

# SEVEN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS

## Skill Building Book Tips

You can read *A Crooked Kind of Perfect* in a way that highlights Focus and Self Control, a Life Skill that promotes Executive Functions. 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.**

### TIP:

Zoe had a dream of playing an elegant piano, of being a prodigy and of performing at Carnegie Hall in New York. But instead, she got a “wood-grained, vinyl-seated, wheeze-bag organ.”

Talk with your child about what Zoe did to focus on her goal of making music even when there were challenges along the way. For example, she kept thinking of quitting, but then she heard the expert player on the piano and learned from this experience.

### SKILL:

The skill of Focus and Self Control is driven by **goals**—and those goals can change over time. It is important to help children understand how goals can affect motivation and actions.

### TIP:

Learning music involves practice. Ask your child:

- “What kept Zoe practicing?”
- “What kept her father learning to cook new things (from Living Room University)?”
- “Can you remember a time when you had to practice? What helped you stick to the practice and what made it hard?”

### SKILL:

**Practicing** requires both focus (being able to screen out distractions) and self control (sticking with something, even when it’s hard), which call on **Executive Function** skills. Also, this back and forth conversation about practicing is what researchers call “**Take-Turns Talk.**” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something and the other responds. The importance of these everyday interactions to brain-building is a key finding from child development research.

### TIP:

Make a list together of what you and your child do to stay focused when there are distractions. The list can include simple things, like listening to music or putting on head phones or shutting the door to have quiet and think about the goal.

### SKILL:

When you list **strategies to use to achieve goals**, you are promoting the skill of **Focus and Self-Control.**

These tips sheets were developed by *Mind in the Making*, in collaboration with First Book. *Mind in the Making* and Vroom are programs of the Bezos Family Foundation. Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need. Visit: [www.fbmarketplace.org](http://www.fbmarketplace.org).



### A Crooked Kind of Perfect

By Linda Urban

*A Crooked Kind of Perfect* is the story of a girl called Zoe who dreams of performing on the piano. As she puts it, “My dad was supposed to buy me a piano,” but instead buys a “wood-grained behemoth” organ. Thus begins a series of surprising adventures that lead Zoe to compete in a Performa-O-Rama competition.

