

# Executive Function in Children: Designing Classroom Learning Environments and Experiences to Improve Attention, Retention, and Self-Regulation

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*Executive Function (EF) refers to the higher-level cognitive skills you use to control and coordinate your other cognitive abilities and behaviors. How we organize our lives, how we plan, and how we then execute those plans are largely guided by EF.*

No one is born with executive function skills, but nearly everyone can learn them.

While our genes provide the blueprint for learning these skills, they develop through experiences and practice. ([Harvard Center on the Developing Child](#), 2023)

## A Few of Our Favorite Executive Function-Themed Books

- A Compartir! By Maria Maysen
- B is for Breathe: The ABCs of Coping with Fussy and Frustrating Feelings by Melissa Boyd
- Belly Breathe by Leslie Kimmelman
- Big Red Lollipop by Rukhsana Khan
- Breathing Makes It Better by Christopher Willard, Wendy O'Leary
- Buckle Up by Stephanie Scott
- Care Bears: Caring Contest by Nancy Parent
- Clark the Shark by Bruce Hale
- Edward the Emu by Sheena Knowles
- Everyone Feels Angry Sometimes by Dr. Daniela Owen
- Eyes that Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho
- Feelings by Libby Walden and Richard Jones
- Fox Makes Friends by Adam Relf
- Grumpy Pants by Claire Messer
- Hair Love by Matthew A. Cherry
- How Do Dinosaurs Play with Their Friends? by Jane Yolen
- How Do Dinosaurs Say I'm Mad
- How Do You Feel? by Lizzy Rockwell
- How I Feel Frustrated by Marcia Leonard
- I am Enough by Grace Byers
- I Am Stronger Than Anger by Elizabeth Cole
- I Can Do It Myself: Featuring Jim Henson's Sesame Street Muppets by Emily Perl Kingsley
- I Can Do That: A Book on Self-Regulation by Kayla J. W. Marnach
- I Can Handle It by Laurie Wright
- I Don't Want to be Big by Dev Petty
- I Love My New Toy! by Mo Willems
- I Love You, Stinky Face by Lisa McCourt
- I Need a Hug by Aaron Blabey
- I Promise by LeBron James
- If I'm Upset I Can by Julien Bodrieu
- I'm in Charge of Me! (The Best Me I Can Be) by David Parker
- I'm Just a Kid by Chandele Morris
- It Could Have Been Worse by A. H. Benajmin and Tim Warnes

- It Was Just Right Here! by Bryan Smith
- Keeping It Cool: Skills for Coping with Change by Melissa Boyd
- Leo the Late Bloomer by Robert Kraus and José Aruego
- Listening to My Body: A Guide to Helping Kids Understand the Connection Between Their Sensations (What the Heck Are Those?) And Feelings So That They Can Get Better at Figuring Out What They Need by Gabi Garcia
- Llama Llama Mad at Mama by Anna Dewdney
- Mi Papa es el Mejor by Rosie Smith and Bruce Whatley
- Mouse Was Mad by Linda Urban
- My Friend is Sad by Mo Willems
- My Many Colored Days by Dr. Seuss
- My Mouth Is a Volcano: A Picture Book About Interrupting by Julia Cook
- My Words Roar by Mary DiPalermo
- No, No Gnome! By Ashlyn Anstee
- Not Your Typical Dragon by Dan Bar-el
- Paula and her Multi-coloured Hair: A Children's Book About BIG Emotions by Carmen Parets Luque
- Percy Gets Upset by Stuart J. Murphy
- Perfect by Max Amato
- Positive Ninja by Mary Nhin
- Rain! by Linda Ashman
- Remy the Rhino Learns Patience by Andy McGuire
- Santiago's Sadness: Making Room for All Emotions by Gabi Garcia
- Scaredy Squirrel Makes a Friend by Melanie Watt
- Sharing: How Kindness Grows by Fran Shaw and Miki Sakamoto
- Sometimes I Grumblesquinch by Rachel Vail
- Sometimes I'm Bombaloo by Rachel Vail
- Spark by Kallie George
- Still a Gorilla by Kim Norman
- The Baby Sister by Tomie DePaola
- The Caring Me I Want to Be by Mary DiPalermo
- The Feelings Monsters by Emily Hartmann
- The Great Big Book of Feelings by Mary Hoffman
- The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade by Justin Roberts
- The Very Impatient Caterpillar by Ross Burach
- The Way I Feel by Janan Cain
- Today I had a Bad Day by Sarah Read
- Waiting Is Not Easy! An Elephant and Piggie Book by Mo Willems
- We are Growing by Laurie Keller
- We're Better Together: A Book about Community by Eileen Spinelli
- What Does it Mean to Be Kind? By Rana DiOrio
- When I'm Feeling Angry by Trace Moroney
- When I'm Feeling Sad by Trace Moroney
- When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry... by Molly Bang
- Wild Feelings by David Milgrim