

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF):

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**.

Suggestions for Promoting Focus and Self Control for Ages 3-5

TIP:

You can talk with your child about all the ways the little boy in the story cared for the carrot seed (pulling the weeds around the seed and sprinkling the ground with water, etc.) and how he kept focused on his goal, even when everyone in his family doubted that the seed would grow.

SKILL:

Focus and Self Control includes **being able to work toward a goal**. **Executive Function** skills are **driven by goals**.

TIP:

Ask your child:

- “What did the little boy do to help the seed grow?”
- “How do you think the little boy felt when nothing came up?”

SKILL:

An important aspect of **Executive Function** skills is **remembering** information so you can use it in different ways. By asking your child to recall the story, you are building this capacity.

TIP:

You can share a story with your child about a time that you had to exercise **self control** to work toward a goal that was important to you. Remind the child of a time that he or she worked toward a goal as well.

SKILL:

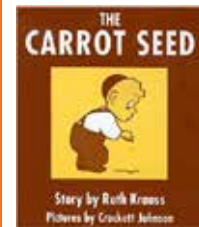
It is important for children to understand that working toward a goal **takes time, effort and believing you can achieve the goal**.

The Carrot Seed

By Ruth Krauss

Pictures by
Crockett Johnson

In this heartwarming story, a boy plants and cares for a carrot seed. He's certain it will grow into something wonderful, even when those around him have doubts.



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.