Executive Function Life Skill: Focus and Self Control

Children need this skill in order to achieve their goals, especially in a world that is filled with distractions and information overload. It involves paying attention, remembering the rules, thinking flexibly and exercising self control.

Suggestions for Promoting Focus and Self Control

Tip:
As you read each page of Goodnight Moon, point to the objects named in the story (the red balloon, two little kittens) and ask your child to point after you.

Skill:
When you invite your child to find the objects, you are helping your child learn to pay close attention to the details in the pictures, which calls on Executive Function skills. The back and forth interaction you have with your child in reading this book 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:
After the opening of the book, there is a tiny mouse on all of the pages with pictures in color. See if your child can find and point to the mouse. If not, point the mouse out to your child.

Skill:
Your child will not only have to pay attention to find the mouse, he or she will also have to use the skill of self control to select the mouse in the midst of everything else happening in the picture.

Tip:
Once your child has heard Goodnight Moon a number of times, stop before words that rhyme. Can your child remember that after “Goodnight, kittens” is “Goodnight, mittens?” You can help your child remember by pointing to the relevant pictures.

Skill:
When you play the rhyming and remembering game, you are not only helping your child learn to listen carefully to the sound of words, you are also promoting his or her working memory, an important aspect of Focus and Self Control.