

# The use of Ben Furman's *Kids' Skills* in the therapy of children who stutter at preschool and early school age



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## INTRODUCTION:

*Kids' Skills* is an innovative and useful **method of helping children learn skills and overcome emotional and behavioural problems** with the help from families and loved ones.

It is designed for children **aged three to twelve**, but its principles are also applicable to **teenagers** and even **adults**.

The method was developed in the 1990s at the Helsinki Brief Therapy Institute. The author of the method is Finnish psychiatrist and **psychotherapist Ben Furman**.

The method is based on the **Solution Focused Approach (PSR)**. A book about the *Kids' Skills* programme was published in Finland in 2003 to be translated into other languages. Recently, the *Kids' Skills* app <http://www.kidsskillsapp.com/> has been released.

*Kids' Skills* is aimed at **professionals** working in the field of education and childcare, teachers, therapists, parents, and child carers etc. It is a method of working with children, **consisting of 15 steps**.

The key idea behind *Kids' Skills* is the belief that **problems can be transformed into learnable skills**. Children and parents tend to avoid talking about problems.

Adults tend to see problems as symptoms of an underlying disorder which needs to be treated, whereas children tend to see problems as a manifestation of lacking skills which they need to learn. The method can also be used to support proper development of children.

## *Kids' Skills* - Step by step

### The method consists of 15 steps:

The steps can be approached creatively, i.e. some steps can be omitted and others added.

1. **Convert the child's problem into a skill** which the child can learn.
2. Make an agreement with the child about the skill for them to learn.
3. Identify with the child and the parents **the benefits of learning the new skill** for the child and other people.
4. Ask the child to give a name to the skill they will learn.
5. Ask the child to choose an **imaginary power creature** from among their toys or cards.
6. Ask the child to find supporters in their immediate environment.
7. Help the child to **build confidence**.



Fig. 1. Imaginary power creature helping learn new skills (Furman, <https://www.kidsskillsacademy.com/about-the-method/>)  
Fig. 2. Converting problems into skills (Furman, <https://www.kidsskillsacademy.com/about-the-method/>)



8. Discuss how they want to celebrate the acquisition of the new skill.
9. Define how the child will behave or react when using the new skill.
10. With the child and the parents, **inform their environment** about the new project.
11. With the child and the parents, **make a plan** of what the child will do to learn the new skill.
12. Ask the child to define how they want others to remind them of applying the skill when they forget about it.
13. The child **celebrates** the acquisition of the skill chosen.
14. The child **passes the skill** on to another child.
15. Suggest that the child might want to move on to the next skill.

## Using *Kids' Skills* in the therapy of child with stuttering

### Sample questions for parents:

- *What skill does the child need to acquire to cope with these difficult situations?*
- *What would be sign for you that your daughter is starting to overcome her challenge?*
- *What will he do or say in the situations which have been so difficult for him to handle?*

### New skills:

Children who stutter acquire new skills including:

- openness about stuttering;
- turn-taking;
- building confidence in interactions with peers;
- reduction of tension while speaking;
- assertiveness towards bullying resulting from the kid's stuttering.

### Sample questions for the child:

- *What would you like to learn or what would you like to become better at so that your friends would have positive attitude towards you?*
- *How will that be good for you?*
- *What do you get out of learning that skill?*
- *And how would you want your loved ones to support you?*

### Conclusions:

The *Kids' Skills* method is very helpful in therapeutic activities undertaken with children with stuttering at preschool and early school age. **It works best with children who are able to indicate independently the skill they would like to learn**. The benefits from learning the chosen skill also motivate the child to further work. With the help from the therapist, with the support of the power creature, but also thanks to the support from the immediate environment, the child acquires coping strategies. The celebration is an additional incentive, increasing the child's motivation to work. The method reinforces the child's self-esteem and self-confidence, developing his/her strengths.

### References:

1. Furman B. (2010). *Method Kids' Skills in practice*. Łódź: Centrum Terapii Krótkoterminowej.
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3. Yusuf D. (2020). *The Solution Focused Approach with Children and Young People*. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
4. <https://www.kidsskillsacademy.com/about-the-method/>