

Skill-Building Book Tips

7 Essential Life Skills

Jump into *Jingle Dancer* in a way that highlights Taking on Challenges, a Life Skill that promotes Executive Functions. 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

Jenna turns to four women for help in finding jingles for her dress so she can dance. She doesn't want to take so many jingles that each woman's "voice isn't heard" but just enough to make one row from each. Ask your child:

- "What do you think of Jenna's solution? Why did it work for Jenna and for each of the four women?"
- "What might have happened if Jenna had asked one of the woman for all of the jingles she needed?"

Skill

One of the most effective ways of problem solving and Taking on Challenges is **finding solutions that work for all involved**. This back-and-forth conversation you have with your child 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

When Jenna took jingles from each of the women, she told them that she would dance for them. In addition, in Jenna's Muscogee culture, it's common for a family to honor a new dancer by "small giveaways," gifts to others (not to the new dancer) in her honor. The author states in the back of the book that these giveaways are meant to show humility. Ask your child:

- "What do you think of these ideas of giving back?"

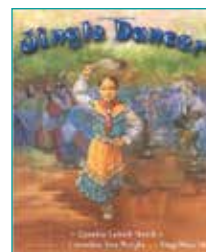
Skill

Taking on a challenge generally involves the **support of others**. In Jenna's culture, there is a giveaway tradition of **doing things for others in return**. This calls for self-control, an **Executive Function** skill.

Jingle Dancer

By Cynthia Leitich Smith

In this prize-winning book, Jenna daydreams of dancing in the upcoming powwow—an important tradition in her family—but she doesn't have jingles on her skirt and there isn't enough time to order them. Jenna has an idea and turns to four women who are important to her to help. A heartwarming story that shares contemporary life and Native American tradition.



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Tip

There are many references to the Muscogee culture in the book. Ask your child to pick out some of them. You can note them too, such as the way the times of day and night are described or the importance of the number four: Jenna needed four rows of jingles and went to four women to help. This number is seen as sacred, representing four seasons, four directions, four colors of people, four stages of life.

Ask your child:

- “How were Jenna’s traditions and cultures important to her in solving her problem?”

Skill

Support for Taking on Challenges comes not just from family and friends but from **culture and tradition**.

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**.