Executive Function Life Skill: Self-Directed, Engaged Learning

It is through learning that we can realize our potential. As the world changes, so can we, for as long as we live—as long as we learn.

- Establish a trustworthy relationship with your child.
- Help children set and work toward their own goals.
- Involve children socially, emotionally and intellectually.
- Elaborate and extend children’s learning.
- Help children practice, synthesize and generalize.
- Help children become increasingly accountable.
- Create a community of learners.

Skill:

Learning is furthered through trustworthy relationships, which Harry and George certainly have, even though they are from different generations and backgrounds. When you discuss this friendship with your child, you are helping him or her understand the importance of relationships to learning.

Tip:

You can ask your child about the relationship between Mr. Baker and Harry:

- “Why do you think they are friends? What do they have in common? How are they different?”
- “Do you have someone special who makes you feel excited about learning?”

You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: Serve and Return and Executive Function skills.

Serve and Return, like game of ball, involves a back and forth conversation between you and your child where you listen, then build on and extend what your child says or does to promote learning.

Executive Function skills are skills you use to manage your attention, your feelings, your thoughts and your behavior to reach your goals.

Find more about Families and Work Institute’s Mind in the Making at www.mindinthemaking.org.
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Skill:

Learning involves challenges. When you help your child think about how the characters in the story deal with challenges and relate that understanding to his or her own experiences, you are promoting both attitudes and skills that will help your child address other learning challenges in the future. This back and forth interaction is what researchers call “serve and return.” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something (serves) and the other responds (returns). The importance of these everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.

Tip:

Mr. Baker has a learning goal—learning to read. You can share a story about a goal you once had in learning something new. Your experiences will be inspiring for your child.

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning includes helping children set goals, work toward those goals and be accountable for achieving those goals. Executive Function skills are driven by goals. When you share your experiences about your own goal-setting, you are, in a real sense, creating a learning community with your child.