



Top-rated education and mental health services for children, teens and young adults for over 65 years



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Consistency and Connections: **Key Strategies to Strengthening Executive Function Skills and Overall Emotional and Behavioral Regulation**

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Visit us at chconline.org/community-connections



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CHC (Children's Health Council)

is a community-based nonprofit organization
providing education and mental health services
for children, teens and young adults
since 1953



We Want Children, Teens and Young Adults to:





About CHC

Our Vision

We believe in the promise and potential of every child, teen and young adult.

Our Mission

To remove barriers to learning, helping children and teens and young adults become resilient, happy and successful at home, at school and in life.

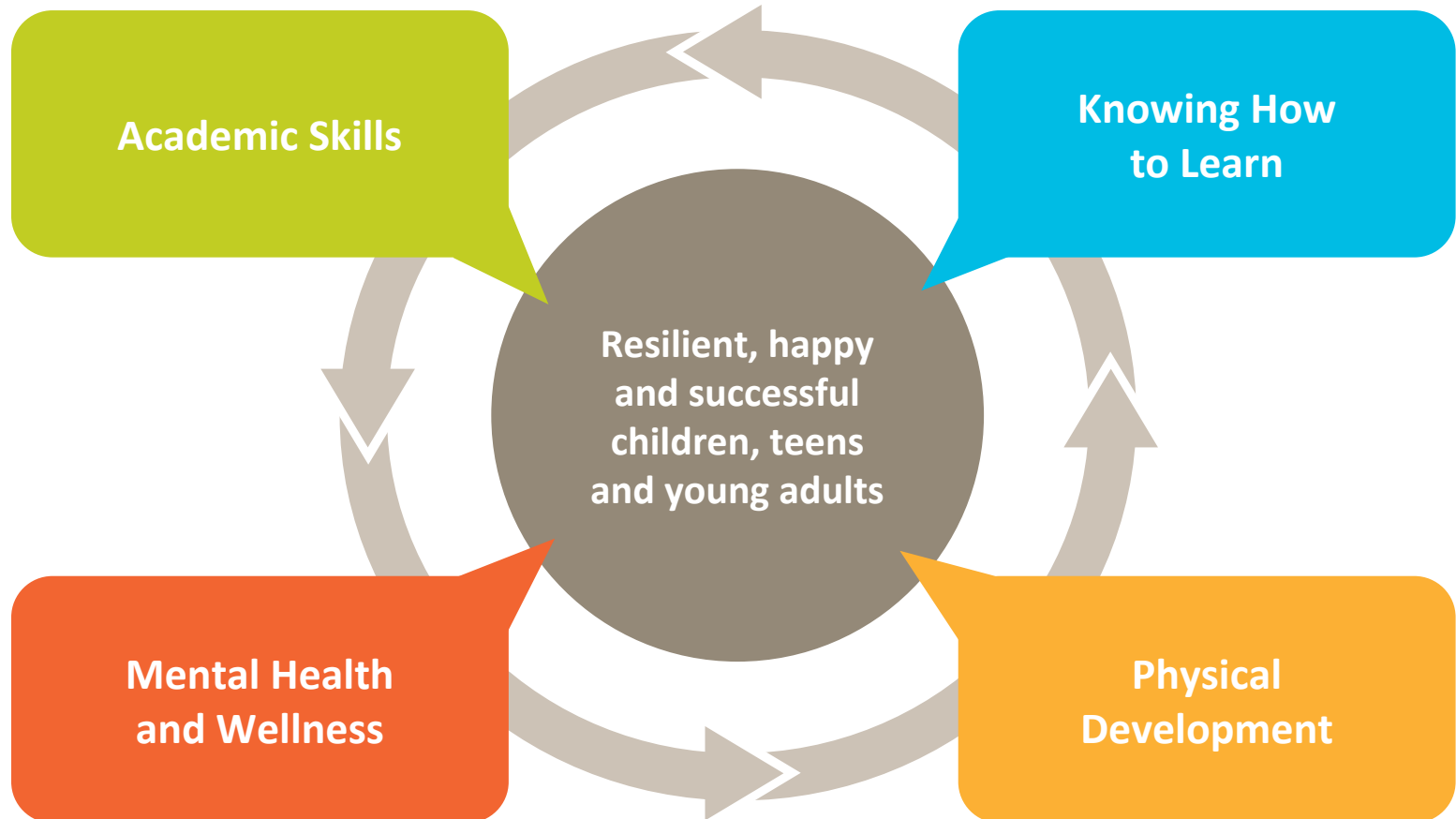
Our Quest

We strive to remove social and emotional barriers to learning and mental health regardless of language, location or ability to pay.



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Integrated Elements of Effective Learning





Our Areas of Excellence





Our Four Divisions

Clinical Services

Multidisciplinary teams provide evidence-based evaluations, therapy, consultations and trainings on ADHD, anxiety and depression, learning differences and autism. Clinics in Palo Alto, Ravenswood and South Bay.

Community Connections

Classes, workshops, and conferences; the EdRev community, Expo and SAFE; support groups; partnerships; volunteer programs; and online resources.

Sand Hill School

An independent day school with strengths-based learning for 1st – 8th grade kids with dyslexia and learning differences.

Esther B. Clark School

Therapeutic day school serving students with emotional and behavioral challenges from over 40 districts in our community. Campuses in Palo Alto and San Jose.



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Join us for

EdRev Expo | 2019

A unique event for the 1 in 5 students with learning and attention issues, anxiety and depression

May 4, 2019

ORACLE PARK
Home of the SF Giants

SAN FRANCISCO

9 a.m. - 4 p.m.



Register Free Now!
EdRevSF.org/expo



On the Agenda

- Defining executive functioning (EF)
- EF and middle school
- Framing strategies within a developmental model of middle schoolers
- Perspectives from interpersonal neurobiology
- Promoting emotional and behavioral regulation
- Strategies for EF weaknesses, with a focus on consistency and connections
- Resources/Q&A



NOT on the Agenda

- Discussing specific diagnoses (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia)
- Focusing on all executive function skills
- Tailoring interventions to specific children
- Troubleshooting why strategies have not worked for you and your child
- High-tech strategies (e.g., specific Apps or assistive technology)



Defining Executive Functioning



Executive Function Skills...

- Allow us to organize our behavior over time and override immediate demands in favor of longer term goals
 - Do tasks on time and efficiently
- Enable us to manage our emotions and monitor our thoughts in order to work more efficiently and effectively
 - Choose what to say and do



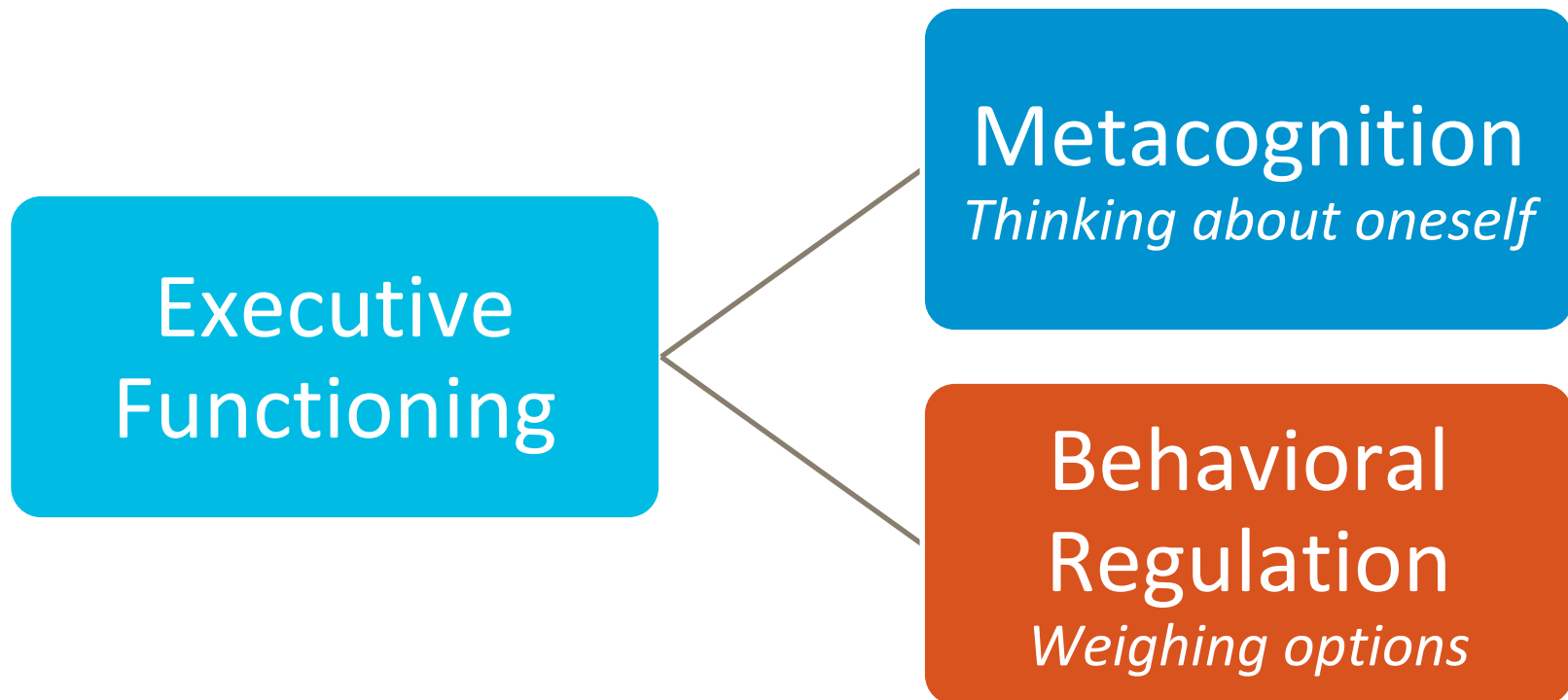
In a Nutshell...

Executive functioning is the set of mental processes that allow us to be efficient and effective learners.





Two Major Components of EF





Metacognition

- The ability to think about yourself, know what you need to learn, and execute it:
 - Planning & Prioritizing
 - Organization of Time, Tasks and Materials
 - Task Initiation
 - Working Memory
 - Self-monitoring/Self-checking



Behavioral Regulation

- The ability to appropriately manage one's thoughts, speech, actions and emotions:
 - Inhibition & Impulse Control
 - Emotional Regulation
 - Flexibility & Shifting
 - Sustaining Attention



What do EF weaknesses look like?

- You may have difficulty with:
 - Planning projects
 - Knowing how much time a task or project will take
 - Pulling together themes or information
 - Telling stories in a sequential, organized manner
 - Memorizing and retrieving information
 - Holding onto instructions so you can do something with it
 - Prioritizing what tasks should be done first
 - Thinking flexibly and adjusting your approach to tasks



What's the big deal about middle school?

- Physical change of location
- Increases in class size
- Changes in school perspective
- Varying instructional formats
- Increases in the number of teachers
- Decreases in perceived teacher support
- Increased expectations for individual responsibility
- Changes in peer networks
- Increased exposure to negative peer behaviors



Framework for Supporting Executive Functions



How do we treat EF deficits?

- Focus is on the concept of **externalizing** information and learning
- Deficits are presumed to be the result of frontal lobe immaturity
- Cannot expect children with EF deficits to be their own solutions – solutions come primarily from adults, especially caregivers and teachers
- Coaching explicitly teaches strategies and *slowly* removes supports



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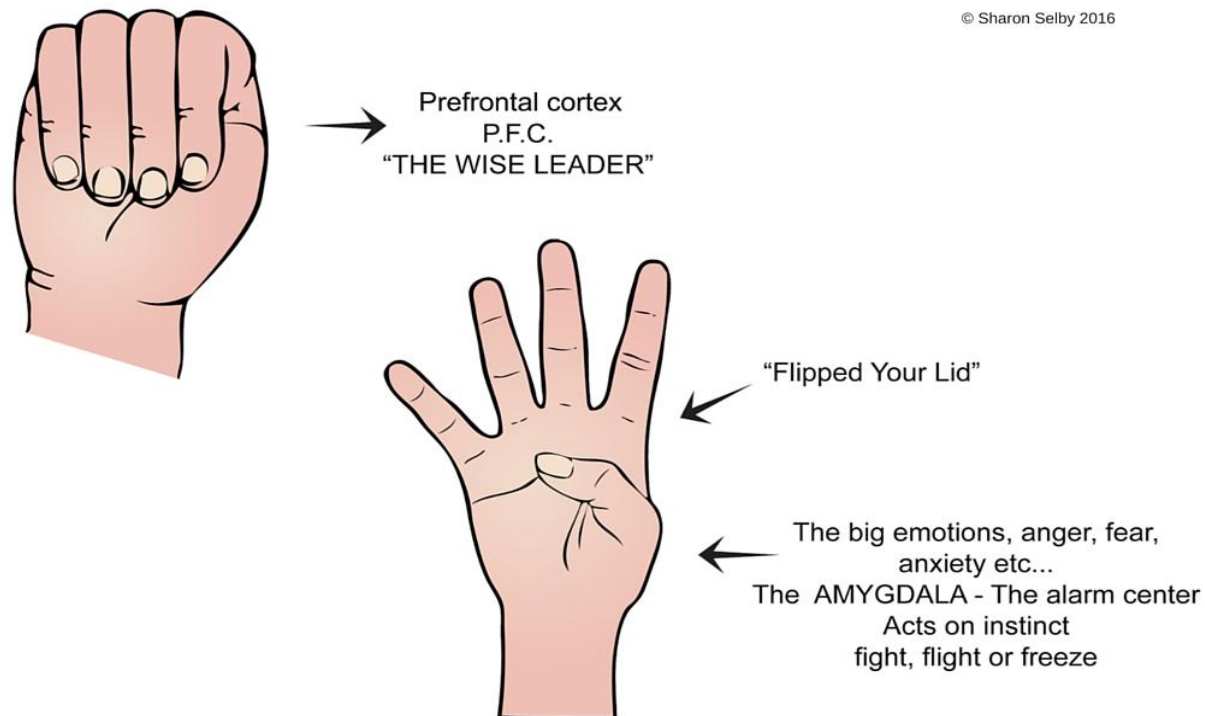
There are many strategies that can be taught to help compensate for and work around executive dysfunction!



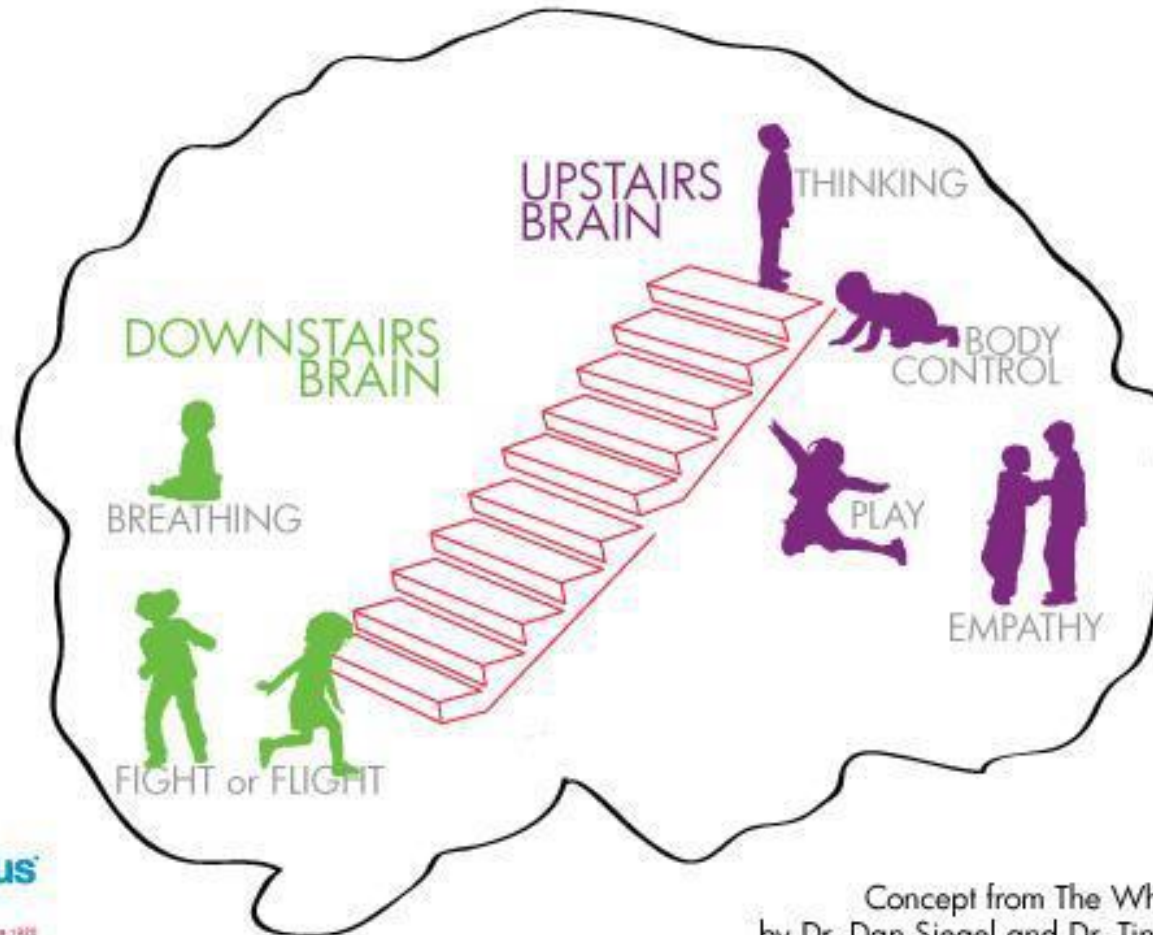
Managing Emotions and Behaviors *Before* Targeting Executive Function Skills

Before Getting into EF Strategies, let's Talk Emotions

- Remember that EF is a higher order cognitive skill
- EF cannot be accessed unless we are in a relatively calm space



Perspectives from Interpersonal Neurobiology





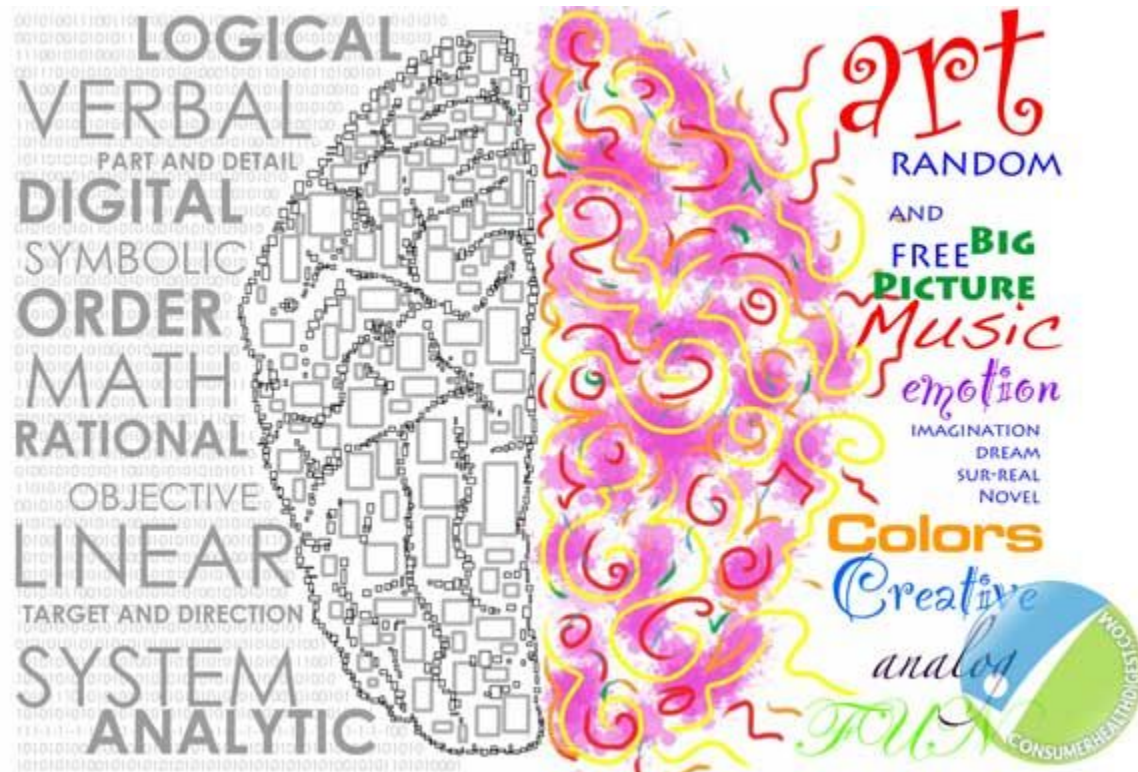
Beyond Time-Outs and Privilege Removal...

- “Top-down” discipline approaches are more effective with preschool and elementary-aged children
- Managing emotions and behaviors in middle school children requires greater flexibility and collaboration
- Your relationship with your child takes center stage in middle school and beyond
- Effective discipline is dependent on a nurturing relationship between adult and child
- Goal of discipline is to teach – sometimes you need to wait for the right moment



...And Towards Integration and Wellness

Our goal is to help our kids use both the logical left brain and the emotional right brain so they can live integrated lives with meaningful relationships





From the Whole-Brain Child (Siegel & Payne-Bryson):

“Using only the right or left brain would be like trying to swim using only one arm. We might be able to do it, but wouldn’t we be a lot more successful – and avoid going in circles – if we used both arms together?”



Strategies to Promote Integration and Overall Emotional and Behavioral Regulation

- **Connect and Redirect**

- When your child is upset, connect first emotionally, right brain to right brain. Then, once your child is more in control and receptive, bring in the left-brain lessons and discipline.

- **Name it to Tame It**

- When big emotions are out of control, help your kids tell the story about what's upsetting them – they'll use their left brain to make sense of their experience and feel more in control

» From *The Whole-Brain Child* by Siegel and Payne-Bryson



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Consistency and Connections as Key EF Strategies



Consistency as a Strategy for Learning

- Schedules and routines help ensure that each day does not seem like a brand new experience
- Predictability reduces the EF demands and the likelihood of dysregulation
- Since individuals with EF challenges do not easily retain information, routines will need to be reiterated for weeks, months or even longer
- Choose routines and schedules that you can maintain for the long haul



Create External Structure for Consistency

- Use large visual aids
 - Schedules
 - Desk/wall calendars
 - White boards
 - Post-its
 - Checklists
- Get a simple academic planner that allows them to see their time and TEACH the child how to use it



Consistency in Relationships

- Be **consistent** and **calm** in your interactions
- Adults are potent role models as students learn how to manage themselves and their emotions
- When we're at our wit's end, we can't access our own EF skills, let alone guide those of our children
- Consistently model appropriate self-regulation strategies – take a few moments away, turn on your happy music, draw, do something creative, get a breath of fresh air



Connections as a Strategy

- Students with EF challenges have difficulty making connections in the information they are learning
- Struggle with “big picture” thinking
- Explicitly link information (e.g., why Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks are connected, how main characters are similar, why writing styles are similar or different)
- Provide increasing levels of scaffolding until they make connections



Supporting Connections in Learning

- Tie lessons to salient and real world experiences (e.g., family travels, sports statistics)
- Review outlines and lesson plans in advance
- Read summaries before reading the full text (e.g., CliffsNotes)
- Note-taking support
- Present information in a multi-modal manner (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile)
- Use visualization strategies



Connections in Relationships

- “Kids don’t care what you know until they know that you care.”
- Students need to feel supported, hopeful and empowered to learn the skills
- Be non-judgmental and collaborative
- Use an experimental lens – trial and error is king!



Collaborate and Problem-Solve Out Loud

- Help build self-awareness by keeping track of how strategies are working, both successes and failures
- By drawing your student into the process, you are engaging their frontal lobe and encouraging use of their metacognitive abilities
- Be upfront when you feel stuck – ask for suggestions
- The quality of your relationship with your child is more important than being their EF taskmaster
- Know when to step back and get help



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Collaboration and Advocacy



Collaboration and Parent Advocacy

- In elementary and middle school, parents are the primary advocates, though middle schoolers also need to be participants
- Develop a positive relationship with the school
- Help them understand your child – regular communication is key
- Try and be non-defensive and collaborative when they bring concerns to you (hopefully they will return the favor)
- Set realistic goals for you, your child and the school



Self-Advocacy for Teens and Young Adults

- Teens and young adults need to understand themselves, specifically their strengths and weaknesses
- Teens need to understand why certain supports or accommodations are helpful – need “buy in”
- They need to know how to problem-solve around their weak spots
- Before they leave for college, a priority should be teaching them self-advocacy skills
- They need to feel comfortable asking for support as adults (e.g., in college, the workplace, in relationships)



Resources – Books

- *Late, Lost, and Unprepared-A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning.* Cooper-Kahn, J. & Dietzel, L. (2008).
- *Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary Executive Skills Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential.* Dawson, P. & Guare, R. (2008).
- *The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind.* Siegel, D., & Payne-Bryson, T. (2012).
- *No Drama Discipline: The Whole Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind.* Siegel, D., & Payne-Bryson, T. (2016).



Resources – Websites

- www.chconline.org
- www.understood.org
- <https://childmind.org/>
- <https://www.chconline.org/resourcelibrary/executive-function-101-e-book-downloadable/>
- <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/activities-guide-enhancing-and-practicing-executive-function-skills-with-children-from-infancy-to-adolescence/>



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Thank You

Contact CHC

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