

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 Ages 9-12

Tip:

Naima wanted to do things that boys in her village could do but weren't acceptable for girls, like making money to help her family and drive a rickshaw. But Naima begins to find that change is coming. As the woman who owns the repair shop tells Naima, "Things are changing whether people around here like it or not. These days a woman who wants to start her own business can borrow money from our women's bank. We decided to put our money together and help each other."

Ask your child:

- "Can you think of a time when you wanted to do something that wasn't accepted practice? How did that feel?"

Tell your child about some of the things that weren't accepted practice when you were growing up and that you helped change.

Skill:

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning is furthered when children and adults have **meaningful goals of their own that they pursue**. Executive Function skills are driven by goals.

Tip:

Naima was an artist. Eventually, she was able to use this strength to learn new skills to make money and repair the rickshaw she crashed by helping a new woman business owner paint damaged rickshaws. You can talk with your child about his or her strengths and how your child can use these strengths to learn more and achieve goals.

Skill:

Self Directed, Engaged Learning includes **building on individual strengths**. This back and forth conversation you have about this book 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.

Rickshaw Girl

By Mitali Perkins

Rickshaw Girl is the contemporary story of a young Bangladeshi girl, Naima, who excels at painting traditional *alpana* patterns, but chafes under societal dos and don'ts for girls. "If only I HAD been born a boy," she thinks, because then she could earn some money to help her struggling family. First, she dreams of helping her father drive his rickshaw, but she crashes it on a test drive. Then, desperate to help her father afford the repairs, she disguises herself as a boy and goes out to find the repair shop to see if she can trade her skill in painting in exchange for the rickshaw repairs. There a whole new world of possibilities for girls and women opens up.



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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.