

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF):

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.

Principles of Self-Directed, Engaged Learning

- Establish a trustworthy relationship with your child.
- Help children set and work toward their own goals.
- Involve children socially, emotionally and intellectually.
- Elaborate and extend children's learning.
- Help children practice, synthesize and generalize.
- Help children become increasingly accountable.
- Create a community of learners.

Suggestions for Self-Directed, Engaged Learning for Infants and Toddlers

Tip:

Play along with your child, going back and forth as you read, copying the actions in the book.

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is built upon **trustworthy relationships** and **positive interactions**. Even if your child is too young to do the actions that the book describes, you can point out what she or he can do.

Tip:

Add new actions to the story. For example, you can say to your child:

- “I can touch my nose. Can you?”

Once your child touches his or her nose, then respond by saying, “You can do it too!” Continue with more actions and ask your child to suggest things for you to do that he or she copies.

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning includes **elaborating and extending on what children do**. Pay attention to what your child is most interested in and can do. Include those in the back and forth actions you create, based on this story. This interaction 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:

Look for something in the book that your child would like to learn. You can practice it with him or her and use the encouraging words from the book.

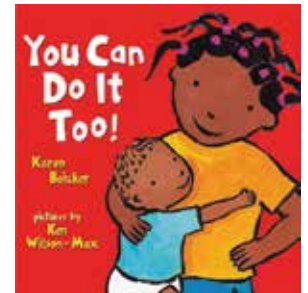
Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is promoted when we help children **practice what they know and work toward new goals**. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals.

I Can Do It Too!

By Karen Baicker

I Can Do It Too! shares a child's joy in being able to do things that her family members can do—like pour juice, get dressed and kiss “ouches” goodbye. It is a tribute to what it feels like to become more independent.



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



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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 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.

Find more about *Mind in the Making* at www.mindinthemaking.org.