

# MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

## Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF): Critical Thinking

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

Suggestions for Promoting Critical Thinking for Infants and Toddlers

### Tip:

Ask your child:

- “Do you think the Teddy that Eddie finds in the woods would fit in Eddie’s bed? Would he fit in your bed? Why do you think that?”
- “Would Eddie’s bear Freddie fit in Eddie’s bed? Would he fit in your bed? Why do you think that?”

You can use an exaggerated and dramatic voice when you ask these questions and ask your child what clues he or she is using to respond to you. If your child can’t yet respond with words, build on his or her sounds and movements, while sharing the answers.

### Skill:

You are asking your child to think about **size** when you ask these questions—how big or small the bears Ted and Freddie are compared with child and the live bear. You are **promoting your child’s curiosity, skill in making predictions, and thinking carefully about information to test those predictions**, all aspects of Critical Thinking, a Life Skill that promotes **Executive Function (EF)**.

### Tip:

After your child has read *Where’s My Teddy?* several times with you, you can ask what comes next before you turn the page. You can use the rhymes in the book as prompts for guessing.

### Skill:

When you ask your child to recall what comes next, he or she is using his or her working memory. Critical Thinking involves being able to **remember previous experiences and information and apply it to the current situation.**

## Where’s My Teddy?

By Jez Alborough

*Where’s My Teddy?* is a story about a little boy looking for his lost Teddy in the dark and scary woods and meeting up with a big Bear, who has his own Teddy.



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](http://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 a 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:

Both the big bear and Eddie are sad when they lose their Teddy and scared when they come upon each other. Ask your child to recall losing something and think about how that made him or her feel. With infants, you can talk about a time you remember when your child was sad and what happened to make him or her feel better.

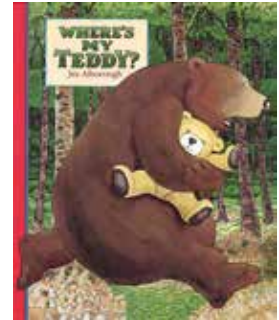
### Skill:

How we feel affects how we think. Helping your child identify feelings, no matter how young he or she is, supports Critical Thinking. It also makes it clear that **pursuing something you want can make children feel afraid.** This back and forth conversation you have about feelings 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.

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