The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF): Perspective Taking

Perspective Taking goes far beyond empathy. It involves **figuring out what others think and feel** and forms the basis for children’s understanding of the intentions of their parents, teachers and friends. Children who can take the perspectives of others are also much less likely to get involved in conflicts.

**Suggested Promotions for Perspective Taking for Ages 6-8**

- **Tip:**
  You can prompt your child to think about how the characters in the book might feel:
  - “How do you think the girl felt when the stepmother tricked her by being nice then turned mean once she married her father? Why do you think the stepmother acted that way? Have you ever been tricked? How did that feel?”

- **Skill:**
  Perspective Taking includes being able to **understand why people behave as they do and how their behavior affects others**. Talking about what underlies the behavior of characters in books promotes **Executive Function** skills.

- **Tip:**
  Ask your child to pay careful attention to how the story changes when it is told in different countries, noticing the details, such as the glass slippers (in France) becoming sandals of gold (in Iraq).
  - “How do the girl’s clothes change in different countries?”

  Despite the fact that the story unfolds in different countries and cultures, the plot continues.

  Ask your child:
  - “How did the girl manage when she didn’t have enough to eat or a good place to sleep?”
  - “Why do you think the animals helped her?”

- **Skill:**
  When you help your child understand others’ attitudes and motivations, you are helping him or her learn to see the perspective of others. This back and forth conversation you have with your child about the book 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.