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.

**Tip:**

Even though Ping is an experienced gardener, he cannot seem to get the seed to grow. Talk with your child about all the different things Ping did to try to make the seed grow.

**Skill:**

Facing challenges, like the Emperor’s Proclamation, requires **putting in effort and trying different strategies**. This back and forth conversation with your child 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:**

Ping was ashamed to bring the empty pot to the Emperor. His father said, “You did your best and your best is good enough to present to the Emperor.” Even with his Father’s support, he hung his head in shame when facing the Emperor. Ask your child:

- “Can you think of a time when you tried hard, but you didn’t achieve the results you wanted. What helped you?”

Share a story of an experience of yours where you didn’t achieve what you wanted but others helped you deal with it.

**Skill:**

Taking on Challenges includes **having people who believe in you and support you**. When you share your stories, you are helping your child understand that asking for and accepting help is a part of being able to take on challenges.
Tip:

The result of this contest was unexpected because Ping was honest. He didn’t know the Emperor was testing the children’s character by giving them seeds that had been cooked and wouldn’t grow.

Ask your child:

• “Why is it important to tell the truth?”

Skill:

Taking on Challenges requires courage; telling the truth is a courageous thing to do.

Note: You will enjoy looking carefully at the illustrations in this book and talking with your child about what the pictures tell you about life in that long-ago Chinese kingdom.