

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 Trixie feel when she realizes that Knuffle Bunny is missing?”

You can also ask children if they noticed that Knuffle Bunny was missing before Trixie comes to this realization. Here’s a hint: you can see the bunny in the window of the washing machine.



SKILL:

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



TIP:

You can ask your child:

- “What were some things Trixie did when she was challenged with trying to tell her daddy about the missing Knuffle Bunny? What else might she have done? What did her daddy do to try to find the bunny?”



SKILL:

Taking on Challenges involves **finding ways to deal with challenging times**. Sometimes it takes **trying many different strategies**, which Trixie did when she tried to communicate without words. When you communicate with your child about this story, the back and forth conversations you have 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:

You can talk with your child about how important Knuffle Bunny is to Trixie, and that’s why she tried so hard to tell her Daddy without words that her bunny is missing. You can point this out to your child.



SKILL:

Having a goal is important to **Taking on Challenges**. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals.



TIP:

This story can serve as an example of how challenging times offer opportunities to grow. It is through dealing with this situation that Trixie learns to say her first words. You can be a role model in helping your children learn this, too, by sharing a story about something that was challenging to you and the strategies you used to deal with it.



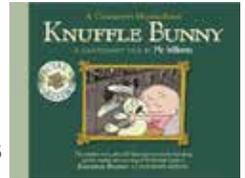
SKILL:

Children learn about **Taking on Challenges** through examples and role models.

Knuffle Bunny

By Mo Williams

Hilarious and relatable, Knuffle Bunny is the story of a pre-verbal toddler—who loses a beloved toy and throws an award-worthy tantrum, and her father—who has no idea what she’s upset about. It’s a very funny story about universal experiences and feelings.



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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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