

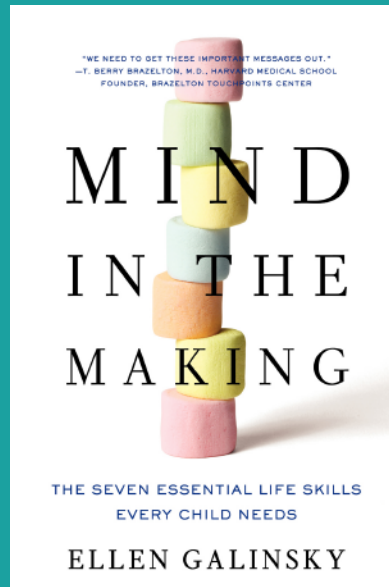
A Book Club Guide
for

Mind in the Making:
**The Seven Essential Life Skills
Every Child Needs**

MIND in the Making

Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs has become an early childhood classic for educators, parents and so many others who care about helping children learn, succeed and be happy.

This **Book Club Guide** will provide a framework for readers who want to share and get the most out of child development and life skills insights. It will also help readers embark on a **personal reflection** path and stoke the desire to **take action** in their own learning journey and beyond.



Dear Friends,

I have always referred to *Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs* as an accidental book. I didn't begin this journey to write a book, but to answer my own question of how we can keep the fire for learning burning brightly in all of our eyes. Along the way—in fact, six or seven years into my own journey, I decided what I had learned needed to be captured in the pages of a book.

Since that time, the staff of Families and Work Institute (FWI) and I have continued this journey by:

- turning the book into learning Modules on the Seven Essential Life Skills and its training spreading across the country: <http://www.mindinthemaking.org/7-skills-modules>;
- continuing to film cutting-edge research;
- selecting a library of more than 100 books and games with First Book that illustrate executive function life skills through the power of literature and activities and creating tip sheets that help adults promote these skills: <http://mindinthemaking.org/firstbook/>;
- creating *Prescriptions for Learning*, close to 100 tip sheets that turn the most frequent questions families ask about their children from seeing them as challenging behavior, but rather as an opportunity to promote life skills: <http://www.mindinthemaking.org/prescriptions-for-learning/>;
- collaborating with the Bezos Family Foundation to create Vroom and to write tips for an app that turns everyday moments with children birth through five—mealtime, bedtime, dressing, shopping and everything in between—into brain-building opportunities: <http://joinvroom.org/>; and
- working with community schools, the health care system, museums and libraries and the media to provide research-to-action training, information and resources on executive functions.

Although I didn't originally plan to write a book, the journey that we have taken has been quite intentional.

As I wrote in the Concluding Thoughts of the book:

These essential skills are not for children only—they are as important to us as they are to our children. Think of the father who was just about to leave a to-do list for his procrastinating teenage son beside his breakfast cereal when he realized that he would hate finding such a list from his boss on his desk at work. Taking the perspective of his son helped him come up with a more effective way of handling his son's procrastination.

These essential skills don't call for expensive programs, fancy materials, or elaborate equipment. They simply call for doing the everyday things you do with children in new ways. When I once asked children what they would remember most about their childhoods, they told me about small moments, everyday traditions they had in their families. If you think back to your own childhoods, you probably remember similar things—it is the small moments that make the biggest difference.

And, finally, it should be very clear that it is never, ever too late. My mother was "parenting" me into her late nineties, and I am parenting my grown children [and my grandsons] now—meaning that I am continuing to learn from them as they are continuing to learn from me. As a parent whose story I share in the book said—her learning relationship with her child is "a lifetime in the making."

I hope that this book and your Book Club Discussion group experiences have and will continue to fuel your commitment to keep the fire of learning burning brightly in your own and your children's eyes, and that the Seven Essential Skills will help us all be all that we can be.

I hope that you are creating communities of learners in your own life. If so, then I will have achieved my most enduring dreams.



Ellen Galinsky

Mind in the Making Book Club Discussion Guide

This guide is a tool for you to use as an individual and as a member of a book club. There are three sections for each Skill for the group: Personal Reflection, Taking Action and Discussion Questions.

ESTABLISHING GROUP ROUTINES

As you begin the learning journey with your book club, it is a good idea to take some time in the beginning of each session for all participants to introduce themselves. If the group knows each other well, open with an opportunity for everyone to share something that others might not know about themselves or how they book affected them since the previous meeting.

Getting reacquainted and connected will enhance the discussion.

USING THE PRINCIPLES OF FACILITATED LEARNING IN YOUR GROUP

The ten Principles of Facilitated Learning can be used to guide interactions and discussions in ways that will offer everyone the opportunity to contribute to the learning experience as well as learn from each other.

TEN PRINCIPLES OF FACILITATED LEARNING

PRINCIPLE	WHAT WOULD YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE FACILITATING ADULTS' LEARNING?
1. Build authentic, attentive, trustworthy and caring relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the time to get to know each Participant as an individual. • Connect with each Participant in a respectful, trustworthy and caring way, affirming that each has valuable things to contribute. • Be authentic in your relationship with Participants, not canned or rote.
2. Possess and use knowledge of relevant and valid content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with the content on child development, life skills and Executive Functions you are helping Participants learn. • Share the content on child development, life skills and Executive Functions in knowledgeable, clear and compelling ways. • Continue to deepen your knowledge of the most relevant and valid content—research and applications of research—to further benefit adult learners.
3. Build on and extend others' learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe and listen to Participants, individually and in groups, paying attention to what they are learning. • Ensure that you listen and observe <u>all</u> Participants—by avoiding unnecessary interruptions, not allowing some to dominate and drawing out others who may take more time to respond. • Use what you observe and hear to build on and extend Participants' learning, finding ways to connect their interests, questions or observations to new knowledge and interests. • Follow through on what Participants are learning to enable them to go deeper.
4. Tailor learning experiences to others' ways of learning best as well as to their cultural and community backgrounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide activities and experiences that enable Participants to learn in different ways. • Invite Participants to share their own cultural and community perspectives and use this in your teaching. • Be responsive to modifying your teaching plans based on Participant's learning, cultural and community perspectives.
5. Engage others socially, emotionally and intellectually (SEI).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide learning experiences that fully engage Participants socially, emotionally and intellectually. • Draw the adults into a discussion of whether their learning is sufficiently "SEI"—and, if not, how together you might change that. • Be ready to modify your teaching to enhance its "SEI" value.

PRINCIPLE	WHAT WOULD YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE FACILITATING ADULTS' LEARNING?
6. Help others set and work toward their own goals and be accountable for what they learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help Participants determine the knowledge they need to help them meet their own professional and personal goals. • Help Participants set goals to obtain this knowledge and experience. • Help Participants make plans to achieve their goals, work toward achieving these goals and evaluate their progress.
7. Foster analysis, reflection and critical thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use guided dialogue and other strategies to encourage Participants to think critically about, challenge, analyze, evaluate and revise their own assumptions in light of what they are learning. • Help Participants learn like scientists, creating hypotheses and testing them against what they are learning. • Help Participants discern the difference between bias or misinformation and valid information.
8. Help others practice, synthesize, generalize and share what they have learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage Participants in discussion of the practical implications of research for their day-to-day lives with children. • Involve Participants in trying out what they have learned with children. • Help Participants be reflective about their efforts to try out what they have learned—what worked, what didn't and why? Help them synthesize these lessons learned. • Help Participants strengthen what they are learning by teaching it to others.
9. Be a model of curiosity and continuous learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an ongoing learner as well as a teacher. • Make your interest in and enthusiasm for what you are teaching visible to Participants. • Share your own continuing professional journey as an educator—without dominating the learning of others.
10. Build connections among others so that they actively learn from one another's perspectives and experiences and become a community of learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help Participants be ongoing self-directed learners with interests they care deeply about. • Intentionally structure adult learning to build relationships among pairs of learners, small groups and the whole group. • Ensure that adults learn to listen to and talk with one another, identifying ways they can continue to learn from each other. • Work toward creating an ongoing community of learners.

INTRODUCTION

Personal Reflection

Think about a time when you or someone else wanted you to learn something, but you didn't learn it. What stood in the way of your learning?

Now, think about a time when you did learn something. What affected your learning? How does that differ from your experience in not learning?

How do these experiences affect your views of how children learn?

Keep these ideas in mind as you read *Mind in the Making*.

Taking Action

What do you hope for yourself as a result of reading this book?

What do you hope for the children in your life as result of reading this book?

Discussion Questions

At the beginning of the Introduction, the author Ellen Galinsky asks you to think about what life is like today. How did you answer? How do your experiences of life today affect you and the child or children in your life?

What was your response to the research on "amazing babies?"

Have you heard the term "executive functions" before? After reading a brief overview about executive functions of the brain, can you think of times when they have affected you and your child or children?

CHAPTER ONE: 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.

Personal Reflection

How did you rate on the Focus and Self Control Quiz in the following areas?

- Focus:
- Cognitive Flexibility:
- Working Memory:
- Inhibitory Control:

Did any of your ratings surprise you?

Taking Action

How can you improve your Focus and Self Control?

How can you help promote your child's or children's Focus and Self Control?

Discussion Questions

Before reading this chapter, how did you think Focus and Self Control developed? Were you surprised by the research that shows we learn this skill in active ways, rather than sitting still?

The author talks about "Lemonade Stands" and how effective it is to pursue goals that we set for ourselves. Share what your "Lemonade Stand" was when you were a child. Discuss ways you can help your child or children pursue "Lemonade Stands."

Discuss people you know who are good at exercising Focus and Self Control. What behavior comes to mind when you think of them?

A number of the suggestions for promoting Focus and Self Control may be familiar games you played as a child. Share other games you can play to promote Focus and Self Control in yourself and in your child or children.

The Marshmallow Experiment has important findings and implications. Discuss the benefits of delayed gratification and the strategies we can use to promote it.

The driving force behind Mind in the Making is to keep the *fire in children's eyes burning brightly and keeping their engagement in learning strong*. Why do you think this is important and how we can be better at this as individuals and as a society?

CHAPTER TWO: PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Perspective taking goes far beyond empathy; it involves figuring out what others think and feel, and forms the basis for children's understanding of their parents', teachers' and friends' intentions. Children who can take others' perspectives are also much less likely to get involved in conflicts.

Personal Reflection

Think of a time when someone helped you feel better when you were having a hard time. What did he or she do?

When is it a challenge to practice Perspective Taking?

How does this skill affect your relationships?

Taking Action

I will promote my Perspective Taking by:

I will promote Perspective Taking in my child or children by:

Discussion Questions

Thinking back on Focus and Self Control ...

How did learning more about promoting the life skill of Focus and Self Control affect you since the previous meeting? What strategies were most effective and why?

Thinking ahead to Perspective Taking ...

How does the skill of Perspective Taking build on the skill of Focus and Self Control?

Share your thoughts about this statement: *To promote Perspective Taking in children, we have to learn it ourselves.*

Discuss your experience observing “the dance” between adults and children.

Why is Alison Gopnik’s research on *theory of mind* important in Perspective Taking?

Larry Aber and his colleagues found that using problem-solving skills were not enough to reduce conflict in children. What is the difference between Perspective Taking and Problem Solving? Discuss appraisal skills.

What are some ways you can promote Perspective Taking? What do you already do that is working well? Share ideas and stories.

Discuss people you know who are good at Perspective Taking. What behavior comes to mind when you think of them?

CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNICATING

Communicating is much more than understanding language, speaking, reading and writing. It is the skill of determining what one wants to communicate and realizing how our communications will be understood by others. It is the skill that teachers and employers feel is most lacking today.

Personal Reflection

What are your thoughts about employers and the need for better communication skills?

What strategies do you use to think about what you want to communicate?

Taking Action

I will promote my Communicating skills by:

I will promote Communicating in my child or children by:

Discussion Questions

Thinking back on Perspective Taking ...

How did learning more about promoting the life skill of Perspective Taking affect you since the previous meeting? What strategies were most effective and why?

Thinking ahead to Communicating ...

How does the skill of Communicating build on the previous life skills?

Discuss how children are born primed to communicate.

What is Parent Speak and how does it help children?

Share ways you do or can promote language development and literacy.

Did any of the findings about learning a second language surprise you?

How do you talk about beyond the here and now? What are some every day moments when you can do this?

Share a favorite story you heard as a child. Do you like to tell stories to your children? Why do we learn through stories?

Discuss people you know who are effective at Communicating. What behavior comes to mind when you think of them?

CHAPTER FOUR: MAKING CONNECTIONS

Making connections is at the heart of learning—figuring out what’s the same and what’s different and sorting these things into categories. Making unusual connections is at the core of creativity. In a world where people can Google for information, it is the people who can see connections who are able to go beyond knowing information to using this information well.

Personal Reflection

What is your most memorable AHA moment? What connections did you make?

How are you at making unusual connections?

Taking Action

I will promote Making Connections and making unusual connections for myself by:

I will promote Making Connections and making unusual connections with my children by:

Discussion Questions

Thinking back on Communicating ...

How did learning more about promoting the life skill of Communicating affect you since the previous meeting? What strategies were most effective and why?

Thinking ahead to Making Connections ...

How does the skill of Communicating build on the previous life skills?

Why is categorizing and figuring out the “stand for” relationship essential in promoting Making Connections?

What does Judy Deloache’s research with Scale Model tell us about the development of Making Connections?

How does number sense and mathematical knowledge contribute to Making Connections?

Adele Diamond says: “The essence of creativity is to be able to disassemble and recombine elements in new ways.” Share a few examples of this in your life.

Share thoughts about the research on the arts and cognitive skills.

What is the difference between a “guide” and a “boss” when participating with your child in something they are interested in?

Share some of your favorite childhood games that helped you in developing the skill of Making Connections.

Discuss people you know who are good at making unusual connections. What behavior comes to mind when you think of them?

CHAPTER 5: CRITICAL THINKING

Critical Thinking is the ongoing search for valid and reliable knowledge to guide beliefs, decisions and actions.

Personal Reflection

Where do you go to get information? How do you decide if it is valid and reliable?

Do you have strategies that help you step back and think about what you need to do and how you should do it, especially in stressful situations? If so, what are your strategies?

Taking Action

I will promote Critical Thinking for myself by:

I will promote Critical Thinking with my child or children by:

Discussion Questions

Thinking back on Making Connections ...

How did learning more about promoting the life skill of Making Connections affect you since the previous meeting? What strategies were most effective and why?

Thinking ahead to Critical Thinking ...

How does the skill of Communicating build on the previous life skills?

When can we use the Steps to Critical Thinking in our lives (p.201-203)? Share a time when these steps could have been helpful if you had used them, but didn't.

Discuss how trust and reliable sources of information impact children and how that changes as they grow. What can adults do to help children develop Critical Thinking skills?

What are strategies you can use to refrain from jumping in and answering your child or children's questions too quickly before they have a chance to investigate for themselves?

Share ways we can promote curiosity in our children and in ourselves.

Children think and play like scientists. How can adults help promote this at home and at school?

Discuss people you know who are good at Critical Thinking. What behavior comes to mind when you think of them?

CHAPTER SIX: 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.

Personal Reflection

What do you do to manage stress in your life?

Think of a time when you moved beyond coping with stress and intentionally decided to do something that was hard. What did you do to achieve your goal?

Taking Action

I will promote Taking on Challenges for myself by:

I will promote Taking on Challenges with my child or children by:

Discussion Questions

Thinking back on Critical Thinking ...

How did learning more about promoting the life skill of Critical Thinking affect you since the previous meeting? What strategies were most effective and why?

Thinking ahead to Taking on Challenges ...

How does the skill of Taking on Challenges build on the previous life skills?

Megan Gunnar defines stress in the following way: "Stress is when demands on your body or your expectations of those demands exceed your ability to handle them." Discuss how you manage these demands.

Relationships are essential in helping children and adults manage stress. Share a story about a person who helps you and specifically what he or she does that helps you manage.

How do you convey your stress to the children in your life? What do you like about the way convey stress and what would you like to change?

Discuss ways you have noticed that your child or children manages their stress. How do you support these strategies?

What is the difference between managing stress and taking on a challenge?

Discuss Carol Dweck's research on mindsets? What are key takeaways that you can do as an adult to help children cultivate a growth mindset?

Discuss people you know who are good at Taking on Challenges. What behavior comes to mind when you think of them?

CHAPTER SEVEN: 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.

Personal Reflection

When you began this book, we asked you to:

- Think about a time when you or someone else wanted you to learn something, but you didn't learn it. What stood in the way of your learning?

- Now think about a time when you did learn something. What affected your learning? How does that differ from your experience in not learning?

We then asked you how your own experiences affected your views of how children learn. In the course of reading *Mind in the Making*, some of your views may have been confirmed and some may have changed. Think about how you now view children's learning versus when you began the book.

Taking Action

I will promote Self-Directed, Engaged Learning for myself by:

I will promote Self-Directed, Engaged Learning with my child or children by:

Discussion Questions

Thinking back on Taking on Challenges ...

How did learning more about promoting the life skill of Taking on Challenges affect you since the previous meeting? What strategies were most effective and why?

Thinking ahead to Self-Directed Engaged Learning ...

How does the skill of Self-Directed Engaged Learning build on the previous life skills?

Someone should record the group members' ideas and disseminate them for individual use in the form of email or paper copies. This section will take longer, so it can be facilitated over several different gathering times.

Together, list specific ways you can promote the seven principles of Self-Directed, Engaged Learning:

Principle 1: Establish a Trustworthy Relationship with Your Child

Principle 2: Help Children Set and Work Toward Their Own Goals

Principle 3: Involve Children Socially, Emotionally and Intellectually

Principle 4: Elaborate and Extend Children's Learning

Principle 5: Help Children Practice, Synthesize and Generalize

Principle 6: Help Children Become Increasingly Accountable

Principle 7: Create Community of Learners

Personal Reflection

Think back to the questions you answered in the beginning of this journey:

Have your views changed regarding how children learn?

Postscript

Thank you for participating in this Book Club Guide.

If you have questions that you would like to ask staff at Families and Work Institute or become part of FWI's community of learners, please email us at info@mindinthemaking.org.