

# 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 Infants and Toddlers

#### TIP:

While reading the book to your child, you can point to your head and say:

- “Here’s my head. Where’s your head?”

Then point to the child’s head:

- “There’s your head!”

Wait for your child’s response and respond back.

#### SKILL:

Focus and Self Control includes **paying attention**, which calls on **Executive Function** skills. Also, this back and forth 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:

For children who are beginning to remember and understand words, you can let them point first and you follow their lead.

You can ask:

- “Where are your toes?” and “Where are my toes?”

#### SKILL:

Asking questions is a good way to be interactive and help children **pay attention**.

#### TIP:

You can encourage your child to point to the part of the body named in the book first and then do the action.

#### SKILL:

This activity requires **memory**. Focus and Self Control includes **remembering information so that you can use it**.

## Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

By Annie Kubler

This cheerful board book engages young children’s minds and bodies. It introduces them to a classic song while teaching them several parts of the body. Use it to get little ones up and moving!



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.

Find more about *Mind in the Making* at [www.mindinthemaking.org](http://www.mindinthemaking.org).