You can read *Whistle for Willie* 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 is filled with distractions and information overload. It involves **paying attention, remembering the rules, thinking flexibly** and exercising **self control**.

**TIP:**
You can ask your child:
- “What did Peter do to learn how to whistle?”

**SKILL:**
When your child retells parts of the story, he or she is developing Focus and Self Control by **paying attention and remembering**. Focus and Self Control also includes **being able to practice in order to work toward a goal**. Executive Function skills are driven by goals.

**TIP:**
We all do better at achieving our goals if they are important to us.

You can ask:
- “Why did Peter want to learn to whistle?”

Wait for the child’s response and respond to that, perhaps by asking:
- “Did Willie notice Peter when he couldn’t whistle?”

**SKILL:**
This back and forth conversation 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:**
You can share a story with the child about a time that you had to exercise **self control** to work toward a goal that was important to you. Or you can remind your child of a time that he or she worked toward a goal, such as throwing a ball, saying a hard word or going to a new place. By telling inspiring stories about your child’s past, you are helping your child build a “can-do” self image.

**SKILL:**
It is important for children to be aware that working toward a goal **takes time, practice and effort, and takes believing you can achieve the goal**.