

# ADHD & Executive Functioning



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# What is ADHD?



## ***Inattentive Type***

- Trouble paying attention
- Doesn't like or avoids long mental tasks
- Trouble staying on task
- Disorganized; appears forgetful
- Doesn't appear to listen when spoken to
- Loses things often
- Makes careless mistakes
- Struggles to follow directions

## ***Hyperactive/Impulsive***

- Blurts out answers before question is finished
- Frequently interrupts others
- Trouble waiting their turn
- Talkative
- Fidgets, tapping, and squirming
- Gets up at inappropriate times
- Running or climbing in inappropriate situations
- Unable to play quietly
- Always "on the go"



# What does this look like in school & home?

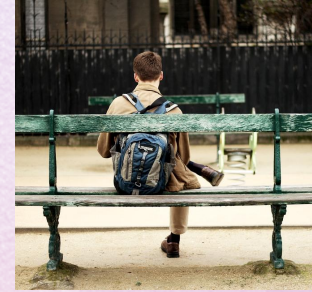
What do I  
have to do  
for  
homework?

I'm not  
good at  
this...

What's that  
noise in the  
hall?

Where are  
we right  
now?

This is  
boring...



# ADHD across the lifespan

## Pre-School Years

*Behavioral Struggles*

- difficulty with transitions
- easily dysregulated/meltdowns

1

## Middle School Years

*Behavioral, Academic & Social Struggles*

- difficulty with motivation/helplessness
- low self-esteem
- organizational & academic struggles
- co-morbidity

3

2

## Elementary School Years

*Behavioral, Academic & Social Struggles*

- impulsivity/silliness in class
- trouble focusing
- social difficulties

4

## High School Years

*Behavioral, Academic & Social Struggles*

- lack of motivation
- low self-perception
- failing grades
- interpersonal issues
- co-morbidity



# What is Executive Functioning?



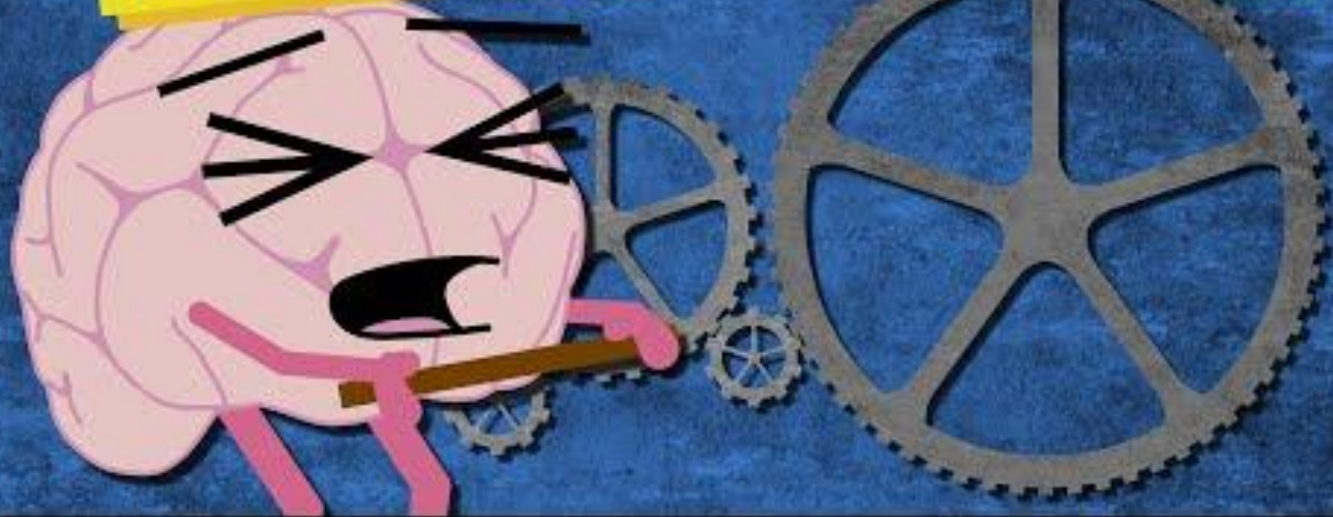
Executive functioning is a set of mental skills that act as a command center in the brain. They help us plan, manage time, control emotions, and get tasks done.

They're also important for staying focused and solving problems, so struggling with executive functioning can have a big impact on kids.





# WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?



# *Executive Functioning Skills*

There are 7 core executive functions including:

Self Awareness

Inhibition

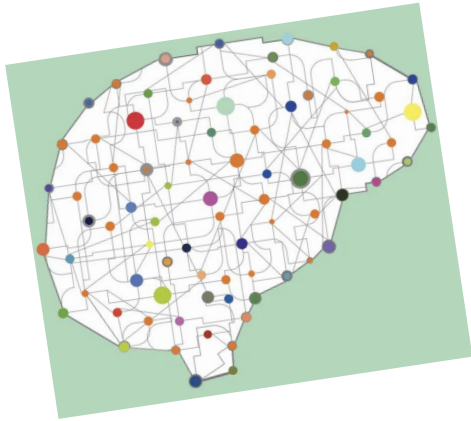
Non-verbal (Visual) Working Memory

Verbal Working Memory

Emotional Self-Regulation

Self-Motivation

Planning & Problem Solving



# Self-Awareness Development

1. Pause, spy, & observe
  - a. Have your child stop and report what they notice about their environment
2. Compare & contrast
  - a. Ask your child to talk through differences and similarities
3. Decode unspoken rules
4. Take the room's temperature
  - a. Discuss emotions based on a predetermined scale
5. Step into another person's shoes
  - a. Share thoughts about what another person might be thinking or feeling
6. Walk through moments of doubt
  - a. It may feel uncomfortable to watch your child be uncomfortable but it's important they know that they recognize something in their body that is telling them they are uncomfortable and they'll know when they are ready<sup>8</sup>





# *Inhibition Development*

1. Simon Says
2. Red light, green light, 123
3. Theatrical acting
  - a. Understanding turn taking in lines
4. Playing musical instruments
  - a. Finding pauses and entrances in the music
5. Performing a comedic routine
  - a. Managing their own laughter
6. Buddy reading
  - a. Tag in the next reader
7. Dinner table conversations



# *Working Memory (Visual & Verbal) Development*

1. Mental math - grocery store or bowling
2. Memory games
3. In my suitcase...
  - a. Keep adding items while remembering previous ones
4. Listening to storytelling
5. Create lists
  - a. Physical or digital



# Emotional Regulation Development



1. Body scanning, deep breathing/mindfulness
2. Sleep hygiene & diet & exercise routine
3. Speak to your child with compassion and curiosity
  - a. Ask questions instead of assuming you know: an example might sound like "huh, it's hard to share with your brother, I wonder how you must be feeling"
4. Circle back & repair
  - a. If you find yourself escalated in response to your child, when you've settled go back and have a conversation about your feelings and how you'd like to do better next time
5. Model your strategies
  - a. Speak out loud when you are working on something "wow, I'm feeling overwhelmed, I need a breathe"



# Motivation Development

1. Break things into smaller parts
  - a. Decide what needs to be done when and setup a schedule
2. Provide rewards for small steps towards the goal
3. Take breaks
  - a. You can use a timer or base it on a break activity - walking the dog
4. Keep it novel
5. Talk about intrinsic motivators
  - a. Your child will be able to share what feels exciting



# Planning & Problem Solving Development

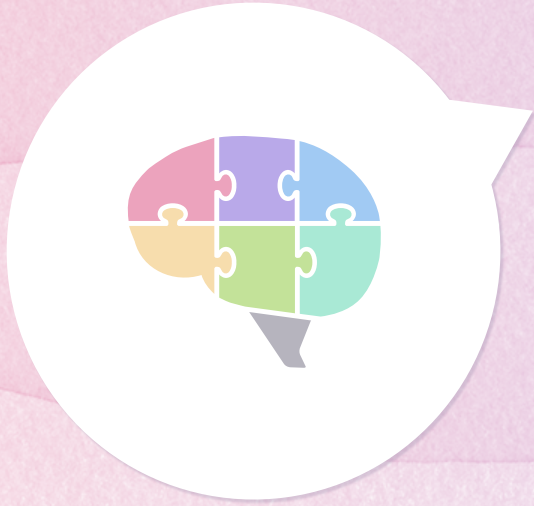
1. Brainstorm
2. Ask open-ended questions
3. Connect 4, Guess Who, Tic-Tac-Toe, Hangman
4. Problem solving wheel
  - a. Do I know what's being asked? Y/N; Am I struggling because I need more info? Y/N; What do I already know?; What do I need to know more about
5. Prompt for solutions to sibling/peer conflicts
  - a. "It seems like you both want the same toy, I wonder what you can do so you both can have what you want?"



## *Environmental Supports at Home*

- ☐ Create a homework space
- ☐ Utilize a central calendar/family planner
- ☐ Have a family technology station
- ☐ Set an after school routine
- ☐ Set clear expectations (first, then)
- ☐ Use visuals to support multi-step directions
- ☐ Establish a break schedule
- ☐ Have a clock/timer accessible
- ☐ Color coding supplies/organization system





# Questions?

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