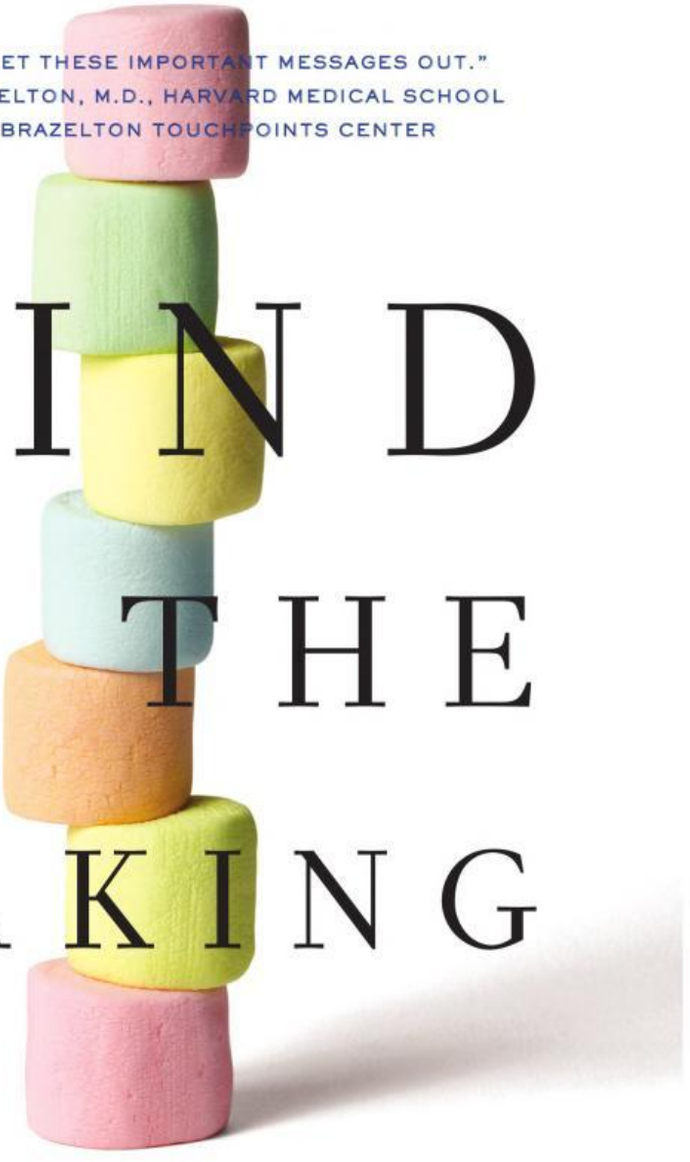
"WE NEED TO GET THESE IMPORTANT MESSAGES OUT."
—T. BERRY BRAZELTON, M.D., HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
FOUNDER, BRAZELTON TOUCHPOINTS CENTER

MIND IN THE MAKING



THE SEVEN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS EVERY CHILD NEEDS

ELLEN GALINSKY

USA $16.99

"WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO I WANT MY CHILD TO BE?"

There are hundreds of books that give parents advice on everything from weaning to toilet training, from discipline to nutrition. But in spite of this overwhelming amount of information, there is very little research-based advice for parents on how to raise their children to be well rounded and achieve their full potential, helping them learn to take on life's challenges, communicate well with others, and remain committed to learning. These are the "essential life skills" that Ellen Galinsky has spent her career pursuing, through her own studies and through decades of talking with more than a hundred of the most outstanding researchers in child development and neuroscience. The good news is that there are simple everyday things that all parents can do to build these skills in their children for today and for the future. They don't cost money, and it's never too late to begin.

In *Mind in the Making*, Ellen Galinsky has grouped this research into seven critical areas that children need most: (1) focus and self control; (2) perspective taking; (3) communicating; (4) making connections; (5) critical thinking; (6) taking on challenges; and (7) self-directed, engaged learning. For each of these skills, Galinsky shows parents what the studies have proven, and she provides numerous concrete things that parents can do—starting today—to strengthen these skills in their children. These aren't the kinds of skills that children just pick up; these skills have to be fostered. They are the skills that give children the ability to focus on their goals so that they can learn more easily and communicate what they've learned. These are the skills that prepare children for the pressures of modern life, skills that they will draw on now and for years to come.

Mind in the Making is a truly groundbreaking book, one that teaches parents how to give children the most important tools they will need. Already acclaimed by such thought leaders as T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., David A. Hamburg, M.D., Adele Faber, and Judy Woodruff, *Mind in the Making* is destined to become a classic in the literature of parenting.

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MIND IN THE MAKING

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INTRODUCTION

AN EXERCISE: WHAT IS LIFE LIKE TODAY?

Think about some words that describe what life is like today. What words come to mind?

Did your words reflect the challenges of living in a complicated, distracting world? Did you think of words that describe feelings of being rushed, time starved, of having too much to do and not enough time to do it? Did you focus on the uncertainties, the changes that ricochet in our economic systems, or the volatility of relationships in a diverse and unpredictable world? Did you focus on the moments that give you pleasure, large and small?

Life today can be all of these things—complex, distracting, fast moving, 24-7, and stressful. It is also joyful and full of exciting possibilities. We know that if it is this way for us, it is only going to be more so for our children. We all want the best for our children, but how do we help them not only survive but thrive, today and in the future?

It is clear that there is information children need to learn—facts, figures, concepts, insights, and understandings. But we have neglected something that is equally essential—children need life skills.

What do I mean by skills? Take the words often used to describe the world: *complicated, distracting*. Or the words about time: *24-7, rushed, time starved, too much to do and not enough time to do it*. To navigate this world, children need to focus, to determine what is important and to pay attention to this, amid many distractions. Focus is one of the essential skills we need to promote in our children.

Or take the words used to describe the complexity of life in an uncertain, even volatile world. Another essential skill is the ability to understand others' perspectives—perspective taking—despite whether we end up agreeing or disagreeing with them.

There are three *essential* points about these life skills:

These skills are not only important for children; we as adults need them just as much as children do. And, in fact, we have to practice them ourselves to promote them in our children. That's why I call them life skills.

We don't need expensive programs, materials, or equipment to promote these skills. We can promote them in everyday ways through the everyday fun things we do with children.

It is *never* too late to help children learn these life skills, no matter what their ages.

So many books for parents make us feel guilty or that we have made mistakes. This is a different kind of book—not a guilt trip but a book that helps us understand children's development in new ways, with hundreds of to-do suggestions.

These are the conclusions I have drawn from my own research, from spending more than eight years interviewing more than seventy researchers on children, and from reading more than a thousand studies to write *Mind in the Making*.

AMAZING BABIES

One theme from the research on children and learning is that babies' brains appear to be wired to help them understand and know about the world in specific ways, and that this learning begins long before babies can be *taught* this kind of knowledge.

Babies four months short of their first birthdays already have what I call a *language sense:* they can detect statistical patterns in which sounds go together in their native language (or languages) to determine the beginnings and endings of words in a "sea of sounds," as the studies of Jenny Saffran of the University of Wisconsin show.

Since babies that young can't talk, how can researchers possibly know this? Babies—like all of us—are drawn to anything new. So the researcher

gives babies something to listen to or look at that is new to them and they look or listen until they get bored. At that point, the researcher presents them with other things to listen to or look at and can tell from the babies' reactions which things the babies view as new (measured by longer listening or looking times) and which they see as familiar (measured by shorter listening or looking times).

So when Jenny Saffran and her colleagues presented babies with a made-up language and, in subsequent studies, with a language they didn't know, they found that babies seem to use an almost statistical-like process to learn that certain sounds are likely to follow other sounds in that language. As a result, the babies became bored with and stopped listening to the made-up or the unfamiliar language after a while, but showed renewed interest when they were presented with *new* combinations of sounds.

Similar studies have shown that infants six months old and even younger have a *number sense:* they can detect the difference between large and small numbers of things—such as the difference between eight and sixteen dots, or the difference between a large and a small number of times that a puppet jumps or a car honks its horn, as seen in the studies of Elizabeth Spelke and her colleagues of Harvard University.

And they have what I call a *people sense:* they focus on people's intentions rather than seeing what people do as random movements in space, as shown by the studies of Amanda Woodward of the University of Maryland. By six months, they can tell the difference between who's helpful and who's not, which Kiley Hamlin, Karen Wynn, and Paul Bloom of Yale demonstrate by showing the children a puppetlike show where a round circle with big eyes tries to reach the top of a hill and is helped up to the top by a square but pushed down the hill by a triangle.

After the children view the show, an experimenter who doesn't know what has happened in the experiment (so as not to influence the babies) enters and places the triangle and the square on a tray in front of the baby to see which one he or she reaches for. Will the six-month-old reach for the character that helped the circle achieve its goal (the helper) or the character that prevented the circle from achieving its goal (the hinderer), or is there no pattern to the babies' choices? Of course, the researchers sometimes used the triangle as the helper and the square as the hinderer. Hamlin says: