

# SKILLS FOR SUCCESS: HELP YOUR CHILD OR TEEN DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET



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## WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

### THE TECHNICAL ANSWER:

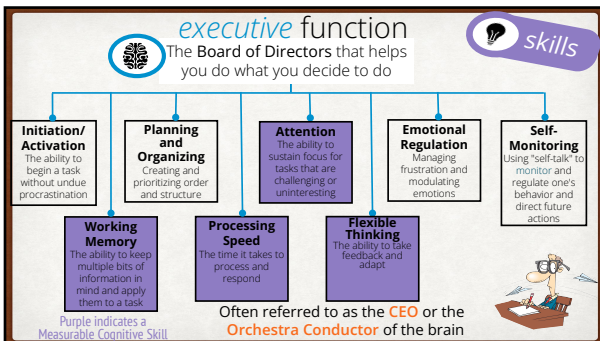
The Executive Functions are a set neurologically-based skills that have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal.

### THE RELATABLE ANSWER:

The Executive Functions manage how you DO what you intend to do.

The brain's control center that orchestrates resources like memory, language and attention to achieve a goal.

- ▶ Located primarily in the Prefrontal Cortex of the brain
- ▶ The last part to develop
- ▶ Typically fully developed by 25 - 30 years of age



### EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS IMPACT A STUDENTS ABILITY TO:

- Get started and finish work
- Remember chores and assignments
- Execute rote memory tasks
- Write well organized essays
- Remember what is read (comprehension)
- Accurately judge the passage of time
- Manage emotions throughout the process of learning



“My son won’t try things that he can’t do right away. I tell him all the time that he is so smart he can do anything, but it doesn’t seem to help.”

## CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

- Kids sometimes lack Motivation
- Kids sometimes avoid Challenge
- Kids sometimes breakdown when the work gets Hard

They may know WHAT to do. But do they know HOW to rally the resources to do it WHEN they need to do it?

What can we do to help kids WANT to learn?



Go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for Stuck on an Escalator

Before learning can happen, one must believe they have the ability to learn!

A Student’s response to challenge arises from his or her beliefs about their intelligence.

### Puzzle Task

Based on the work of Carol Dweck

“You must be smart at this.”

“You must have worked really hard.”

Praised for Intelligence

- Result: Kids focused on “looking smart”
- As puzzles got more difficult, they showed lower levels of confidence, motivation and performance.
- They became more risk averse
- They were more likely to lie about how they did.

Praised for Effort

- Result: Kids focused on learning the task.
- Their level of confidence, motivation and performance increased.
- They were more willing to try new, more difficult tasks

A person’s response to a challenge arises from his or her beliefs about their intelligence.

## Two Types of Mindsets

### Fixed Mindset

- Believe that Intelligence and Expertise are based on fixed, unchangeable traits and/or abilities: some people are smart, some are not
- View effort as fruitless or worse, either you get it or you don't
- Avoid challenge, give up easily, use negative self-talk
- View criticism and the success of others as threatening and judgmental

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### Growth Mindset

- Believe that Intelligence and Expertise can be developed through Effort and Instruction
- Demonstrate a desire to learn
- Recognize that brain and talent are just the starting points. Effort, strategy, and instruction are the path to mastery.
- Embrace challenge, persevere, use self-motivating language
- View criticism and lessons of others as inspiration and helpful feedback

## WHY MINDSET REALLY MATTERS

Our motivation and willingness to face challenges requires that we have a positive outlook about our abilities, potential, and opportunity for growth.

- What is the voice inside their head saying?
- Are they worried about failure, being judged, being left out or cut out?
- Are they focused on looking smart, competent, etc.
- What are the messages they are getting from those around them: teacher, peers, family members?

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## How Do You Impact Mindset?

Teach kids how learning happens!

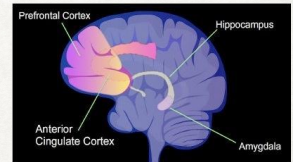
Create a Growth Mindset culture  
in the home and at school

Help kids believe that they Can learn!

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## Explicitly teach about the Brain

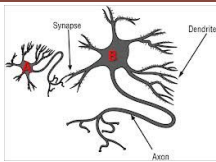
- Prefrontal Cortex: The *Thinking* brain - process and reflect on information
  - This is where your *Executive Functions* are
- Limbic System
  - Hippocampus: Links new sensory input to form, store and process *Memories*
  - Amygdala: involved with the experiencing of *Emotions*



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## Neuroplasticity

- Our brains change physically when we learn new things and have experiences.
- Every time you learn something new, your brain forms new connections
- The more you *PRACTICE* and *REVIEW*, the stronger your neuron connections become.
- Neurons that *FIRE* together *WIRE* together
- Weaker connections are "*PRUNED*" away as we do with plants and trees
- So use it or lose it...



*Dendrites* bring information to the cell body.  
*Axons* take information away from the cell body.  
Information from one neuron flows to another across a *synapse* (space) via chemicals called *neurotransmitters*.

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## YouTube: Michael Jordan Responds To Lebron

Michael Jordan did not make it onto his High School Basketball team.

I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.

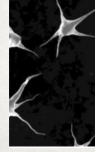
Michael Jordan

[I Can't Accept Not Trying](#) by Michael Jordan  
[The Outliers](#) by Malcolm Gladwell

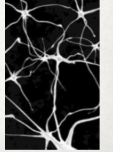
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Carol Dweck's research on 7th grade students clearly showed that those who explicitly had training in a **Growth Mindset** and **basic education about the Brain** showed **significantly greater improvement academically** when compared to those students who just learned study skills for subject material.

"Many of the students reported using the image of their neurons making new connections to motivate themselves in school, saying that they pictured their neurons forming new connections when they paid attention in class and that when tempted to not study, they rejected that idea on the grounds that new connections would not be formed."



Practice and Effort  
grows the Muscles in  
the Brain



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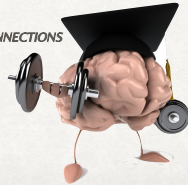
## We just gave Students a REASON to Study!

### YOUR BRAIN:

*It's YOUR MOST IMPORTANT MUSCLE!*

*THE MORE YOU USE IT, THE STRONGER THE NEURON CONNECTIONS BECOME!*

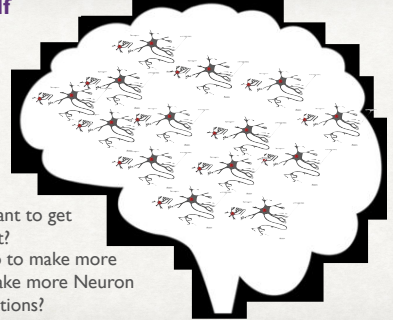
More Connections  
Bigger Connections  
Stronger Connections



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## See yourself learning

What do you want to get  
better at?  
What can you do to make more  
Neurons Fire to make more Neuron  
Connections?

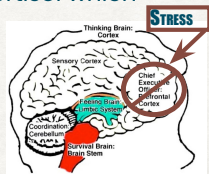


## Stress: The Gatekeeper to Learning

Negative emotions (stress, pressure, anxiety, etc.) increase the hormone cortisol which dulls cognition.

**PreFrontal Cortex** turns off and the reflexive, rapid, responses of the **Amygdala** turn on.

The brain goes into  
**Survival Mode.**



Stressed Brain© Victoria Tennant Consulting

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## What happens when the Brain is under Stress?

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- *Fib*

No learning can take place...  
No problems can be solved...  
Empathy for others becomes difficult...



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## STRENGTH AND TALENT

These things develop over time -  
with Effort, Practice, and Growth

**Think of a time when you had a GROWTH experience. What did you do to become better at it?**

YET...

Help your child recall their own "Moment on the Mountain" - a time when they achieved something very challenging.

## WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO YOURSELF?

Instead of...

- I'm not good at this
- I'm awesome at this
- I give up
- This is too hard
- I can't make this any better
- I just can't do math
- She's so smart. I will never be that smart
- It's good enough
- Plan A didn't work

Say this...

- What am I missing?
- I'm on the right track
- I'll use some of the strategies we learned
- This may take some time and effort
- I can always improve so I will keep trying
- I'm going to train my brain in Math
- I'm going to figure out how she does it so I can try it
- Is it really my best work
- Time for a new plan!

## INTERACTING IS A WONDERFUL WAY TO TEACH EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

LIVE LIFE OUT LOUD – LET THEM HEAR AND SEE YOUR HOW YOU DO WHAT YOU DO

- Interactive and imaginary play
- Board games
- Tinker Toys, blocks, Legos
- Cooking
- Packing for trips
- Planning out the days events
- Quiet, unstructured non-media time



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"When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce.

You look into the reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun.

You never blame the lettuce."

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022)  
Vietnamese Zen Buddhist Monk



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Develop strategies that work for your child's own individual style.

Parent the child you have – embrace differences in developmental timetables

- Stay calm and connected
- Promote a Growth Mindset not a Fixed Mindset
- Encourage thinkers and learners not just performers
- Pay attention to what and how you praise
- Focus on process vs. outcome/ how vs. what
- Enjoy watching them grow

Don't Blame the Lettuce...



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## JOIN ME FOR THESE HIGHLY ACCLAIMED WORKSHOPS AND GET THE SUPPORT YOU DESERVE

**CALM AND CONNECTED: PARENTING CHILDREN & TEENS WITH ADHD/EXECUTIVE FUNCTION CHALLENGES®**

7-Session Parent Workshop

**THE SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL IMPACT of ADHD/EXECUTIVE FUNCTION ON LEARNING, MOTIVATION, BEHAVIOR, & THE FAMILY SYSTEM®**

2-Hour Workshop

**Learn tips and tools for...**

**Session 1** – The Social & Emotional Impact of ADHD/ Executive Function on Learning, Motivation, Behavior, & the Family System®

**Session 2** - Remaining Calm & Connected

**Session 3** - Improving Communication

**Session 4** - Encouraging Collaboration

**Session 5** - Achieving Clarity & Consistency

**Session 6** - Effective Consequences

**Session 7** - Making Better Choices

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(Session 1 of *Calm and Connected* © that may be taken alone)

- Why it is so hard for your child to behave as expected
- What makes following directions and consistency of behavior so challenging
- Why concepts like organization and time management seem to be learned, but not followed
- How using rewards and punishments often create more problems than they solve

**REGISTER:**

<http://bit.ly/PTSworkshop>

You are never alone in this journey!

