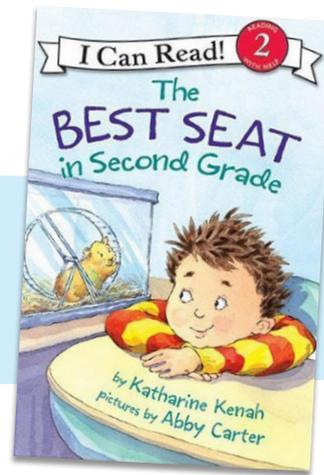


The Best Seat in the Second Grade



Being able to achieve our goals, especially in a world that is filled with distractions and information overload, calls on the life skill of Focus and Self Control.

Children are more likely to learn this skill when adults help them learn how to pay attention, remember the rules, think flexibly, and exercise self-control.

Discussing books with children can help them learn the life skills essential to everyday life success. Books like “The Best Seat in the Second Grade” can specifically be used to develop the skill of Focus and Self Control.

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

This book provides a great opportunity to for children to understand the importance of waiting to do something, even when waiting is difficult.

1.

In the story, Sam was tired of waiting to be the Hamster Helper. Talk with your child about a time he or she was tired of waiting for something. Talk back and forth about what your child did to make the waiting easier.

2.

Share what you do when you need to stay focused even when it is hard or when you can't go on auto-pilot. For example, when sitting in traffic or waiting for the bus, you might sing or think about happy things.

3.

Sam took the hamster on the field trip because he couldn't resist sharing the experience with him. You can talk with your child about how Sam didn't think ahead about the consequences, especially the risk of losing the hamster. Ask your child what Sam might have done to handle the situation differently. You can also share a time that you didn't think ahead and how that affected you or others - for example, saying something that hurt someone else's feelings. Share what you do now to stop and think ahead.

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 Focus and Self Control, 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.