

# 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 Ages 3-5

### Tip:

Ask your child how Owen feels when his family (pushed by the nosy neighbor) tries to get him to give up his beloved comfort blanket, Fuzzy.

### Skill:

Taking on Challenges elicits many different emotions and provides opportunities to learn how to master them.

### Tip:

Owen comes up with his own strategies for coping with the neighbor's advice: he hides his blanket at night to escape from the Blanket Fairy and he rubs his blanket in the sandbox and dirt to get rid of the vinegar smell. Ask your child:

- "What other ideas do you have about how Owen might have dealt with other people's efforts to get him to give up his blanket?"

### Skill:

**Problem solving** calls on **Executive Function** skills.

### Tip:

Ask your child how he or she feels about his mother's solution of turning his blanket into handkerchiefs. What other ideas does your child have for dealing with this issue? Sometimes people offer advice that is not so good (as the neighbor Mrs. Tweezers does). Ask your child to recall a time when someone suggested a solution that wasn't a good idea.

### Skill:

Often in Taking on Challenges, others can be helpful in suggesting solutions.

### Tip:

Share a time with your child when you did something that was challenging. You can talk about what happened, how it felt and what you did.

### Skill:

Children learn Taking on Challenges from **examples and role models**.

## Owen

By Kevin Henkes

Owen loves his blankie. He loves it outside or inside, during the day or the night. How will Owen go to school without his blankie? Kevin Henkes' lovable mouse illustrations and trademark tender humor are plentiful in this picture book about gaining independence one step at a time.



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](http://www.mindinthemaking.org).