

# Skill-Building Book Tips

## 7 Essential Life Skills

Discover *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's 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 despite challenges along the way. For example, Zoe kept thinking of quitting, but then she heard the expert pianist 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 can do to stay focused when there are distractions. The list can include simple things, like listening to music, putting on headphones or shutting the door to have quiet.

### Skill

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

### *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. Challenges lead to a series of surprising adventures that lead Zoe to compete in a Performa-O-Rama competition.



These tips sheets were developed by *Mind in the Making*, in collaboration with First Book. 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)**.