



Executive Functioning & Homework Strategies



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What is Executive Functioning?

Impulse Control

Planning/Prioritizing

Emotional Control

Flexibility

Working Memory

Self-Monitoring



What is this test measuring?



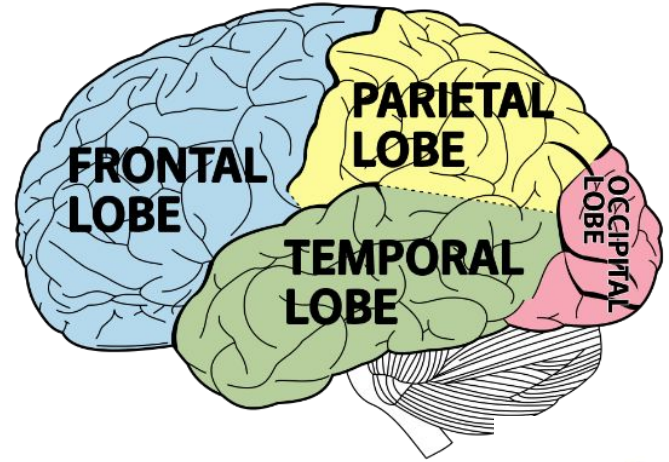
What is Executive Functioning?

- Brain-based pathways that are required for humans to execute, or perform, tasks.
- Skills necessary for learning.
- “Conductor”, “coach”, or a “CEO”.
- Behavior, Cognition, and Emotion



Developmental Trajectory

- Last part of the brain to fully develop
- Not fully developed until mid-twenties
- EF develops over time
- Frontal lobe is more susceptible to injury which is why mood can change drastically after TBI
- We are born with “reactivity” to stimulation (i.e., temperament)
- Development leads to regulation of reactions



Name the color of the word (do not read)

BLUE

PINK

GREEN

BLACK

RED

BROWN



Parents Role in EF Development

- Behavior Modification
- Reinforce immediately and consistently
 - Natural and Explicit (adolescents notice) **Any behavior that is reinforced will increase in frequency Reinforce “doing” behaviors (i.e., effort) and explicitly name what it is you are reinforcing.
 - “I am so proud that you came home, took out your work, organized everything, and got started all by yourself!” Your brain will do what you teach it to do
- Make explicit connections between the EF skill and the academic, emotional, or behavioral target



What do students with EF challenges look like in school?

Off task

Passing assignments in late

Impulsive (saying or doing the first thing that crosses their mind)

Forgetful

Messy backpack and desk

Completing tasks out of order

Emotional ups and downs

**Remember that these behaviors are developmental*



What is it like to be a child with EF challenges?

OVERWHELMING

ISOLATING

CONFUSING

FEELING LOST

FEELING INADEQUATE

1. Open your book to page 163
2. Highlight this chapters vocabulary words
3. Pick three to write sentences on
4. Type up your sentences on google class
5. Submit to me and Mrs. Jones
6. Make sure you use appropriate highlighter color I assigned to your group last week
7. Pick the theme for your essay
 - a. Which is due next week April 3 you can give your rough draft the day before



Organizing & Prioritizing Strategies



- Teach your child to think of a long-term project as a “**mental movie**” by breaking complex tasks into manageable chunks (like movie scenes).
- Use a white board or sheet of paper to map tasks into **flowcharts**.
- Encourage your child to write down important tasks in a **calendar** and to allocate time accordingly.
- You can teach your child to estimate the time each task will take and to **track the time** while working.
- Help make **lists** of homework assignments or chores. Let them experience the satisfaction of **checking off tasks**.



Organizing & Prioritizing Strategies

continued

- Identify a regular time during the week for clearing out and organizing backpack.
 - Work together to make this a pleasant experience so that it becomes a habit (Oreos and Organizing)
- Use a brightly colored folder to bring important papers (like homework and permission slips) to and from school, so those items don't get lost.
- Use a simple planner that you and your child check daily, a schedule for daily homework, study and review.



Flexible Thinking Strategies



- Fun Activities:
 - Activities that involve multiple-meaning words
 - word categories and number puzzles can build a child's flexible approach to language and numbers from the preschool years onwards
 - Visualizing and discussing jokes, riddles, puns and multiple-meaning words



Flexible Thinking Strategies

continued

- **Writing**
 - “stuck” on a writing task, encourage the use of strategies to organize and prioritize the information. Use graphic organizers to help shift between the main ideas and supporting details, and a three-column note-taking system to record major themes, concepts or questions in the first column, relevant details in the second column, and a memory strategy, such as a picture, in the third column
- **Reading Comprehension**
 - Is there a word or phrase that could have more than one meaning? Can I emphasize different parts of this sentence to change its meaning?



Working Memory Strategies



- Break up or chunk information
 - This takes up fewer “slots” in working memory. For example, give one or two instructions rather than a long string of them
- Discourage multitasking
 - Use working memory like a spotlight to focus on one thing at a time and shift between activities.
- Pair visual and verbal
 - Draw picture and say aloud
 - Make up riddles to remember facts



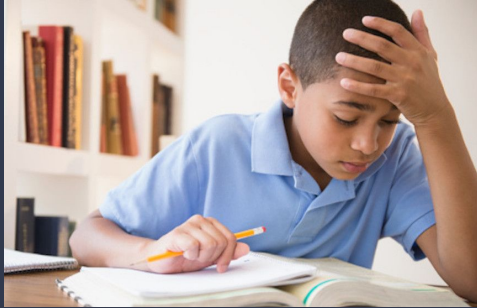
Self-Monitoring Strategies



- Help your kids come up with silly phrases or songs as reminders to pack necessary books and folders in their backpack when leaving school or when leaving home in the morning.
- Encourage them to give finished homework a “once over” to learn the habit of self-checking.
- Keep a clock nearby so they can monitor the time spent on each assignment.



How does EF impact homework completion?



Homework requires students to:

1. Write down all assignments correctly
 - a. Focus
2. Bring home materials needed for their work
 - a. Organization
3. Complete tasks on time
 - a. Planning
4. Remember to turn in their work.
 - a. Working Memory



What strategies can you use at home to help with homework?

- “First, then” language
 - “First do homework, then do a preferred activity”
- Strategic and timed breaks
 - Work for 20 minutes, take 5 minute movement break
- Set goals at the start of the week
 - Make a list, check assignments/steps off as you complete them
- Check in with parent/older sibling at start of week and check out at end of week
- If something is hard make note of it to check in with adult/teacher and move on



Mindfulness Activities to foster EF Skills



Calm

Focus

Kindness

Sleep

Wakeup



EF Activities for 5-7 Year Olds



- Working Memory
 - Concentration
 - Old Maid
- Attention
 - Freeze Dance
 - Duck Duck Goose
- Cognitive Flexibility
 - Crazy Eights
 - Uno
- Self-Control
 - Slapjack



EF Activities for 7-12 Year Olds



- Working Memory
 - Fantasy/Make believe play with rules as you go
- Attention
 - Card game Spit
- Cognitive Flexibility
 - Crosswords puzzles
 - Sudoku



EF Activities for Adolescents



- Impulse/Emotional Regulation
 - Yoga
 - Meditation
- Self-Monitoring
 - Journaling
 - Self-Talk
- Working Memory
 - Chess
- Study Skills
 - Making timelines
 - Calendars
 - Reduce distractions/use a timer



Helpful Resources



- School Psychologist
 - My child is struggling with long term projects, do you have any suggestions for how we can support her at home?
- Your child's teacher
 - How much time should we be spending per night on math homework?
- <http://smartbutscatteredkids.com>
- <http://www.efinthe classroom.net>
- <http://efs2therescue.ca>
- <http://learningworksforkids.com>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/view/>
- <http://developingchild.harvard.edu>
- <http://www.brainfacts.org>
- http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/09/15/health/20080915-brain-development.html?_r=0
- <http://www.toolsofthemind.org>
- <https://www.gonoodle.com>



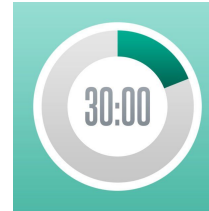
Helpful Apps for EF & Homework



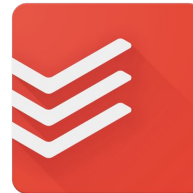
Quizlet - Working
Memory & Study Skills



InClass - Organization;
Study Skills



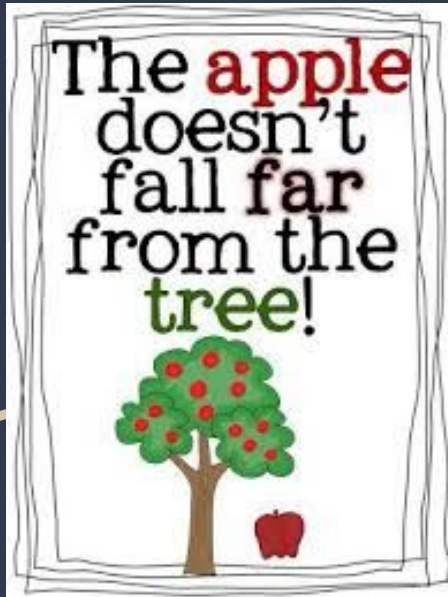
30/30 - Time Management;
Productivity/Self-Monitoring



Todoist - Goal Setting &
Tracking



How to Model EF Strategies for your Child



- Use EF Questionnaire to determine where your strengths & challenges are and work on these areas together
- Habits are easier to form than they are to break!



Top Take Aways



Lessons
Learned

1. Teach deficient skills: do not expect that they should just develop them naturally
2. Consider your child's developmental level: different expectations for different ages
3. Move from external to internal (e.g. impulse control is like crossing a street)
4. Use your child's input to develop mastery routines and schedules, build in choices
5. Modify tasks to match your child's capacity to exert effort: difficult v. not enjoyable
6. Use incentives
7. Provide *just enough* support: fade your role as the frontal lobe
8. Keep supports in place until achieves mastery: be on alert for small signs of progress
9. When you do stop supporting, fade the support gradually, never abruptly

QUESTIONS
COMMENTS
CONCERNS

