

# 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:

- “What helped the clown and the other dolls and toys continue to try to find solutions to get the train to the children, even when other engines refused to help?”

Ask your child to recall a time when things weren’t working, but he or she continued to try hard. Ask what difference that made.

#### Skill:

Taking on Challenges includes **being able to press on, not avoiding or simply coping with difficulties.**

#### Tip:

Ask your child how believing you can do something difficult helps make it possible to succeed.

#### Skill:

Children learn Taking on Challenges from **examples and role models.** Children can learn from the Little Blue Engine as a role model and her saying: “I think I can—I think I can—I think I can.”

#### Tip:

You can ask your child:

- “What was the goal that the little train and the dolls and toys had?”

It is also good to point out that the goal was very important to all of them.

#### Skill:

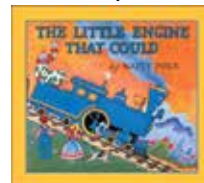
**Having a goal** is important to Taking on Challenges. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals.

This book was written a long time ago and includes some stereotypes, such as the helpful train is a female train and the unhelpful trains tend to be male. Ask children what might be different in this story if it had been written today.

#### The Little Engine that Could

By Watty Piper

The “I think I can” refrain of this classic picture book is synonymous with accomplishment and success. It originated with this book and the story of the Little Blue Engine who knew she could make it over the mountain even though she was small and inexperienced.



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).