

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Executive Function Life Skill: Taking on Challenges

Life is full of stresses and challenges. Children who are **willing to take on challenges** (instead of avoiding them or simply coping with them) do better in school and in life.

Suggestions for Promoting Taking on Challenges



TIP:

Ask your child:

- “How does Horton feel when no one believes that there are small persons on a speck of dust? How does he cope with his feelings?”



SKILL:

Taking on Challenges elicits many different emotions and presents opportunities for children to learn to manage them.



TIP:

Ask your child:

- “What does Horton do to try to save Who-ville? How does he deal with the taunting and actions of others who endanger Who-ville; the exhausting journey in following the black-bottomed bird that ‘tattered his toenails and battered his bones;’ the search in the patch of clovers ‘a hundred miles wide;’ and his own capture? What keeps him going?”

Ask your child what would keep him or her going if your child was in Horton’s place.



SKILL:

Taking on Challenges involves finding ways to deal with challenging situations.



TIP:

Ask the children if they find the refrain in this book (“A person’s a person, no matter how small”) inspiring? Can they think of another time when “special words” helped them or others respond to challenge? What were those words?



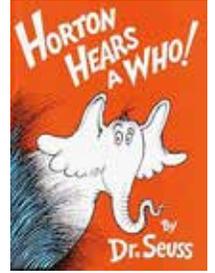
SKILL:

Having a goal is important to **Taking on Challenges**. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals. You can talk with your child about how important it is to Horton to save Who-ville.

Horton Hears a Who!

By Dr. Seuss

Horton the elephant may be large, but he cares deeply about those who are not—even organisms that are too small to see. In this Dr. Seuss classic, Horton struggles to protect his tiny friends from harm. After all, “a person’s a person, no matter how small.”



High-quality books and educational resources from First Book supporting research-based Life Skills from *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky



Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need.

www.fbmarketplace.org.

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.

They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self control.

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TIP:

Ask the children how they feel about these different characters in the book and what they learned from them.



SKILL:

Children learn about **Taking on Challenges** through **role models**. This story can serve as a role model—Horton is a role model. So is the Mayor. And so is the smallest person in Who-ville, Jo-Jo, who is first described as a shirker, but comes through in the end. You are a role model, too. You can share a story about something that was challenging to you and the strategies you used to deal with it.



TIP:

You can ask your child:

- “What did Horton do when the bird said he would fail?”
- “What did Horton do when he was caged?”



SKILL:

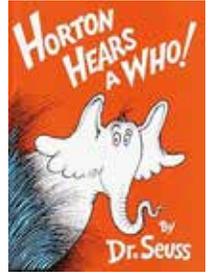
Taking on Challenges requires what has been called a **growth mindset** by researchers. This means **that we believe we can continue to learn and can tackle difficult situations**. This can be promoted by praising children’s effort and strategies, not their personalities.

Pointing out specific actions helps children see that believing in yourself can be a source of strength in **Taking on Challenges**.

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