EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

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ABOUT ME

- School psychologist/ neuropsychologist in Ventura County

- Director supporting CA Special Education Teachers completing their credential process

- Educational Consultant and Licensed Educational Psychologist

AGENDA

- What is executive functioning?
- Which skills fall under executive functioning?
- How do I determine my child's strengths and areas of challenge?
- Which skills do we target first?
- How do we support executive skill challenges?

RESOURCES

www.tinyurl.com/EF-Parent

- Type this into the address bar at the top of your screen.
- No spaces between words.
- You will continue to have access to these materials after today.
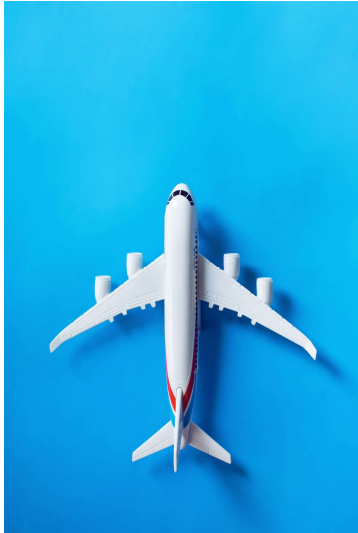
WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING?

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

- Many definitions are available, but generally defined as a <u>set of skills</u> that allow us as humans to set goals, plan, and get things done.

  www.understood.org

- They are viewed as the "conductor" or all cognitive skills and allow you to organize a trip or a paper for school.
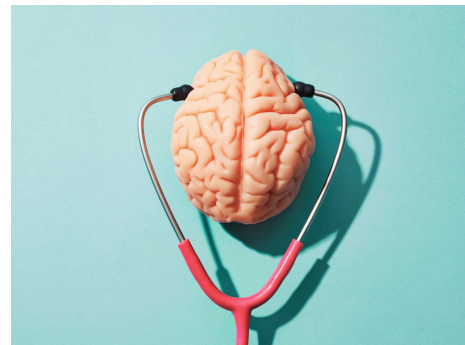
  LD Online

Fuel

Pilot

Cargo/People

Computer

Wings

But a plane needs air traffic control to let them know when to take off and land safely and which direction to go if off course.
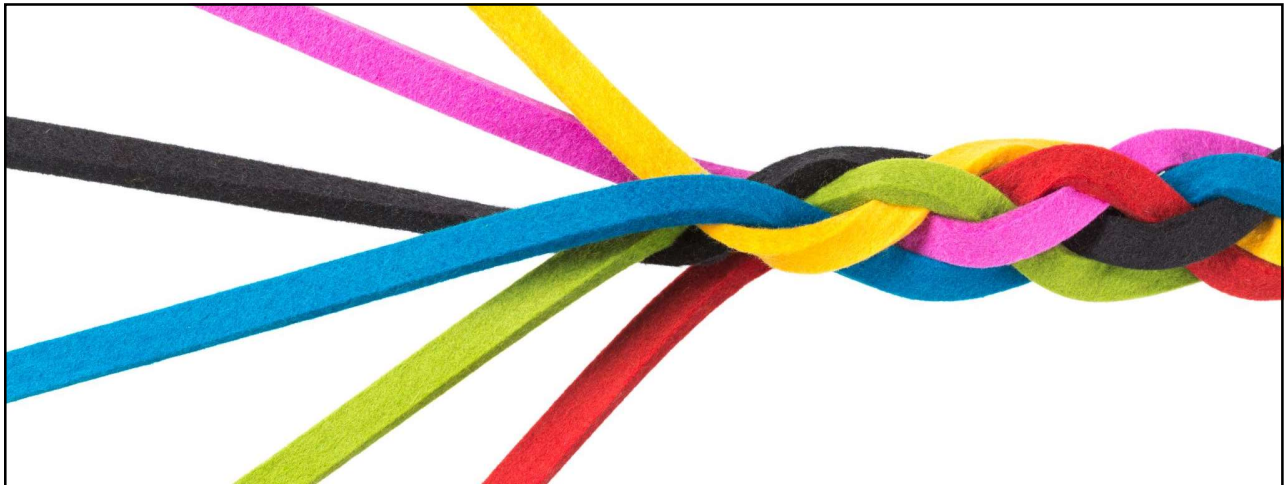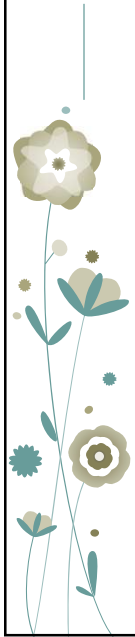

Memory

Attention

Listening

Communication

Problem-Solving

But we need our executive functioning system to know when to talk, and when to listen...and for how long.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

- These skills tend to develop in early childhood and into the teen years, but they continue to develop into a person's mid-20s.

- There is a developmental nature to this set of skills.

- We would not expect a 5-year-old to be able to pay attention as long as we would a 15-year-old.

WHICH SKILLS FALL UNDER EXECUTIVE FUNTIONING?

WHICH SKILLS ARE INVOLVED?

▪This depends on which article, website, and/or book you are reading.

▪Some resources talk about 3 executive skills, and some discuss 30+ skills that all fall under this big term "executive functioning."

▪I will be referencing the skills and definitions from the work of Peg Dawson and Richard Guare, authors of multiple books on the topic of executive functioning.

https://www.smartbutscatteredkids.com/

EXECUTIVE SKILLS

G-drive

Foundational Skills	Advanced Skills
• Response Inhibition • Working Memory • Emotional Control • Flexibility • Sustained Attention • Task Initiation	• Organization • Planning/Prioritization • Time Management • Goal-Directed Persistence • Metacognition

FOUNDATIONAL AND ADVANCED SKILLS

- Foundational skills develop earlier

- Advanced skills develop later and often incorporate the earlier developing foundational skills

- Other things can impact executive skills, such as sleep, hunger, or extreme stress

QUICK DEFINITIONS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

- <u>Response Inhibition</u> – the ability to think before you act
  - Not calling out in class or interrupting a parent when they are talking

- <u>Working Memory</u> – the ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks
  - Remembering 1-2 step directions or remembering the expectations from different teachers

QUICK DEFINITIONS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

- Emotional Control – the ability to manage emotions
  - Recovering from a disappointment or managing anxiety for a test

- Flexibility – the ability to revise plans and adapt to changes
  - Able to adjust to a change in plans or choose an alternative if the first choice is not available

QUICK DEFINITIONS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

- Sustained Attention – the ability to maintain attention despite being distracted, bored, or tired
  - Completing a 5-minute chore or attending to homework with small breaks

- Task Initiation – the ability to begin tasks without undue procrastination
  - Start a chore right after instructions/reminders are provided or start a project two weeks before it is due

EXECUTIVE SKILLS

Foundational Skills

- Response Inhibition
- Working Memory
- Emotional Control
- Flexibility
- Sustained Attention
- Task Initiation

How did you use these skills to <u>get to</u> this presentation today?

How are you using these skills <u>during</u> this presentation?

SELF-REFLECTION

▪ Which of the foundational skills are strengths for YOU?

_____

_____

▪ Which of the foundational skills are more difficult for YOU?

_____

_____

WITH SO MANY SKILLS, WE ALL HAVE AREAS OF STRENGTH AND AREAS OF CHALLENGE

Foundational Skills	Advanced Skills
• Response Inhibition • Working Memory • Emotional Control • Flexibility • Sustained Attention • Task Initiation	• Organization • Planning/Prioritization • Time Management • Goal-Directed Persistence • Metacognition

HOW DO I DETERMINE MY CHILD'S STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF CHALLENGE?

MANY WAYS TO DETERMINE STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF CHALLENGE

▪ You know your child best!

▪ www.smartbutscatteredkids.com
  ▪ ESQ-R

### Executive Skills Questionnaire (ESQ)

Everyone has both strengths and challenges in these skills depending on the situation they are in. Be as honest as you can in deciding what your strengths and challenges are. In particular, think about how you handle non-preferred tasks (the kinds of tasks you don't particularly like to do). Please read each item and decide how often you consider it to be a problem for you using the following scale:

- Never or Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

	Never or Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
I act on impulse	○	○	○	○
I say things without thinking.	○	○	○	○
I lose things.	○	○	○	○
I have a short temper.	○	○	○	○
I get upset when things don't go as planned.	○	○	○	○
I run out of energy before finishing a task.	○	○	○	○
It's hard for me to set priorities when I have a lot of things to do.	○	○	○	○

QUESTIONNAIRES WITHIN BOOKS

Smart But Scattered:
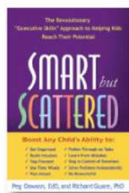
The Revolutionary "Executive Skills" Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential.

More Details

Smart but Scattered Teens:

The "Executive Skills" Program for Helping Teens Reach Their Potential.

More Details

Smart but Scattered—and Stalled

New!
10 Steps to Help Young Adults Use Their Executive Skills to Set Goals, Make a Plan, and Successfully Leave the Nest

More Details

YOUR STRENGTHS AND YOUR CHILD'S STRENGTHS

▪Sometimes, our strengths and areas of challenge are similar to our children's.
- It might be difficult to determine how to work on areas of challenge.

▪Sometimes, our strengths and areas of challenge are different from our children's.
- It might be frustrating that something easy for you is difficult for your child.
- When that happens, reflect on how you are successful – what steps do you take?

WHICH SKILLS DO WE TARGET FIRST?

FOUNDATIONAL AND ADVANCED SKILLS

- You do not have to wait until all foundational skills are improved to work on advanced skills; however, the foundational skills can impact the advanced skills.
  - For example, difficulties with task initiation can impact time management.
- Typically, for younger children, we choose one skill to work on at a time. Depending on your child, you may be able to introduce a few skills in a semester.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Which challenge has the biggest impact on
  - Home life?
  - Homework?
  - Social skills?
  - School?
  - Your child's happiness and/or self-esteem?

CONSIDERATIONS

▪Which challenge could we find quick success in and/or improvement in to get the momentum going?
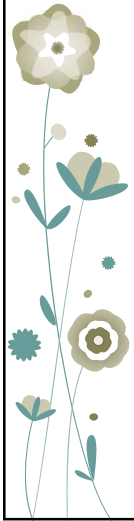
HOW DO WE SUPPORT EXECUTIVE SKILL CHALLENGES?

FOUR WAYS TO ADDRESS AREAS OF CHALLENGE

1. Change the environment
2. Change the task
3. Change the way adults interact with the student
4. Teach the skill

CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT

- If a student struggles with working memory, we might provide
  - Visuals for the morning routine or step-by-step directions for the multi-step math problem

- If a student struggles with sustained attention, we might provide
  - Breaks every 5 minutes during homework time (or 10 or 15)

CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT

- If a student struggles with response inhibition (impulsivity), we might provide
  - Restrictions to where the child can play (backyard instead of the front yard)

- If a student struggles with emotional control, we might
  - Limit the number of friends that come over at a time or the amount of time they play with friends

CHANGE THE TASK

- Make the task shorter
- Build in frequent breaks
- Give the child something to look forward to when the task is complete
- Make the steps for the task clearer
- Build in choice or variety

CHANGE THE TASK

- If a student struggles with sustained attention, we might
  - Have the student complete only ½ of the assignment if they can show mastery of the standard

- If a student struggles with emotional regulation, we might
  - Offer a different task if the student is not in the right emotional space to work on a writing assignment

CHANGE THE WAY ADULTS INTERACT

- Before the Situation: rehearse what will happen, use verbal prompts, and/or arrange for visual cues
- During the Situation: coach the child to use the rehearsed behavior, remind the child to use the list/schedule, and/or monitor the situation to see what triggers the behavior
- After the Situation: praise your child and debrief the situation

CHANGE THE WAY ADULTS INTERACT

- If a student struggles with task initiation, we might provide
  - An adult supporting the student with item #1 on the page

- If a student struggles with working memory, we might
  - Have the student repeat back directions to check for understanding
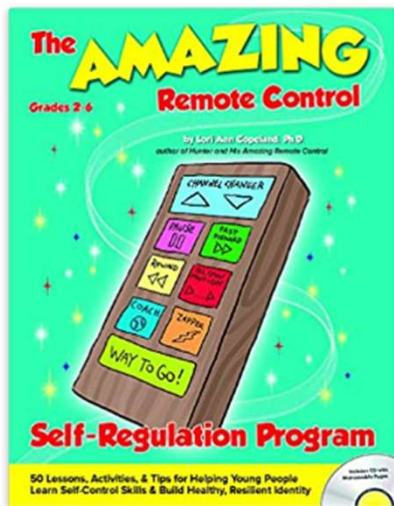
TEACH THE SKILL

- If a student struggles with response inhibition, we might provide
  - Teaching and reinforcement of the "pause" button on a remote control

TEACH THE SKILL: IMPULSIVITY
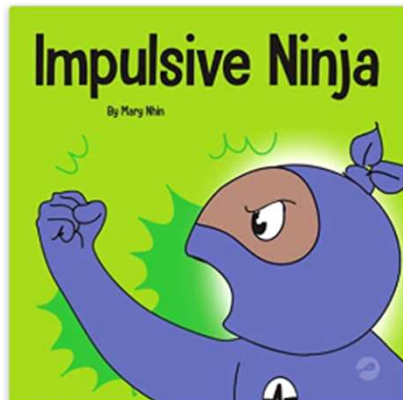
Impulsive Ninja
by Mary Nhin

TEACH THE SKILL: IMPULSIVITY

The Amazing Remote
Control
by Lori Ann Copeland

TOP 10 *Executive Functioning Apps*

Evernote (free) helps you remember everything across all devices. Stay organized, save your ideas, and improve your productivity; take notes, snap photos, to-do lists, scan business cards, record voice reminders--and it makes everything searchable.

Alarmed (free) reminder + timer app that gives pop-up alerts with repeat scheduling abilities, flexible snooze, and full customization.

Choiceworks ($14.99) helping children complete daily routines, understand & control their feelings, and improve their waiting skills; designed for caregivers to provide clear and consistent support to foster a child's independence, positive behavior, and emotional regulation at home and in the community.

Quizlet (free) easiest way to practice and master what you're learning. Create

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FOUR WAYS TO ADDRESS AREAS OF CHALLENGE

1. Change the environment
2. Change the task
3. Change the way adults interact with the student
4. Teach the skill

Which do you choose?

Some trial-and-error, and sometimes you use a combination of strategies.

WORK AS A TEAM

- Talk with your child's case manager to see which strategies are being used in the school setting.
  - Similar language across settings can be helpful.
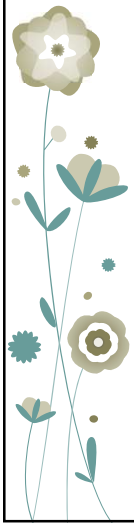
WWW.JENNYPONZURIC.COM

thank you!