

Executive Functioning

East Islip School District Parent Training
2/15/2023

Executive Dysfunction

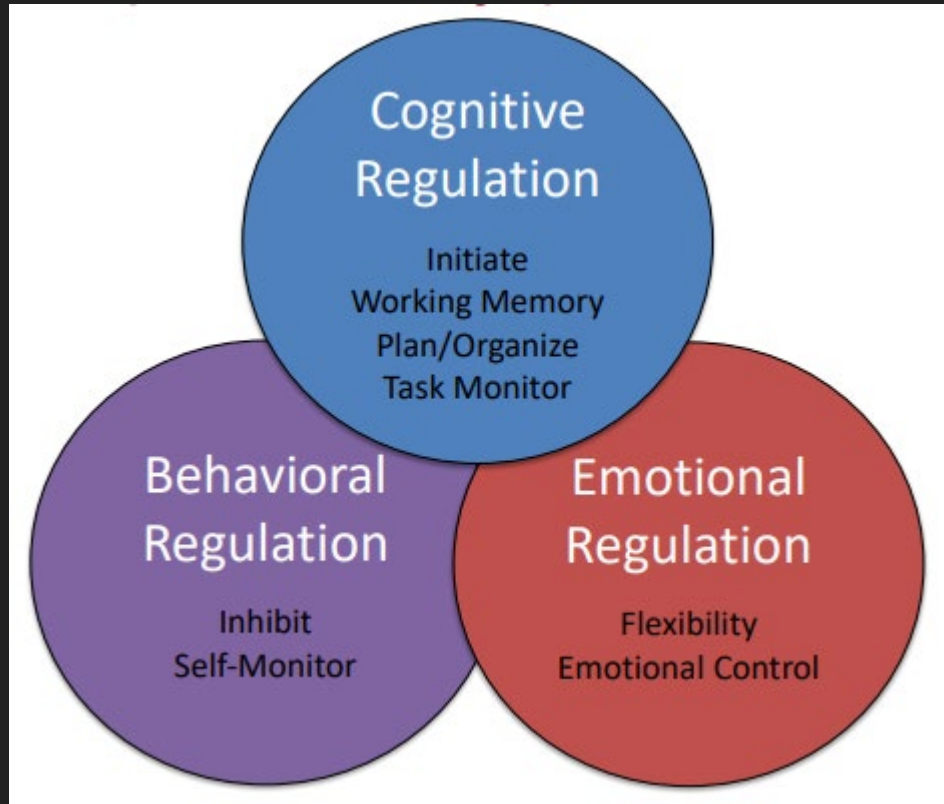
“The curious dissociation between knowing and doing”

Problems in childhood relate to:

- Learning and academic skills
- Social skills
- Family stress
- Adaptive behavior
- Adult outcomes

Executive Functions can predict:

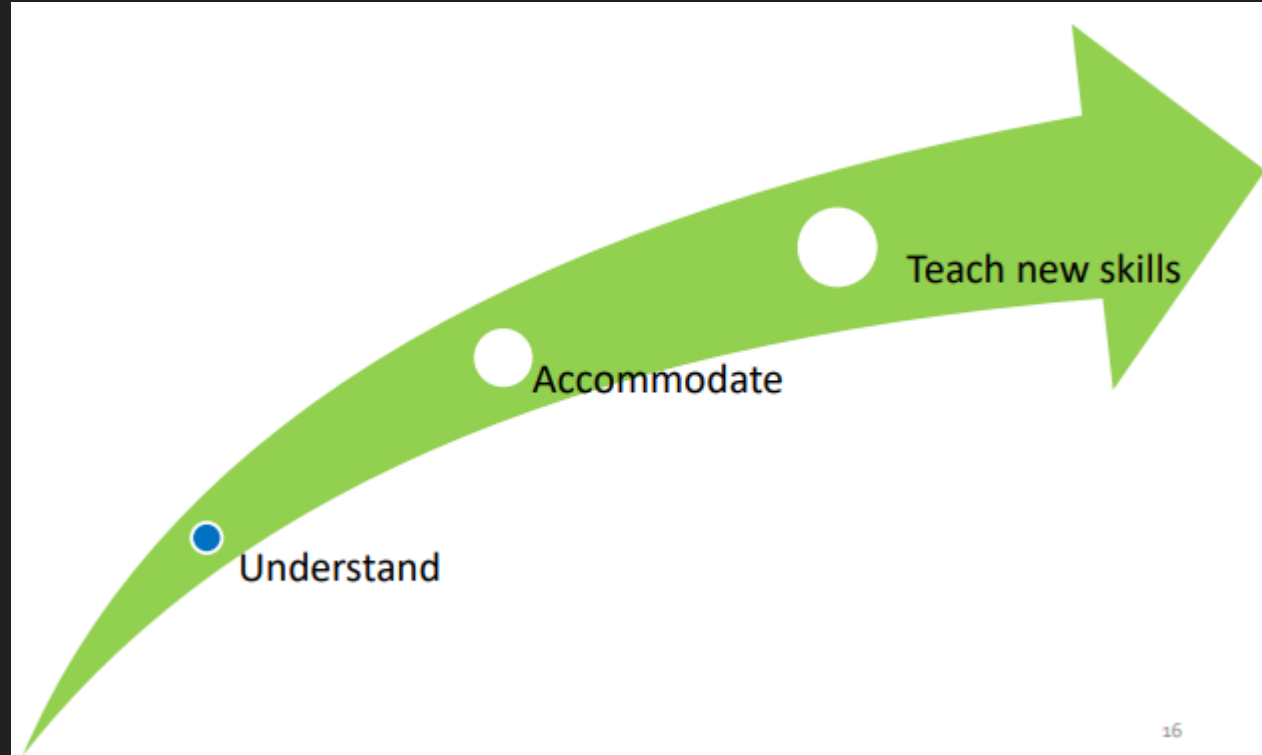
- SES
- School learning & achievement more strongly than IQ
- After controlling for SES & IQ, likelihood of adult criminal conviction



The phrase “executive function” refers to a set of skills. These skills underlie the capacity to **plan ahead and meet goals, display self-control, follow multiple-step directions even when interrupted, and stay focused despite distractions**, among others.

Executive Functions change

- Changes over time (developmental)
- Neuroplasticity
 - Context & experience play a role in the neural pathway development
- They are teachable!



Won't.... Or Can't?

Looks Like <i>Won't</i> ...	Could be <i>Can't</i>
Oppositional, Stubborn	Difficulty shifting Avoiding overload
Can do it if he wants to	Difficulty shifting Lack of salience
Self Centered	Impaired social cognition Poor self monitoring
Won't put good ideas on paper	Poor fine motor Disorganization
Sloppy, erratic	Poor self monitoring Overloaded
Won't control outbursts	Overloaded Disinhibition
Doesn't care what others think	Impaired social cognition Poor self monitoring

Cognitive Inflexibility looks like

Can't or won't...

- Accept feedback, different opinions, ideas
- Transition
- Handle frustration
- Start something they don't want to do
- Stop meltdowns
- Stop doing something even though they have been told to stop
- Avoid shutting down when something is challenging
- Stop correcting people
- Let other kids take the lead when playing

Strengths!

- Deep datasets, expertise in areas of interest
- Persistence
- Reliability
- Loyalty
- Inflexibility is adaptive: it limits unexpected, overloading events

Organization/integration deficits look like

Can't, or won't?

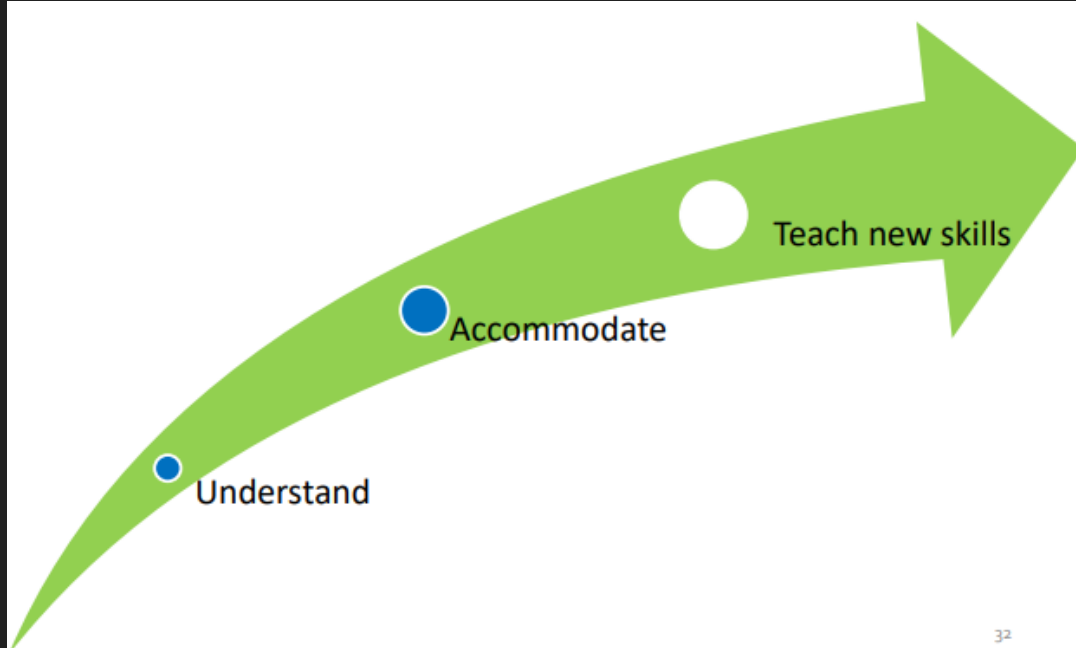
- Disorganized language
- Literal language
- Asks for lots of structure in new situations
- Gets stuck on details - doesn't let go of small mistake/inconsistency
- Dominates discussions without knowing it
- Behaves worse in unstructured groups
- Doesn't set goals
- Trouble learning from mistakes
- Poor written expression, doesn't get good ideas onto paper
- Draw meaning from a reading assignment
- Know what to study for on a test

Planning/Working memory problems look like

Can't or Won't?

- Doesn't follow directions
- Doesn't complete independent work
- Frequently off-task
- Says one thing, does another
- Poor time management
- Gets off track during multiple step tasks

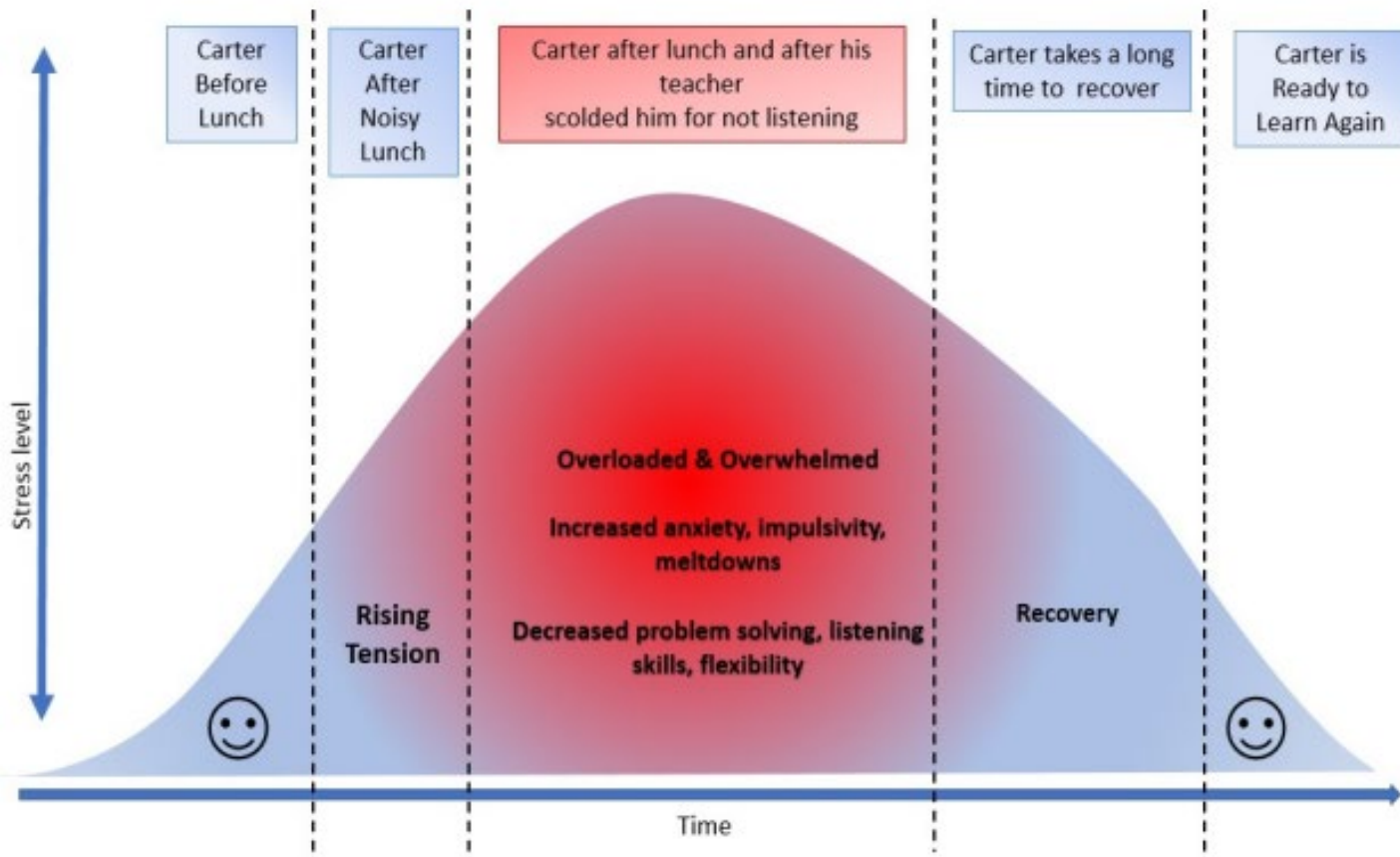
Accommodate before remediate



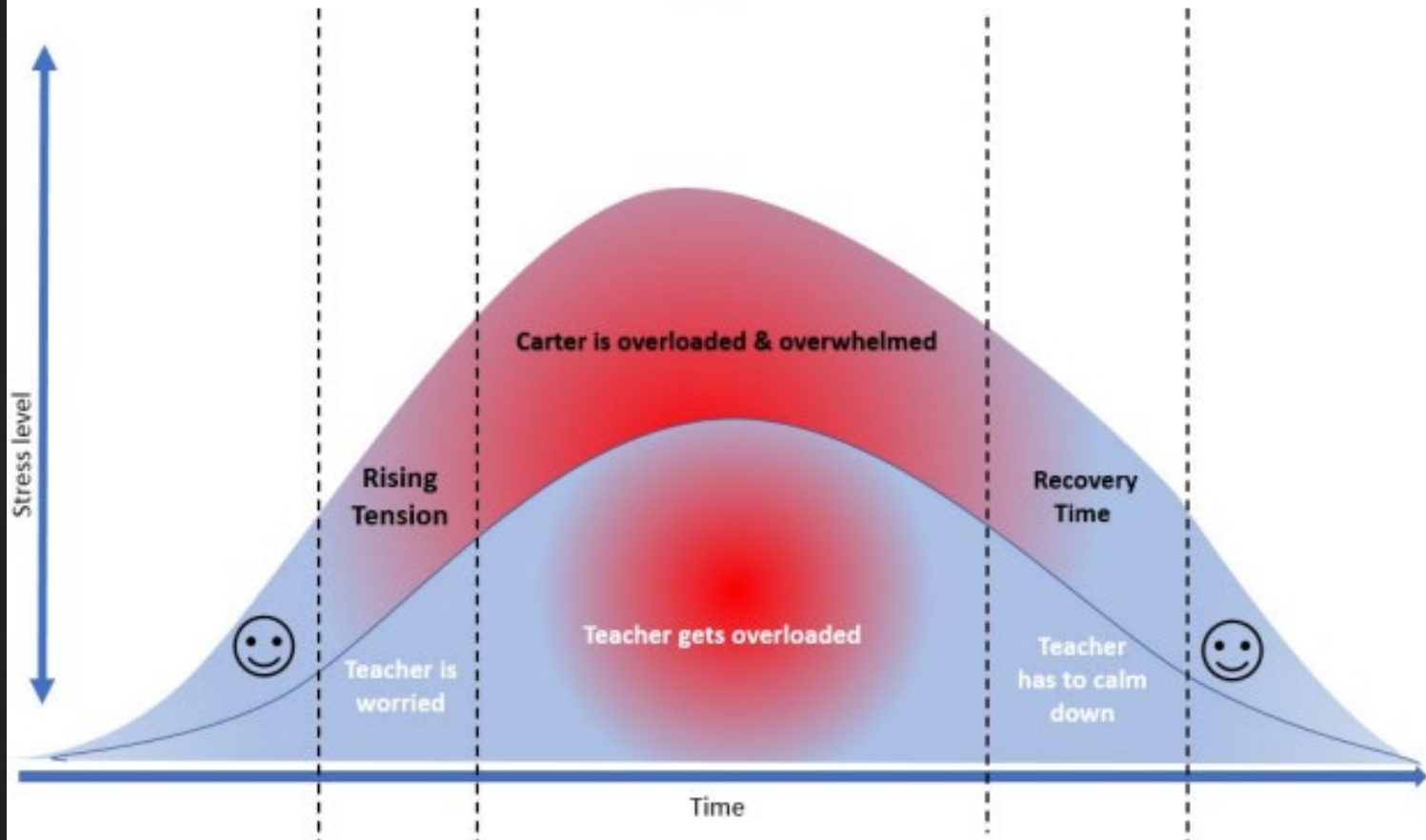
Overwhelmed people can't learn!

1. **Keep it positive**
2. **Predictability & Structure**
3. **Break it down and make big picture explicit**
4. **Talk less, write more**

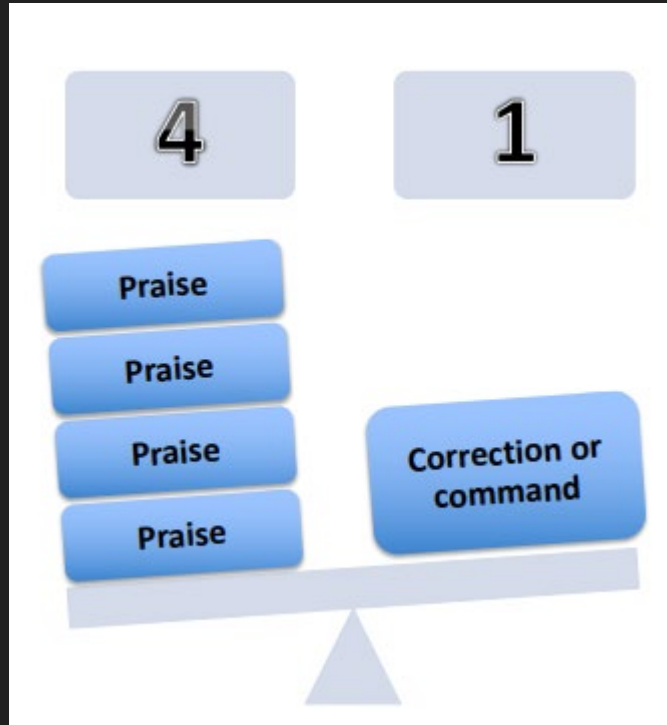
Overwhelmed people can't learn



Overwhelm is contagious



Keep it positive



Inflexibility Risks & Accommodations

Difficulty with violation of expectations:

- Schedules
- Routines
- Predict change
- Flexible adult

Overwhelming intense feelings:

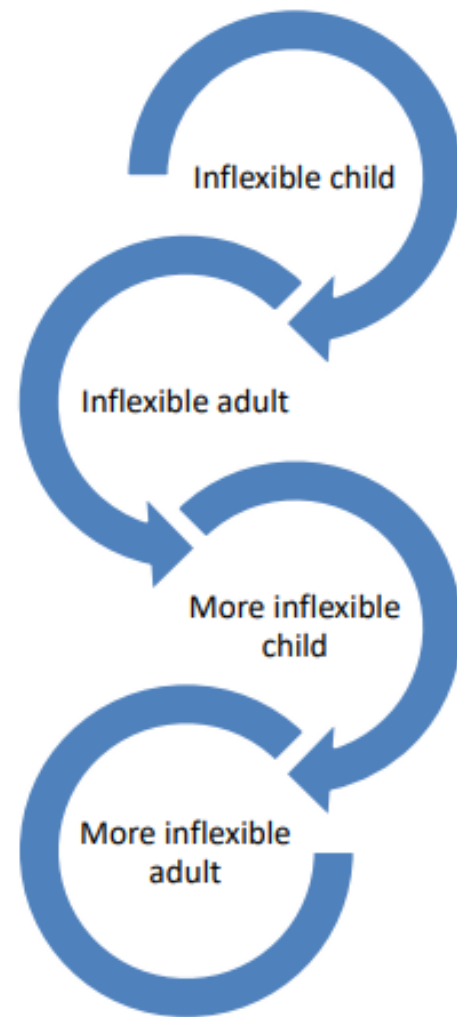
- Breaks
- Downtime
- Flexible, safe adult

Rigid interpretation of rules:

- Make clear rules
- Make the implicit explicit
- Flexible adult

Repetitive or intense interests or behaviors:

- Decide when/where the behaviors can occur
- Flexible adult



Disorganization Risks & Accommodations

Lack of generalization:

- Put new info in familiar context
- Explicitly review inferences, nuances
- Teach skill in the setting where the behavior is expected

Don't show what they know:

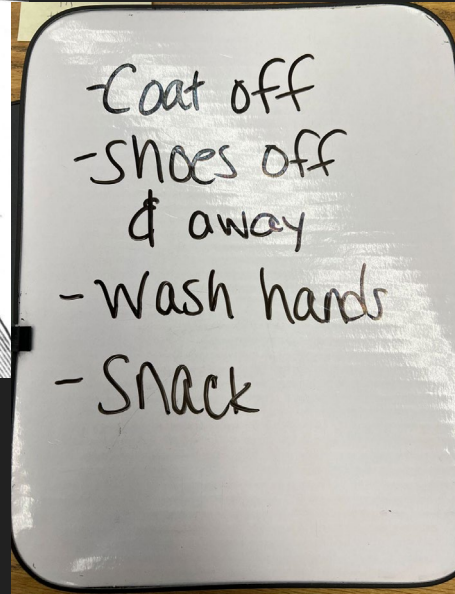
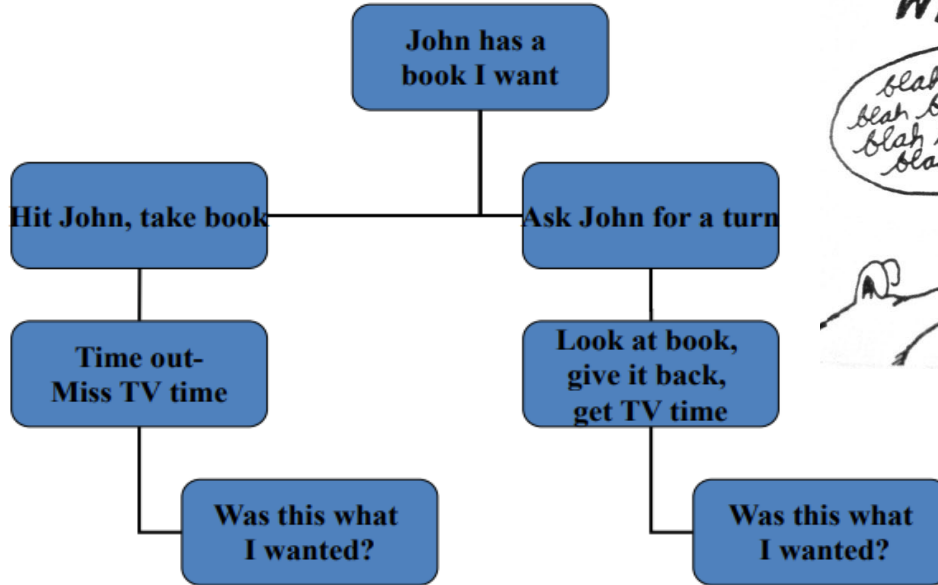
- Study guides
- Closed format tests
- Writing rubrics
- Structure

Missing big picture/ Getting stuck on the details

- Emphasis on goals
- Break things down
- Explicit rules, checklists, and routines
- Structure

Talk less, write more

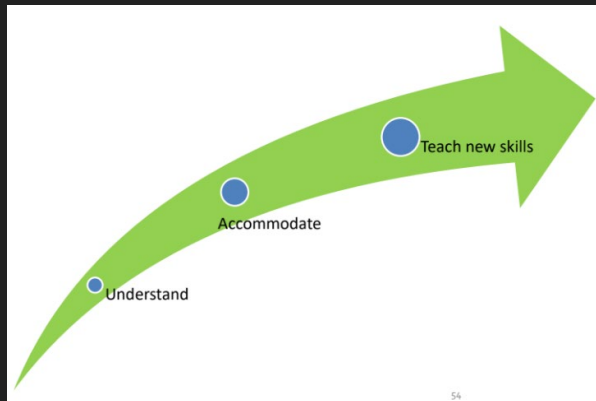
- White board
- Socratic method
- Hand-held technology
- Computer-based curricula



Teaching Executive Function Skills... or bridging the dissociation between knowing and doing

The challenge:

- EF's are complex
- Hard to generalize
- Can't teach "doing" without doing



The strategy:

- Individualized treatment
- Teach self regulatory scripts/vocabulary to automaticity
- Embed teaching in the real world: School & home
- Teach process: make implicit explicit
- Model the skills
- Collaboration: "With, not for"

- Consistency across settings
- Memorized, automatic language

Teach and use key scripts and words

- Coach
- Make Implicit Explicit
- Scaffold-fade-generalize

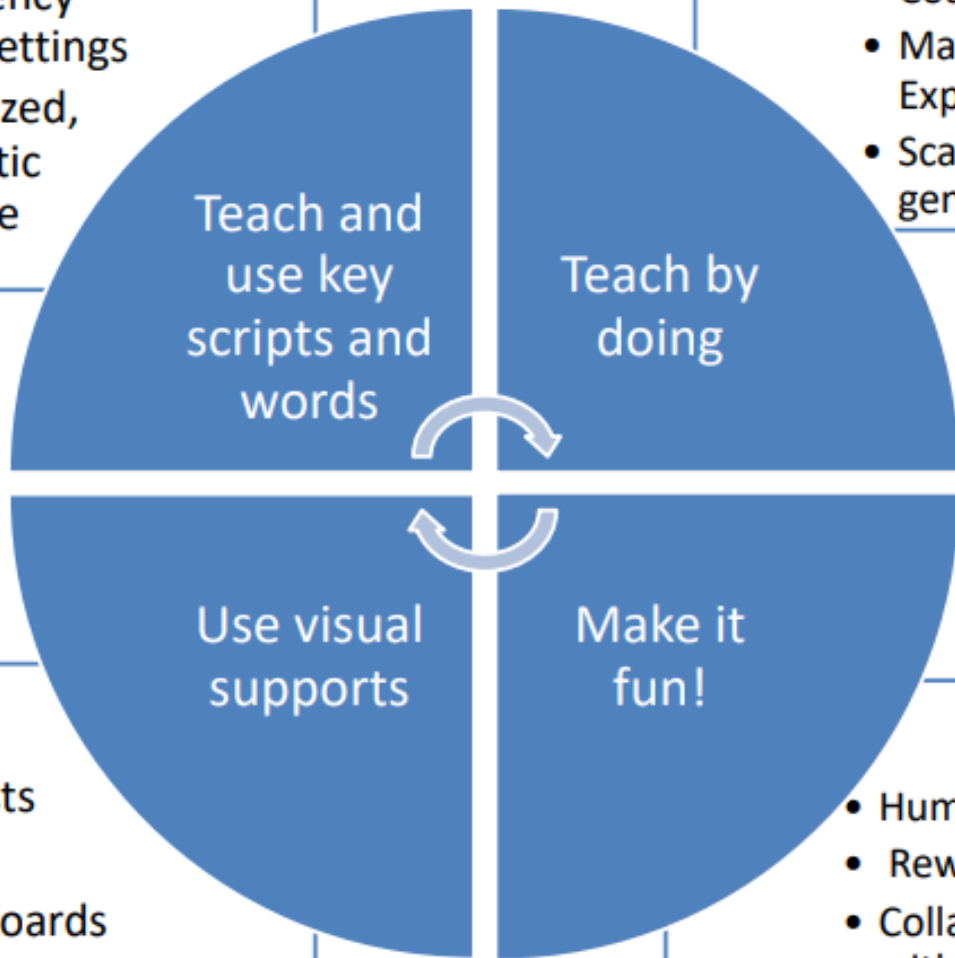
Teach by doing

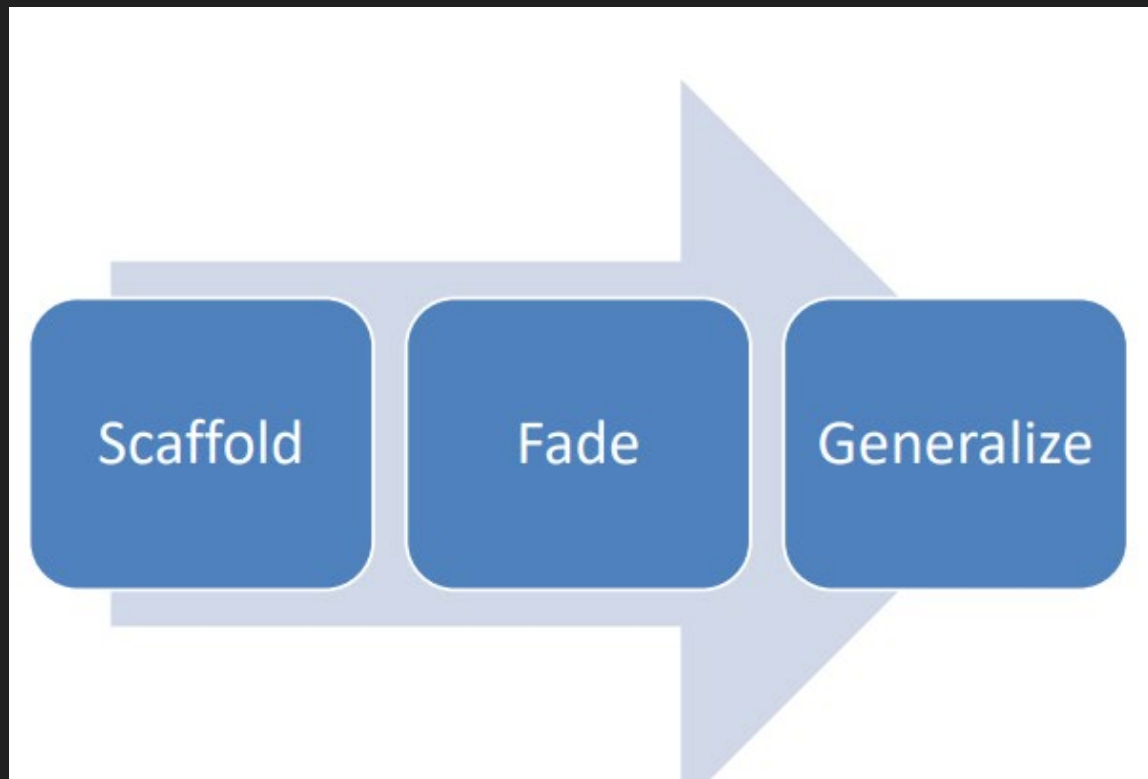
Use visual supports

- Checklists
- Cues
- White Boards

Make it fun!

- Humor
- Rewards
- Collaborate with child

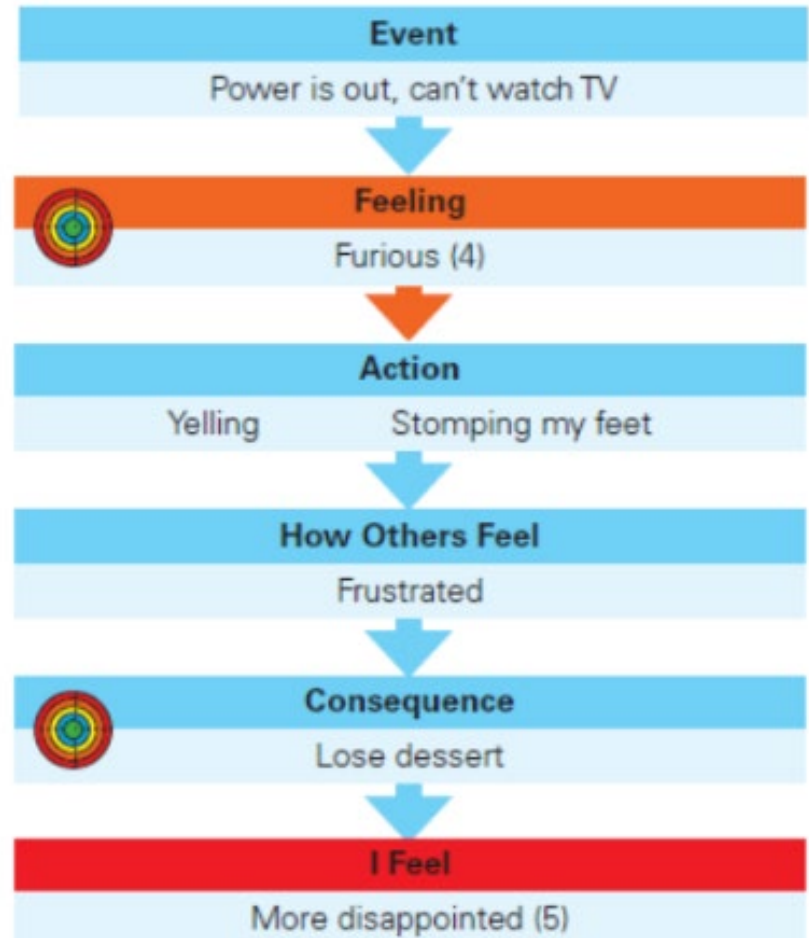
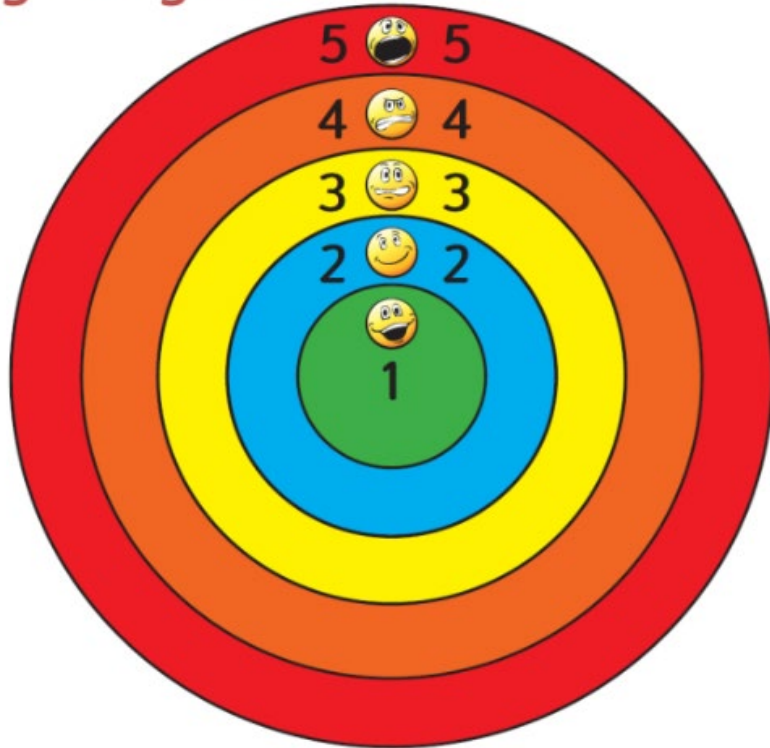




To fade: use Socratic
method: ask
questions instead of
direct prompts

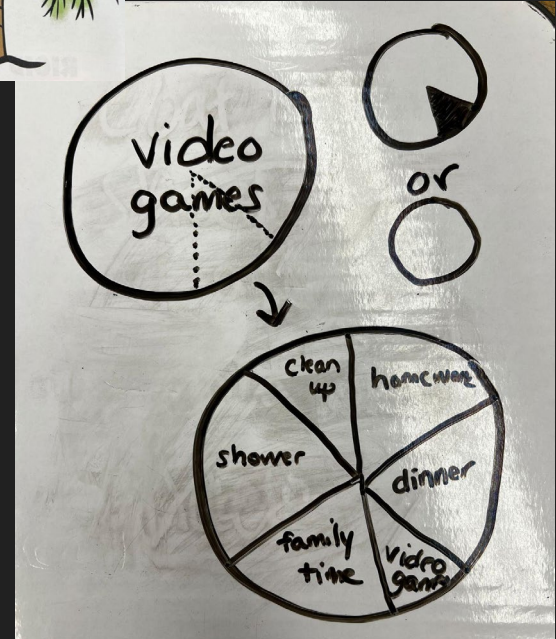
Awareness of feelings and consequences

Feelings Target



Teach Flexibility

- Advantages of physical flexibility
 - Palm Tree versus Oak Tree in storms
 - Silly putty
- The “facts” of life
- What to do when what I want is impossible
- Pie charts: getting part of what I want is better than nothing at all



Self-regulatory scripts

Flexible

- Great job being flexible

Unstuck

- I'm getting stuck on ____, how can I get unstuck?

Compromise

- Let's compromise so we both get some of what we want

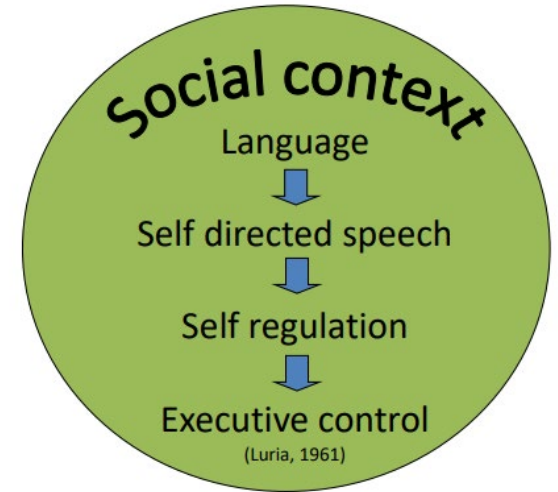
Plan A/Plan B

- What is our plan?
- What is our Plan B?

Big Deal/Little Deal

- How can we make this big deal into a little deal?

Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check



Inner speech is related to the ability to plan

Compromising

Adult Goal	Child Goal
Compromise	
Plan A B C	
Do: Did we do all the steps?	
Check: How did it go?	

Teacher Goal: To go to bus	Brady's Goal: To keep playing kickball
Compromise: - Play for 20 minutes - Play the next morning	
Plan:	1. IF Brady finishes check-out before 3:00 he will get 20 minutes of kickball 2. IF my bus gets called before 20 minutes I will take the rest of my time the next morning
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
Do: Have we done all the steps to accomplish the goal?	
Check: How did it go?	

Goal - Why - Plan - Do - Check

Goal	To have fun at recess
Why	Recess is my free time
Plan A	Ask Johnny if he wants to play soccer
Plan B	(If J says, "no") Ask Melissa to play soccer
Plan C	Swing on the swings
Do	Follow my plans
Check	Did I meet my goal? Which plan worked? Would I do it the same or different next time?