

organizational TUTORS

Workshop for SEPTA Suffern Central School District

Executive Functioning Overview

Presented by:

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What is Executive Functioning?

- The air traffic control of the brain
  - Frontal lobe
- An umbrella term
  - Interrelated set of cognitive processes

Working Memory	Housing and retrieving
Self-Control	Self-regulation, self-monitoring, and delayed gratification
Mental Flexibility	Flexible thinking and transitions

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Why EF underlies success for ALL students



Provides the foundation required for success in:

- Academic
- Occupational
- Social-emotional

EF is **vital** for all **successful learning**

Learning challenges: **EF difficulties** underlie **struggles**

This guides us to see **gaps** as **opportunities**: **identifying growth areas**

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Strong EF Skills Mean That Students Can:



Focus & Engage

Impulse control, resist distractions, selective attention, cognitive inhibition



Creative problem solving

Stamina, applying knowledge, self-regulation, metacognition



Increase pace & automaticity over time

Working memory, self-monitoring, time management



Integrate information to see the big picture

Cognitive flexibility, filtering, synthesis, inferential thinking



Complete Tasks Independently

Initiation, planning and prioritizing, sequencing, goal-directed persistence

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Executive Functioning Pyramid

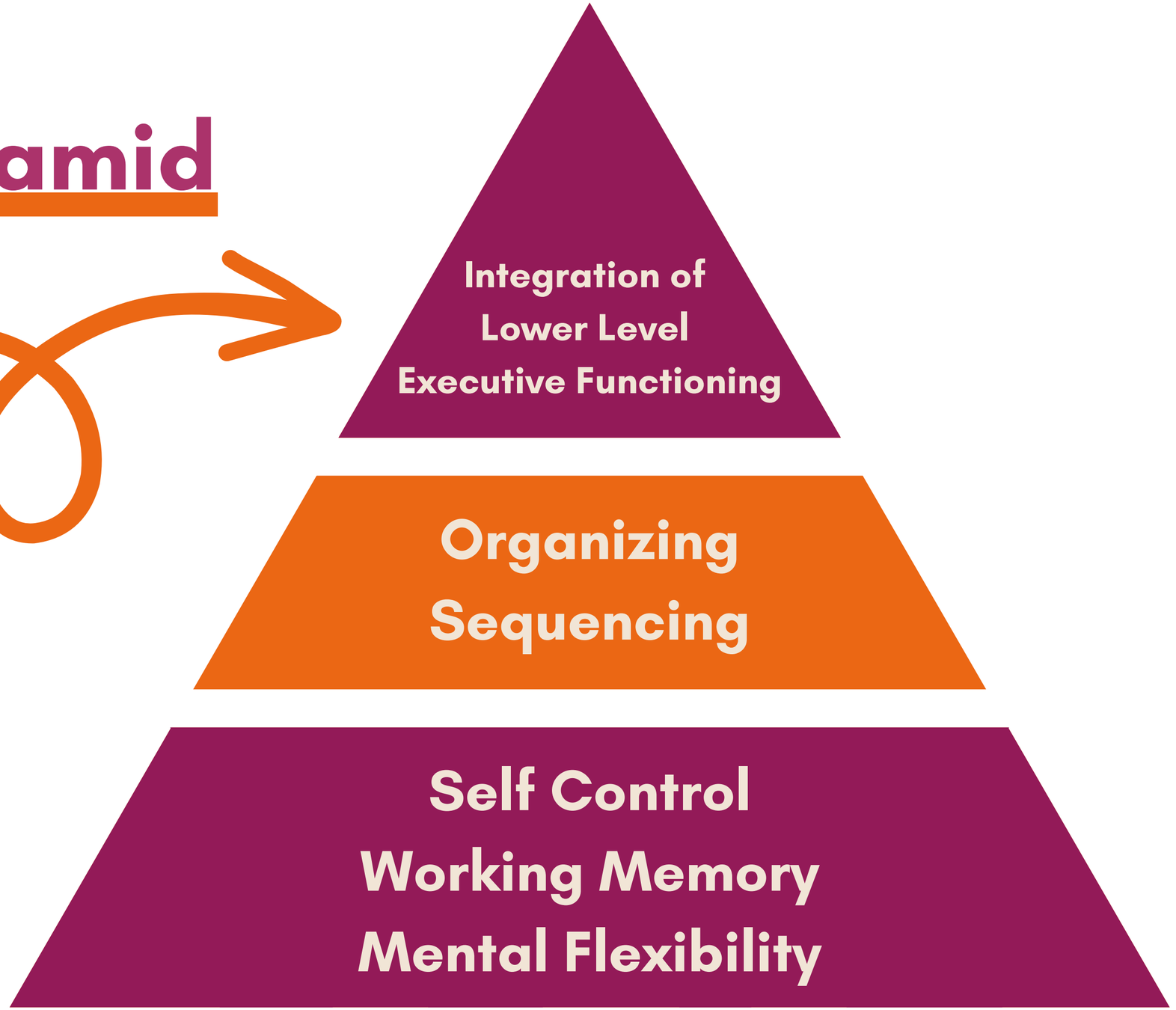
Metacognition

Planning/Goals

Task Initiation

Decision Making

Time/Attention Management



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Adapted from Action Potential





Let's Dive In.

Integration of Executive Functioning Across Development

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"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember.
Involve me and I learn."

– Benjamin Franklin



How do we build independence?

Do it for you

⇩

Do it with you

⇩

Watch you do it

⇩

Do it completely independently

(Stacy Ashland)

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Developmental Perspective:

How do we figure out when to push?

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BEFORE 3 YEARS

SMALL CHORES, BASIC LIFE SKILLS & BASIC GROOMING

- Help put their toys away
- Dress themself (with some help from you
- Put their clothes in the hamper when they undress
- Clear their plate after meals
- Assist in setting the table
- Brush their teeth and wash their face with assistance



4–5 YEARS

IMPORTANT NAMES & NUMBERS (SAFETY SKILLS)

- Full name, address and a phone number to reach you
- How to make an emergency call
- Perform simple cleaning chores (dusting in easy-to-reach places & clearing the table after meals)
- Feed pets
- Identify money denominations and understand the very basic concept of how money is used
- Brush teeth, comb hair and wash face without help
- Help with basic laundry chores, such as putting clothes away and bringing dirty clothes to the laundry
- Choose their own clothes to wear



6–7 YEARS

BASIC COOKING TECHNIQUES

- Mix, stir and cut with a dull knife
- Make a basic meal, like a sandwich
- Help put the groceries away
- Wash the dishes
- Use basic household cleaners safely
- Straighten up the bathroom after using it
- Make bed without assistance
- Bathe unsupervised



8–9 YEARS

PRIDE IN PERSONAL BELONGINGS

- Fold clothes
- Learn simple sewing
- Care for outdoor toys such as their bike
- Take care of personal hygiene without being told to do so
- Use a broom and dustpan properly
- Read a recipe and prepare a simple meal
- Help create a grocery list
- Count and make change
- Take out the trash

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Source: Lindsay Hutton https://www.familyeducation.com/life/individuality/guide-to-teach-your-child-life-skills-by-age



10-13 YEARS

GAINING INDEPENDENCE

- Stay home alone
- Go to the store and make purchases by themself
- Change their own bed sheets
- Use the washing machine and dryer
- Plan and prepare a meal with several ingredients
- Use the oven to broil/bake
- Read labels
- Use basic hand tool
- Look after younger siblings or neighbors



14-18 YEARS

MORE ADVANCED SKILLS

- Mastered previous skills
- Perform more sophisticated cleaning and maintenance chores, such as plunging a toilet, cleaning the stove and unclogging drains
- Fill a car with gas, add air to and change a tire
- Read and understand medicine labels and dosages
- Interview for and get a job.
- Create and maintain a calendar



YOUNG ADULTS

PREPARING TO LIVE ON THEIR OWN & SUPPORT THEMSELVES WHEN THEY GO TO COLLEGE OR MOVE OUT

- Make regular doctor and dentist appointments and other important health-related appointments.
- Have a basic understanding of finances, and be able to manage his bank account, pay a bill and use a credit card.
- Understand basic contracts, like an apartment or car lease.
- Schedule oil changes and basic car maintenance.

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Source: Lindsay Hutton https://www.familyeducation.com/life/individuality/guide-to-teach-your-child-life-skills-by-age

What is a growth edge?

- Liminal space of change that **requires a person to make a shift**
- A space that **feels safe enough to risk** what you KNOW for what you don't know.
- Meet the limit and realize that to grow and flourish requires you to **transform**



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What are early signs a child may have issues with Executive Functioning?



Difficulty maintaining focus



Loses/misplaces items frequently



Struggles with transitions



Routines are a challenge



Asks for excessive help

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Working Memory
Elementary



Skill that allows you to hold onto and/or mentally manipulate information

Cognitive load increases

the amount of info that can be retained diminishes

Do your children struggle with...

- Remembering instructions and specific directions
- Needing information repeated to them very frequently
- Recalling information or what they did in school/earlier in the day
- Completing puzzles

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Working Memory

Routine Charts

- Write it out/include pictures
- Give time markers
- Use timers (Time Timers)
- Have established routines
- Reward efficiency and independence
- Give warnings for time

Tonight's Schedule

4:15pm - Reading

5:00pm - Math HW

5:30pm - Writing HW

6:00pm - Dinner

6:45pm - Bath

7:30pm - in bed reading

8:00pm - lights out

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Working Memory adolescence



Skill that allows you to hold onto and/or mentally manipulate information

Cognitive load increases

the amount of info that can be retained diminishes

Do your students struggle with...

- Test-taking – using information in new ways
- Keeping track, following, and executing multi-step instructions or multi-step problems
- Long-term goal setting
- Remembering different deadlines and assignments
- Note taking in class
- Executing mental calculations

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Working Memory

SOLUTIONS

Debunk the myth of "I can remember"

- **One direction at a time**
- **Multiple forms of the direction**

Calendar invite



Written



Verbal Reminder



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Working Memory

STRATEGIES FOR STUDY

Incorporating expressive learning into study to increase retention and recall

- Actively produce something with receptive information: ***write, take notes, make flashcards, annotate, draw a picture, explain a concept, create a visual image in the imagination***

- Complete receptive-expressive circuit until expressive path can be accomplished without receptive supports.



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Tera Sumpter SL/P, Seeds of Learning LLC

Working Memory *FOR TESTS*

SOLUTIONS

- Practice **retrieving the information** learned without it in front of the student (rather than merely going over it in written or outline form)
- Practice new ways of accessing information through **mnemonic devices** and chunking of information
- **Reflect**, self-interrogate, and self-explain
- **Rewrite** multi-step directions using bullet points
- Employ spaced **practice**



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Working Memory

FOR PAPERS

SOLUTIONS

- Always **copy the question** and the rules at the top of the page
- Take long prompts and walk through them as a series of **small steps**
- **Outline** and reverse outline
- Make time **for editing and revising**



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Self-Control Elementary



Resisting several thoughts or actions to focus on one

Do your children struggle with...

- Speaking without restraint
- Taking turns and waiting for their turn
- Interruptions
- Outbursts of intense emotions
- Staying still when it's expected
- Putting something away they enjoy

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Self-Control

SOLUTIONS

- Plan/anticipate the problems
- Press pause for 3 seconds in conversations before responding -- make sure you are calm
- Help kids avoid distractions (out of sight, out of mind)
- Create an environment where self-control is rewarded
- Support them with timely reminders when needed

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Self-Control
Adolescence



Resisting several thoughts or actions to focus on one

Do your kids struggle with...

- Putting their tech away
- Disruptions/interruptions
- Outbursts of intense emotions
- Thinking before acting
- Writing without editing/checking

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Self-Control

SOLUTIONS

- Involve students by asking:
  - how can I help you to best follow guidelines
  - what supports do you need to perform at your best
- Help students plan/anticipate the problems
- Practice stopping/pausing
  - Breath
  - Waiting practice (3 secs)
- Encourage drafting responses to everything
- Timed communications

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Mental Flexibility elementary
(aka cognitive flexibility)

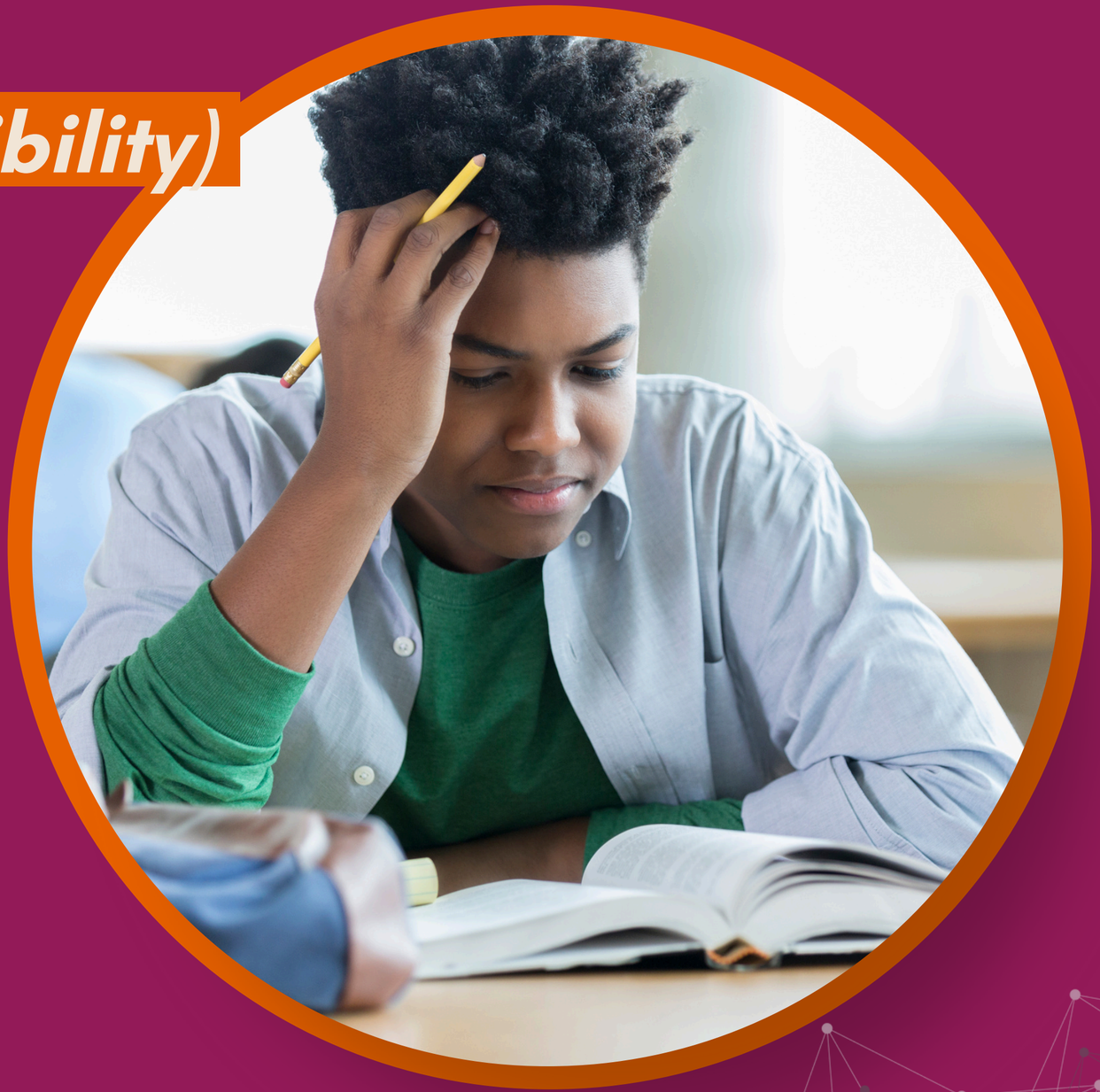


Do your children struggle with...

- Understanding different perspectives in a story
- Switching from one activity to another
- Participating in group activities that require flexibility and compromise
- Meltdowns over any change in their routine
- Feeling overwhelmed when trying something new
- Adjusting when plans change last-minute

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Mental Flexibility adolescence
(aka cognitive flexibility)



Do your kids struggle with...

- Understanding different opinions
- Pivoting- Coming up with plan B
- Perfectionism/rigidity
- Problem-solving without any intervention

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Mental Flexibility

(aka cognitive flexibility)

SOLUTIONS

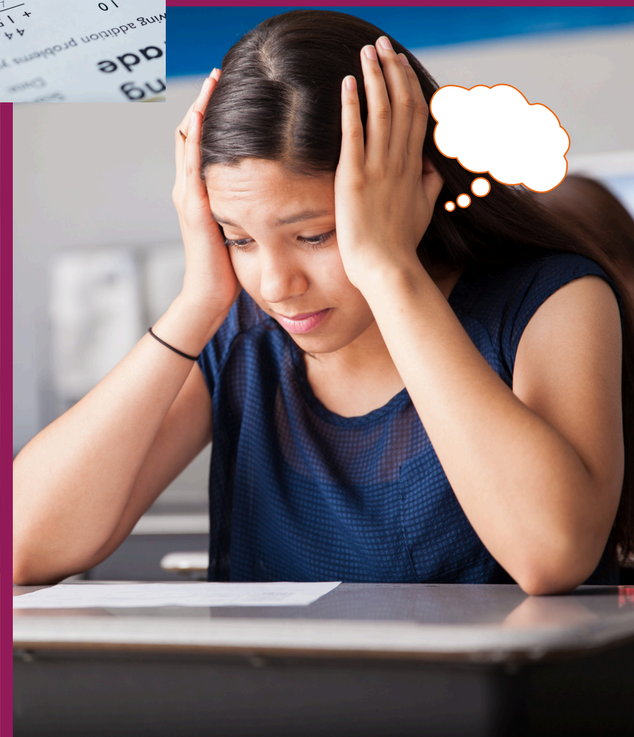
- **Teach** concepts of rigidity and flexibility
- **Label** rigid thinking patterns, model flexible ones
- **Identify** triggers that make a student more vulnerable to rigidity (ie anxiety, screen fatigue)
- **Explore** different strategies
- **Practice** taking multiple perspectives on one situation











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Planning & Organizing elementary

Difficulty with scheduling, strategizing, outlining, etc.

SOLUTIONS

- Play **games** that require strategy
- Set **realistic goals** based on developmentally appropriate expectations
- Establish **freedom within structure**
- Use **calendars/planners**
- **Schedule** breaks/downtime

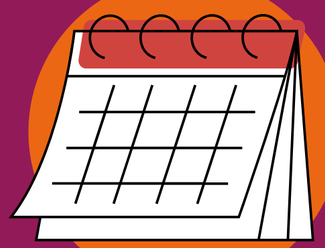
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Planning & Organization

SOLUTIONS

Calendars



Planners



To-do list



Color Coding



Consider

- Different options for planners/agendas
  - Daily, weekly, monthly
  - Goal setting options
  - Habit trackers

DIGITAL VS. PHYSICAL (OR BOTH)

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Planning & Organization adolescence

Difficulty with scheduling, strategizing, outlining, etc.

How do we address this?

- Set **realistic** goals
- **Prioritize** work in order of deadlines and importance
- Use **calendars/planners**
- **Schedule** breaks/downtime
- **Acknowledge** work-related fantasies as separate from the reality of the work

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Time Management



Difficulty understanding concept of time & how long a task will take

MODEL

- **visually** with time timer.
- **verbally** by acknowledging when you make mistakes in your planning/time management.
- **through planning**
  - prevention – get ahead of transitions

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Time Management



Students struggle with...

- Completing homework assignments & deadlines for classwork
- Keeping up with class routines
- Understanding how much time a task will take
- Breaking up larger projects into smaller tasks
- Last minute studying for tests
- Balancing screentime with responsibilities
- Remembering events
- Keeping track of time

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Time Management

SOLUTIONS

- Time chunking
- Use of physical timers
- Reminders
- Scheduling in breaks
- Schedule downtime
- Prioritize work in order of importance



visual timers


digital timers


sand timer

Identify common distractions and find ways to minimize them to avoid interrupting your concentration

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Task Initiation

Do your children struggle with...

- Not knowing where to start an assignment
- Managing distractions
- Navigating perfectionism
- Needing many reminders to start a task
- Transitioning from one activity to another
- Having a sense of how long a task will take



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Initiation

What do I do when it's hard to get started?

- Understand the avoidance and **identify motivation**
- Find the smallest entry point
- **Break down** the rest of the task into smaller chunks with **planned mini-breaks** or **micro rewards** in between
- Never start with a blank page – **use scaffolds, ie graphic organizers**
- **Visualize completion** and getting to the reward on the other side – dopamine



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Attention/Sustaining Focus

Our capacity to focus reduces when we are:

- tired
- stressed
- emotional
- hungry
- low interest
- low personal application
- low interaction



General Metric

Rough Metric: Age x 2-5 minutes

Age	Time
4	8 -12 minutes
6	12 - 18 minutes
8	16 - 24 minutes
10	20 - 30 minutes
12	24 - 36 minutes
14	28 - 42 minutes
16	32 - 48 minutes

DEFICITS

1. Short attention span
2. Highly distractible
3. Restless, can't sit still, impulsive
4. Excessive talking, interrupts frequently

**Inability to control their attention/self regulatory system

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Maintaining Focus

SOLUTIONS

Help children...

- Know the optimal **PLACE** for homework
- Keep homework space **TIDY**
- **REMOVE** distractions
- Have materials **READY** and organized
- Decide on **ORDER** of tasks and how long they will take
- Support focus with brain **BREAKS** and natural micro rewards
    - Modeling what paying attention looks like



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Attention

The ability to concentrate on a current source of information.

"Paying attention" involves **5** specific skills:



Focusing on or attending to a single task

Being present and alert for class instructions or an interaction with a parent.

Initiating or activating one's attention

Ending a casual conversation with a classmate in order to take out the materials needed for class and direct attention to the teacher without being prompted by an adult.

Sustaining or maintaining concentration

After being distracted by a joke or another interruption, returning focus to one's notes, the current activity, or the teacher.

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Attention

The ability to concentrate on a current source of information.

"Paying attention" involves

5 specific skills:



Inhibiting or blocking out external and internal distractions

Remaining focused on the teacher and not engaging with a peer who is distracting or disruptive. This includes noticing when one has been daydreaming and returning attention to the class activity.

Changing focus as a task or class requires without becoming distracted or disengaging

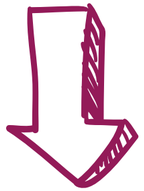
Moving from a mini lesson to an activity without requiring repeated prompting from the teacher or engaging in chitchat with classmates.

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Action Potential

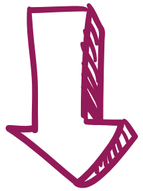
It isn't just about EF

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING



- Impulse Control
- Working Memory
- Self-Regulation
- Attention
- Planning/Organizing
- Time Management
- Self-Monitoring

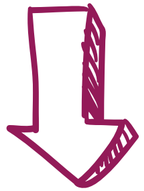
GROWTH MINDSET



- Belief that:
  - IQ
  - Talent
  - Creativity
  - Love/friendship

  develop through effort and deliberate practice
- Failure is learning & opportunity

GRIT



- Willingness to commit to action
- "Sticking with things over the very long-term until you master them" - Duckworth's 'Hard Thing Rule'
  - Reminder that everyone has a 'hard thing.'
  - Finish what you start, no quitting mid-season, but you don't have to sign up next year.
  - You pick the 'hard thing' yourself.

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organizational TUTORS

WHAT WE OFFER

Individualized and targeted in-person and virtual support for students of all ages who struggle with:

- Executive Functioning and attentional weaknesses
- language-based learning problems
- visual-spatial and auditory processing issues
- social/emotional difficulties that impede their academic success

- customized match with an expert tutor
- weekly or bi-weekly, 75-minute sessions
- curated program to meet each student's specific needs and goals

www.organizationaltutors.com

WHO WE ARE

OT is a premier network of highly trained academic and Executive Functioning coaches, working at the intersection of education and psychology, founded and led by Anna Levy-Warren, Ph.D.

TUTORS

All coaches in our network hold graduate level degrees in education, neurocognition, educational therapy, or psychology, and have a background in working with students with a combination of academic, cognitive, and social/emotional challenges.

FEES

Our fees range based on the experience of the tutor and the student's needs, to accommodate each family's budget. This fee includes out-of-session preparation, a detailed written follow-up outlining each session, and between-session contact with teachers, parents, psychologists, and the client as needed.



THANK YOU

Feedback?

CONTACT

Feel free to contact us if you have more questions/feedback:
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