

**Getting Started
with**

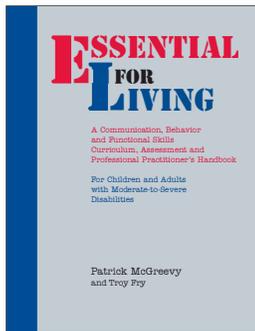
**ESSENTIAL
FOR
LIVING**

What, Why, and How

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Troy Fry**

What am I doing here...

In this era of multiple forms of effortless access to information, it has become difficult for many of us [including myself] to exert the effort that some materials seem to require. Such has been our experience with many of those who have purchased or considered purchasing *Essential for Living*.



Many readers of the first few pages of the *Essential for Living* handbook often describe their experience as overwhelming. While the authors should have done something about this several years ago [okay, maybe seven or eight], then was then and now is now. So, let's get started; and, we promise...

it's not difficult and it won't take long...

What is Essential for Living

Essential for Living is a life skills curriculum and assessment instrument for children and adults of all ages with moderate-to-severe disabilities, limited skill repertoires, and, sometimes, aggressive, destructive, or self-injurious behavior.

This instrument is based on the concepts, principles, and evidence-based procedures from Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), B. F. Skinner's functional and pragmatic analysis of language [verbal behavior], Direction Instruction, or Precision Teaching. When evidence is not available, *Essential for Living* is based on the direct experience of the authors: 55 years for Patrick McGreevy and 35 years for Troy Fry.

Essential for Living is designed for children and adults who struggle with everyday speaking, listening, daily living, and tolerating skills, as well as, abstract concepts and academic skills. Curriculum-based assessment instruments referenced to typical child development [the ABLLS, the VB-MAPP, or the ESDM] or formal academic skills [the Common Core or the Alternate Assessment State Standards] and designed to help these children and adults 'catch up' to their peers or these standards are often used with these children and adults. These instruments, for our children and adults, offer only a range of unreasonable expectations. *Essential for Living*, on the other hand, is referenced to 'quality of life' and will take our children and adults to everyday life skills required in concrete settings, which they can and often will learn to perform quite well.

Essential for Living [EFL] is a 'deep dive' into life skills that are actually required in everyday living, rather than a checklist of seemingly useful skills. For example, reading the signs on the doors of public restrooms [for example, MEN, WOMEN] is seemingly useful in order to enter the appropriate restroom. A deep dive into this skill, however, indicates that reading is neither necessary, nor required, and that matching the signs with your behavior or that of others is the skill that is actually required. As a result, many of our children and adults who have not learned to read, can easily learn to perform this essential life skill.

EFL begins by assessing and teaching the *Essential Eight Skills*, along with leisure skills, and gradually proceeds to teaching *should-have*, *good-to-have*, and *nice-to-have* speaking skills, listening skills, daily living skills, and tolerating skills that are both frequently required and useful in everyday living.

As you become acquainted with *EFL*, you will notice features that encourage you to record small increments of learner progress, teach to fluency, generalization, and critical skill outcomes, and to implement a post-school transition plan that results in a happy and fulfilling life. A deep dive into life skills and these features distinguish *Essential for Living* as 'the premier life skills curriculum'.

Why use *Essential for Living*

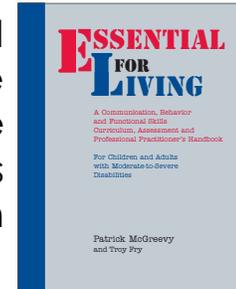
Many of our children in public school classrooms and private clinics and many of our adults in day activity programs or at home are participating in activities that are designed to be instructional, but that 'aren't going anywhere', that is, aren't improving or leading to an improvement in the quality of their lives.

Dr. McGreevy was recently visiting a classroom in the New York City public schools. He sat down at a table where the teacher was working with a seven-year-old boy with no spoken words or alternative method of speaking and very limited motor skills. She was teaching him to match lower case letters, a to a, b to b, and so on. After a few minutes of observation, he asked her, "does it ever strike you that, for this child, this skill isn't going anywhere?". She responded by saying, "Dr. McGreevy, it strikes me that way every day... please show me something else I could teach him that *would matter to him*". How many child and adults are in 'the same boat'?

The thousands of children and adults 'in the same boat' are the reason to use *Essential for Living*.

How to get started...

Obtain a copy of the *EFL* handbook and read pages 1-3. Then, STOP. These pages describe what *EFL* is all about. Then, turn to page 28; the first part of this page describes the 4 activities of an assessment. Then, turn to page 39, which describes how to conduct...



Activity 1: Conduct the EFL Quick Assessment

Get temporary access to the **EFLAPP** by sending an email to: liz@eflapp.com. Then, use this APP to conduct the *EFL Quick Assessment* with a child or adult or use the paper and pencil forms on the essentialforliving.com website:

<http://essentialforliving.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/EFL-QuickAssessForms.pdf>.

When you have completed the *EFL Quick Assessment*, you will have a list of 'possible skill deficits' for that child or adult. On the **EFLAPP**, this list will appear on the screen as skills after which the QA box is shaded in yellow. If you use the paper and pencil forms, you will need to make a list of these skills from those 'in bold' after the answers that have been selected.

Then, return to page 28 and proceed to...

Activity 2: Determine if Your Child or Adult needs an Alternative Method of Speaking

Use the new *AMS Selection Tool*, a free APP, which you can find on the Essential for Living website under the All About EFL menu or at:

<https://datamakesthedifference.com/ams-selection-tool>

This tool will help you determine if your child or adult can use spoken words effectively or if she or he needs an alternative method of speaking. If an alternative method is required, it will help you select a method which is consistent with the skill repertoire of this child or adult.

If your child or adult already has an alternative method, it will help you determine if that method is effective.

Once you have selected a method or confirmed the use of a current alternative method, return to pages 65-67 of the *EFL* handbook, which will describe procedures for testing and confirming the effectiveness of this method.

You should also consider using the **CAFE** criteria to estimate the likelihood that this method will last a lifetime, that is...

is this method of speaking...

CA [continuously available]

F [frequently used], and

E [effortless]

All three criteria must be met to insure that this method of speaking will last a lifetime.

Then, return to page 28 and proceed to...

Activity 3: Scan the must-have, should-have, and good-to-have skills and add 'possible skill deficits' not suggested by Activity 1

Scan the *EFL* handbook, one of the scoring manuals, or the **EFL APP** to determine if you want to include additional skills into your child or adult's instructional program beyond those suggested by the *EFL* Quick Assessment. Then, proceed to...

Activity 4: Confirm and determine the extent of 'skill deficits suggested by Activity 1 and Activity 3

Confirm and determine the extent of these 'skill deficits' using procedures described on pages 28-29 or procedures with which you are familiar [for example, prompt codes and/or percent]. These new procedures will permit you to record small increments of progress and teach to both fluency and generalization, so that skills will occur when and where they are required and so that these same skills will last a lifetime. Then, as described on pages 33-35, you can use these same procedures to record the progress of your child or adult. It will should take only about 2 weeks to become familiar with these new procedures.

Then, as you continue to use *EFL*, you can begin to explore skills and procedures that will enhance the quality of life of many other children and adults with similar disabilities and skill deficits.

What your environment will look like

As you begin to use *EFL* with these children and adults in school and clinic settings, you will find yourself beginning to transform the appearance of your classroom or clinic. This transformation is best described in the slogan of P224Q, a school in New York City...

If it doesn't happen 'out there' [in your community], **it's not happening 'in here'** [in the classroom or clinic]. This includes the skills and the context in which these skills are taught...

Your classroom or clinic will gradually begin to look like your community.