Executive Function and Challenging Behavior: A New Approach
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The Importance of Executive Function

Executive Functions Skills are attention regulation skills. Researchers focus on:
- Cognitive flexibility
- Working memory
- Inhibitory control
We focus on 7 Executive Function based skills:

- Focus and Self Control
- Perspective Taking
- Communicating
- Making Connections
- Critical Thinking
- Taking On Challenges
- Self-Directed Engaged Learning

AN EXERCISE: Think of a behavior challenge and write it down.

Challenge → Autonomy Supportive Approaches + Opportunity Mindset + Strategy =
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Looking at the Literature

Autonomy Supportive Skills Makes a Difference:
In the development of children’s executive function (EF) skills

Autonomy Supportive Caregiving:
Is predictive of children’s EF skills beyond parents own EF skills;
and can be taught.

Stephanie M. Carlson, Ph.D.,
University of Minnesota
Take the child's view
The adult thinks about why the child might be behaving this way and about what the child can and cannot do developmentally. The adult then responds with this understanding in mind.

Share reasons
The adult shares what is expected and why. The adult is predictable and shares reasons in a way that promotes the child in taking an active role.

Ensure the child plays an active role with choice and joint problem solving
The adult ensures that the child plays an active role in solving age-appropriate problems by suggesting choices and engaging in joint problem solving versus the adult fixing things for the child.

Scaffold
The adult helps the child in a way that follows the child's pace and provides the child with a challenge that's hard but not too hard and gives the child a chance to develop and use his/her own Life Skills.
Listening to Stories

An Adversity Mindset: Things won’t be any different. The child won’t or can’t change; I won’t or can’t change. I can’t make a difference.

01
When children do things that are wrong, I worry that they aren’t going to change.

02
When children do things that are wrong, I worry that this is the way it is going to be in the future.

An Opportunity Mindset: Things can be different. The child can change, I can change, I can learn. I can make a difference.

01
When children do things that are wrong, I think about possible reasons why they may have acted that way.

02
When children do things that are wrong, I see it as an opportunity for me to better understand their thoughts and feelings.

03
When children do things that are wrong, I know it is specific to the moment and not a sign for the future.

04
When children do things that are wrong, and it is an opportunity for me to improve how I handle these situations.
Write down a solution for your challenge.

Poll: Did it work?
1. Yes
2. No

After the poll if you can’t see the slides, click the flower in the task bar at the bottom of your screen.

Poll: What Did You Use?
1. Take the child’s view
2. Share reasons
3. Ensure the child plays an active role with choice and joint problem solving
4. Scaffold
5. Opportunity Mindset
6. WOOP

After the poll if you can’t see the slides, click the flower in the task bar at the bottom of your screen.
Challenge → Autonomy Supportive Approaches + Opportunity Mindset + Strategy = **Solutions That Work**

What We Have Done To Share The Science

- MITM Community Modules
- MITM Book Tips
- MITM Skill Building Opportunities
- Vroom
- Mt Sinai Pediatric Residency Modules

Sharing the science of early learning in ways that transform science into action.
Transformational Learning

Seven Essential Life Skills Community Modules

Mind in the Making training extensively explores and shares the science of early childhood development in ways that boost Life Skills for children and adults.

MiND in the Making

Transformational Tools & Resources

Mind in the Making’s Skill Building Books Tips and Skill Building Opportunities help adults boost the life skills of children.

MITM
Skill Building Opportunities

MITM
Book Tips

Vroom provides actionable tips and resources to help parents and caregivers turn every moment into a brain-building moment.

Newborn
1 month
2 month

Transformational Learning: Pediatric Residency Training

In partnership with the Parenting Center of Mt Sinai, we have created a residency training program where we have incorporated child development information into well-child visits.

Mt Sinai Parenting Center has made this curriculum available free for pediatric residencies nationwide and in just a year, it’s being used by 61% of all programs!


