a great way to promote independence and resilience. Here are some ideas:

- **Play corner:** Make believe play is important for children to develop self-regulation, which leads to resilience. Set up a corner with props children can use for play and devising their own stories.
- **Book corner:** Stock your book corner with stories in which characters overcome challenges or face dilemmas. Allow children to offer different solutions to problems, and to talk about what characters could have done or what they might



FOR PROFESSIONALS

do when faced with similar situations.
 ➤ **Water play:** A table with a leak-proof container lets children test science concepts and make predictions — what objects will float? Which shape containers hold more water? This encourages children to be confident explorers of their world. The biggest pitfall to avoid is telling children what to do. Listen to them, ask them questions, follow their lead.

Q My 10-month-old baby is starting to stand up. Relatives suggest I get a walker to help him learn to walk. But I am not too sure about this.

Ms Puspa: Infants reach their physical developmental milestones such as rolling over, lifting the head, sitting, crawling, pulling to stand, standing and walking when they are ready. All infants are intrinsically motivated to move and this should be done naturally and unassisted. For this to happen, they need to be

on the floor with the freedom to move. Gadgets do not support natural movements, as they strap an infant in and prevent him from moving freely. Even if the gadget allows the infant to move, the movement is 'passive' with no effort from the infant. It can be very frustrating for an infant when his intrinsic motivation to move freely is hampered. What does it mean for an infant to walk on his own? The infant has to first learn to balance himself before he can take the first step. This means standing using his own muscle strength. As a result if this, the infant gains a sense of self and mastery of the skill. When an infant is allowed to move naturally, he will be graceful in his movements, and be able to move with ease. ♥

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MS PUSPA SIVAN



FOR PARENTS

Ask the experts!



DR TRISHA CRAIG is Executive Director of Wheelock College - Singapore. Her background is in public policy and she is passionate about using high quality research to inform policy decision making. She is a frequent contributor to public dialogue on education and has lived and worked extensively in Asia, Europe and Latin America. She is a member of the Child Development Network (CDN) Professional Leadership & Development Sub-Committee.



MS PUSPA SIVAN has 34 years of experience in early childhood training, administration and working with parents, infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children with special needs in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the region. Ms Sivan also serves as a consultant to international organisations and is a frequent speaker at conferences, talks and seminars.