

Stone Fox



Life is full of stresses and challenges. Children who are willing to face them head-on, rather than avoiding or simply coping, are demonstrating a life skill called Taking on Challenges.

Children are more likely to learn this life skill when adults help them understand ways to deal with challenging times and problem solve. Children who can take on challenges do better in school and in life.

Discussing books with children can help them learn the life skills essential to everyday life success. Books like “Stone Fox” can specifically be used to develop the life skill of Taking on Challenges.

As your child reads this book, use these questions start a conversation:

This book provides a great opportunity to for children to realize they have the ability to succeed in difficult situations, as well as the understanding that others are there for them when they need help.

1.

Life can be difficult, but Willy has unusual responsibilities for a 10-year-old. Talk with your child about Willy’s situation and how important it is to him to save his grandfather’s farm. Rather than just cope, Willy takes action and tries something risky —entering the race and competing against Stone Fox, an adult champion racer. His grandfather has always said, “Where there’s a will there is a way.” Ask your child:

- “How does Willy’s ‘will’ help him persevere?”

2.

Everyone told Willy, “Sell the farm. That is the only answer.” He felt discouraged, but still told Searchlight, “We’ll do it, girl. You and me. We’ll find a way.” He kept looking for solutions. Finally, the people who told him to sell the farm begin to support him, saying “win that race tomorrow.” Ask your child:

- “How much did having the support of others matter to Willy? Does it matter to you when you face a tough challenge?”

3.

Willy felt like a winner before the race even though the odds were against him, especially since his opponent Stone Fox had never lost a race. Talk with your child how Willy’s feelings of being a winner—as well as his knowledge, his experience with the route and his skill in racing—helped him during the race.

4.

Right before the finish line—Searchlight suddenly dies. Stone Fox stops the other racers and waits for Willy to carry Searchlight over the finish line so they win. Ask your child:

- “How did you feel when Searchlight died?”

5.

Some say that both Willy and Stone Fox were winners because they each did the right thing. What do you think of this idea? What would you have done if you were Stone Fox?”

You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: 1) Serve & Return. Like game of ball, serve and return involves a back and forth conversation where you listen, then build on - and extend - what your child says or does to promote learning. 2) Executive Function skills are skills that are used to manage attention, feelings, thoughts and behavior to achieve goals. They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self-control. All of the life skills, like Taking on Challenges, call on Executive Function Skills, which have been found to help children thrive now and in the future.

Life skills are discussed in depth in [Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs](#) by Ellen Galinsky, president of Families and Work Institute. Mind in the Making shares the best research on children’s and adults learning. Its mission is to promote executive function life skills in order to keep the fire for learning burning brightly in all of us. Find more about Families and Work Institute’s Mind in the Making at www.mindinthemaking.org.