

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF):

Taking on Challenges

Life is full of stresses and challenges. Children who are willing to **take on challenges** (instead of avoiding them or simply coping with them) do better in school and in life.

Suggestions for Promoting Taking on Challenges for Infants and Toddlers

Tip:

Children can learn from the characters in this book. For example, talk with your child about all the things that Baby Llama does to try to wait for his Llama Mama. You can point out that Baby Llama has a comfort toy, a little llama.

Skill:

Taking on Challenges involves **finding ways to deal with challenging times or problem solving**, which calls on **Executive Function** skills.

Tip:

Baby Llama goes from being lonely to fretting to being sad to being angry and, finally, to being scared.

Talk to your child about times when he or she experienced any of these feeling. You can ask your older child:

- “What do you do when you are scared or doing something difficult?”

Skill:

Taking on Challenges elicits many **different emotions and provides opportunities to learn how to master them**. When you talk with your child about this book, your back and forth conversation 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:

At the end of the book, Mama gives Baby Llama a message: “Mama Llama’s always near, even if she’s not right here.” This is a message you can use with your child at naptime, at bedtime, or other times when you are apart.

Skill:

Knowing that others are there for you is very important in learning the skill of Taking on Challenges.

When your child tries something hard, point this out to him or her, reminding your child about the book: “You were scared just like Baby Llama, but you managed it!”

Llama Llama Red Pajama

By Anna Dewdney

Anna Dewdney’s adorable llama toddler and mother face bedtime worries and separation anxiety in this well-loved picture book. Told in rhyme, this story offers the reassurance that a loved one is “always near ... even when she’s not right here.”



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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.

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