

Executive Functioning Skills Defined

1. Response Inhibition:
 - a. Capacity to think before you act.
 - b. Uses all other executive functioning skills to develop.
 - c. Ex. Stopping yourself before acting or talking.
 - d. Ex. Not blurting out, not crying, not grabbing things of desire from others
 - e. Ways to help: Write questions down, signal, use timer, read questions prior to reading passage on test, planned waiting.
2. Working Memory:
 - a. Ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks.
 - b. Lack of WM Makes comparing, sequencing, summarizing difficult.
 - c. WM only intact for about 10 minutes
 - d. Ex. recalling a list of items while attending to something else
 - e. Ex. Recalling steps/recipes procedure while cooking favorite meals.
 - f. Children with weak WM have difficulty remembering steps to a game, difficulty following a story, steps to a math problem, or forget to turn in HWK.
3. Emotional Control:
 - a. Ability to control emotions to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.
 - b. Ability to inhibit, self soothe, self calm, contemplate, and moderate emotions.
 - c. Brain regulating the limbic system.
 - d. Ex. Handle criticism and not act upon it.
 - e. Technology can be a problem here. Calling home during the school day when there is a problem does not help a child develop emotional control.
 - f. Create a pause between emotion and action. A child with good emotional control is able to see his/her emotions objectively and perceive how someone else might feel.
 - g. Rehearse difficult emotional situations, give script, call emotions, try social stories, regulate environment to take stressors away, prepare for challenges.
4. Sustained Attention
 - a. Capacity to keep paying attention to the task or situation in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.
 - b. Capacity to attend while bored or disinterested.
 - c. Keep child close to monitor attention, allow for vestibular stimulation (physical activity)
 - d. Prompt attention, give signal to cue attention, break into smaller tasks.
5. Task Initiation:
 - a. Ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient and timely manner.
 - b. Routine important, make directions simple, use scaling 1-5, use timer

- c. Use deadlines, checklists, start with easy items, break tasks into smaller chunks

6. Planning/prioritization: Ability to create a mental road map to reach a goal or to complete a task. Ability to make decisions about what to focus on and what's not important.

- a. Low intrinsically motivated tasks, like homework, take a back seat when highly emotional issues become present.
- b. One could call this the ability to become strategic

7. Organization: Ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.

- a. Getting organized vs. staying organized
- b. Getting Organized: Need clear systems, easy to use, organize electronics systems too.
- c. Staying Organized: New systems are novel and easy to stay organized with but staying organized is more difficult over time.
- d. Use examples of other peoples organizational systems, use visible systems like lists.
- e. Encourage consistency. Clocks can help but often a child's perception of time is not accurate and needs practice.

8. Time Management: Capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. Involves the sense that time is important.

- a. Ability to look back to get ready for what is coming at you.
- b. Kids are pulled along by the now.
- c. Time management is the purpose of the frontal lobe: organize the now for the future.
- d. Teens struggle with time planning. Often underestimate how long it takes to do boring tasks and overestimate complex tasks.

9. Goal-directed persistence: Capacity to have goal, follow through to the completion of the goal, and not be put off by or distracted by competing interests.

- a. One of the last EF skills to mature.
- b. Ex's projects and Trash Girl

10. Flexibility: Ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes. Adaptability in changing conditions.

11. Metacognition: Ability to stand back and take a birds eye view of the situation, to observe how you solve problems. Includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills

- a. Last EF skills to evolve.
- b. Help students develop a plan, monitor their understanding, and evaluate learning after completing tasks.
- c. "How am I doing" "What did I learn" "Am I on track, how should I proceed"