

Executive Functions: Topics and Techniques for Parents

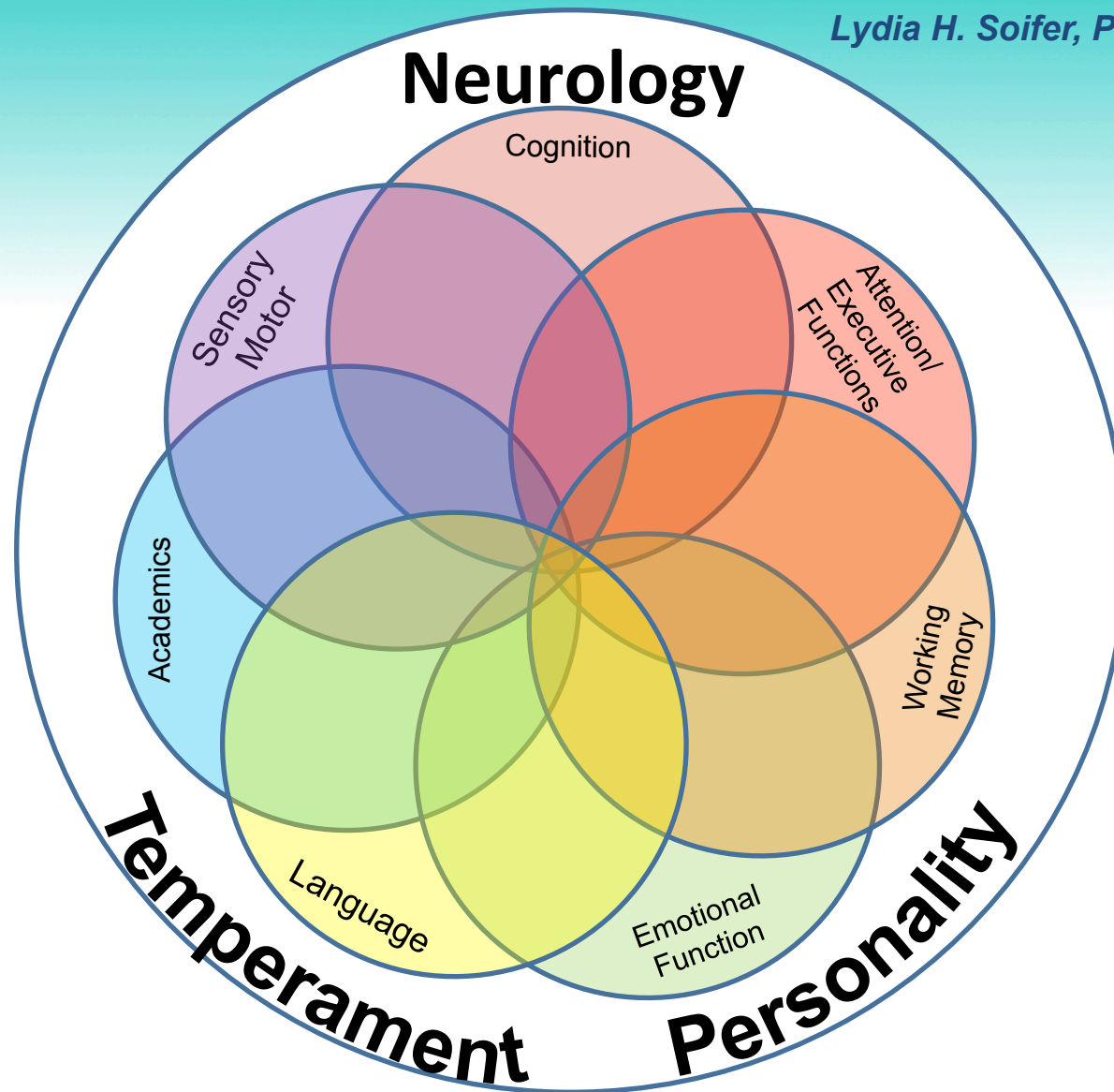
Lydia H. Soifer, Ph.D.
Language and Literacy Specialist
Program Consultant
DrSoifer@LydiaSoiferPhD.com

SEAC
May 23, 2022



Who is this Child?

Lydia H. Soifer, Ph.D., 2006



Executive Functions

Being the boss of your brain!



Executive Functions

- Executive functions are the “*Air Traffic Control System*” of your brain!



Dates Ideas

Activities

Chores

Homework

Avoiding distractions

Self-control

**Executive Functions are important in
showing what you know.**

**Without good Executive Functions, you will not
look as smart as you actually are.**

What are the Executive Functions?

- **Decision making** and **planning processes**
- Invoked at the **outset of a task**
- Invoked when faced with a **novel challenge**
- Meta-cognitive strategies mediated by **language**
- *Management* functions of the mind that ***activate integrate regulate*** a wide variety of mental functions

Executive Functions

Thinking Skills to Select and Achieve Goals

Planning

Organizing

Time Management

Working Memory*

Metacognition

Skills for Guiding and Modifying Behavior

Response Inhibition

Self-regulation of Affect

Task Initiation

Maintaining and Shifting Set (mental flexibility)

Goal Directed Persistence

Executive Skills: Thinking Skills to Select & Achieve Goals

- Planning
- Organization
- Time Management
- **Working Memory ***
- Metacognition

Executive Skills: Guiding and Modifying Behavior

- **Response Inhibition**
- Self-regulation of affect
- Task Initiation
- **Flexibility**
- Goal-directed persistence

Add to EF – Self-Regulation!

Self-Regulation

Self-monitoring

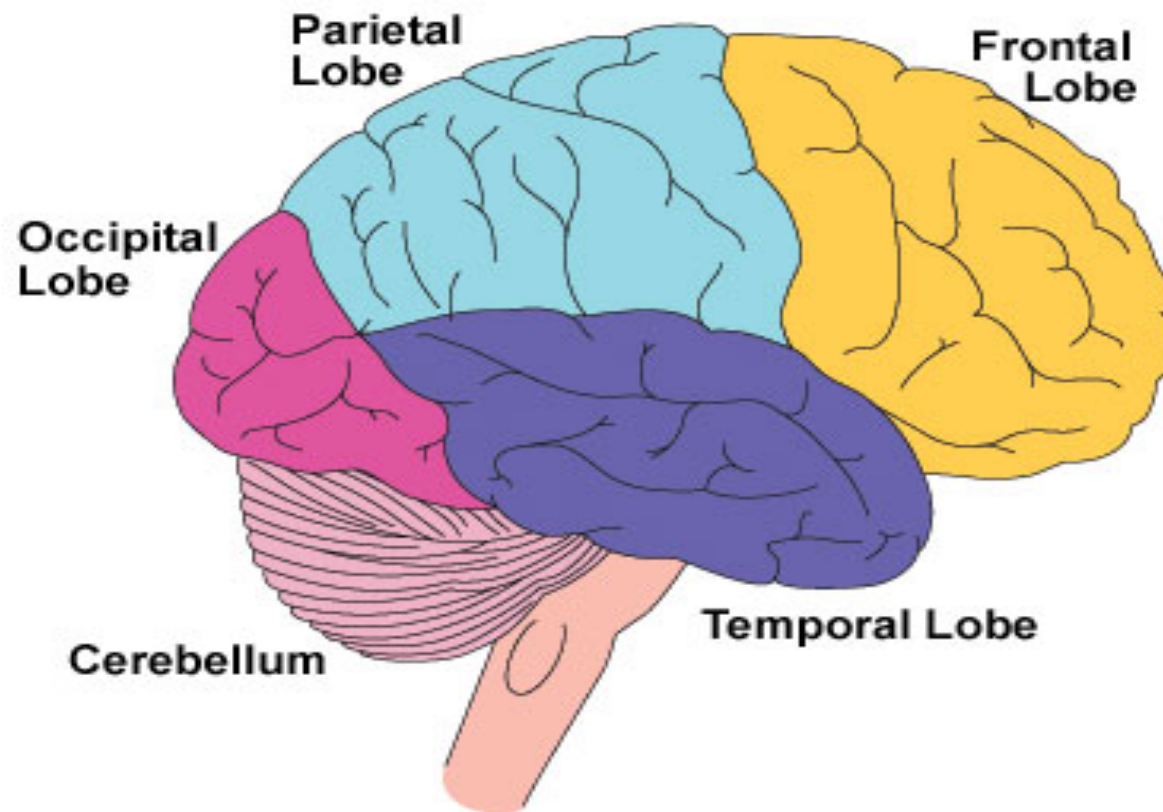
Self-evaluation

Self-reaction

(behavioral adjustment)

(regulation of affect)

A Bit of Neuroanatomy...Just a Bit



Stroop Coloring Naming

Black	Blue	Red	Yellow	Green	Orange
Yellow	Green	Blue	Orange	Red	Black
Orange	Black	Green	Red	Blue	Yellow
Green	Yellow	Black	Blue	Orange	Red
Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Black	Blue
Blue	Red	Orange	Black	Yellow	Green

Executive Functions and School

Absolutely, positively, no doubt about it

NECESSARY!!!

- Reading comprehension
- Writing
- Studying
- Homework
- Test taking
- Projects

“Gee, I gotta get some metacognition!”

Turner, age 14

- What do good executive functions look like?
 - Not this!!!!



- Rather,
 - Plans and organizes for assignments and studying
 - Monitors behavior and reflects on it
 - Functions independently but knows when to seek help
 - Organized with good self-control

Relationships among Executive Functions, Self-Regulation and Language

- Metacognitive strategies mediated by language (**talking yourself through the thought process and/or task**)
- Vygotsky – **language** plays a central role in:
 - Self-control
 - Self-direction
 - Problem solving
 - Task performance

**“How do you always make it
about language, Lydia?”**

Howard Demb, M.D., 1978

Self-talk is crucial for EF

- **Plan** – How do I start this problem?
- **Organize** – Where am I going and how do I get there?
- **Focus** – What is important here?
- **Set goals** – What are the steps?
- **Schedule** – Now what?
- **Inhibition** – I know I don't like math.
- **Sustained effort** – I'd rather watch cartoons
- **Shift back** – But I'm going to get this done
- **Monitor** – Did I get an answer
- **Assessing** – What do I think of that answer?
- **Revise** – That did not answer the question. Let me look again
- **Praise/Reward** – Looks great! Where's my ice cream?

HELP!! How?

- Model the behavior
 - Talk to yourself OUT LOUD
 - Do yourself what you want them to do
- Organize time
- Organize tasks
- Organize materials
- Prioritize tasks
- Prioritize materials



Some Strategies That Will Help

- General strategies
- Managing time
- Managing space and materials
- Managing work
- Define completed work

General Strategies

- Take a step by step approach to work; use visual organizational aids
- Use tools like organizers, computers, watches with alarms
- Prepare a visual schedule and review it during the day
- Ask for written directions with oral directions whenever possible
- Plan and structure transition times and shifts between activities.

Managing Time

- Create checklists and “to do” lists; estimate how long each task will take (see how close to right you are)
- Break long assignments into chunks; Create a time frame for each chunk
- Use visual calendars to track long term assignments, due dates, chores, activities (color code!!!)
- Use time management software
- Write the due date on the top of each assignment

Managing Space and Materials

- Organize the work space
- Minimize clutter
- If possible, have separate work areas with appropriate supplies for different activities
- Schedule a weekly time to clean and organize the work space.

Managing Work

- Make a checklist for getting through assignments
- Create a mantra – “Paper, pencil, name and date, read directions...”
- Troubleshoot problems with your child and have the youngster talk to the teacher – demonstrates commitment!

Define Completed Work

- Your room will be clean when...(list)
- Your math homework will be done when...(list)
- Your piano practice will be done when...(list)
- The table will be properly set when...(list)
- Your science project for tomorrow will be done when...(list)
- **STOP. THINK. PLAN. BE SPECIFIC. ASSESS.**

Daily Assignment Sheet

Date _____

English/Lang. Arts Time to Complete: Estimated _____ Actual _____ Due Date _____

____ I have completed the assignment ____ There was no homework

Math Time to Complete: Estimated _____ Actual _____ Due Date _____

____ I have completed the assignment ____ There was no homework

Science Time to Complete: Estimated _____ Actual _____ Due Date _____

____ I have completed the assignment ____ There was no homework

Social Studies Time to Complete: Estimated _____ Actual _____ Due Date _____

____ I have completed the assignment ____ There was no homework

Other Time to Complete: Estimated _____ Actual _____ Due Date _____

____ I have completed the assignment ____ There was no homework

LONG-TERM ASSIGNMENTS/TESTS

PARENT/TEACHER COMMENTS:

Signatures _____

DAILY HOMEWORK PLANNER

Date: _____

Subject/assignment	Do I have all the materials?	Do I need help?	Who will help me?	How long will it take?	When will I start?	Done (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>)
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				

From *Smart but Scattered* by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare. Copyright 2009 by The Guilford Press.

Some Terrific Sources for You

- *Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence.* Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University (developingchild.harvard.edu)
- Dawson, P. and Guare, R. *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention, 3rd edition.* Guilford Press.

Executive Functions: Topics and Techniques for Parents

Lydia H. Soifer, Ph.D.
Language and Literacy Specialist
Program Consultant
DrSoifer@LydiaSoiferPhD.com

SEAC
May 23, 2022

