

The Executive Functions in the Home



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Overview

- Define Executive Functioning
- Identifying the Executive Functions
- Home examples of Executive Dysfunction
- Home Help Ideas

Executive Functioning

- Definition
 - An umbrella term for the management of cognitive processes, including working memory, reasoning, task flexibility, problem solving including planning and execution.
 - A set of mental skills that helps you get things done. These skills are controlled by the frontal lobe. Allows you to manage time and pay attention.
- The brain's hub/administrator
- Not a specific diagnosis, but affected by
 - Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Learning Differences

Continuum from Skill to Pathology

- Not all struggles with Executive Functioning represent pathology
- Remediation is possible
- Direct instruction is necessary for some to develop

What are the Executive Functions

- Inhibit
 - Shift
 - Emotional Control
 - Initiate
 - Working Memory
 - Plan/Organize
 - Organization of Materials
 - Monitor

Inhibit

The ability to not act on impulse; to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time

- Example
 - Interrupting conversation
- Idea/Redirection
 - You can touch my hand when you want to tell me something and wait for me to acknowledge you
 - Multisensory techniques and nonverbals

Shift

The ability to move freely from one situation, activity, or aspect of a problem to another.

- Example
 - Transition from one activity to another: homework, play, dinner, bath, to bed
 - Kids thinking in terms of “now or not now”
- Idea/Redirection
 - Provide a schedule of activities for the day

Emotional Control

The ability to modulate emotional responses with change in situation/setting

- Example
 - Becomes tearful or irritable
 - Struggles to remain calm on school party or special activity days
- Idea/Redirection
 - Counseling
 - Reflections of Feeling, Calm down space, Mindfulness, Limit setting
 - Develop a specific strategy for special activity days

Initiate

The ability to begin a task or activity, as well as independently generating ideas, responses, or problem-solving strategies.

- Example
 - Difficulty starting on their work or project
- Idea/Redirection
 - Scheduling what comes next
 - Teaching to use a calendar

Working Memory

The ability to actively hold information in the mind for the purpose of completing a task or activity.

- Example
 - Difficulty following through with multistep sequential directions
- Idea/Redirection
 - Engage the child's multiple senses
 - Morning Dots

Plan/Organize

The ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands within the situational context.

- Examples
 - Maintaining their planner, having supplies necessary to begin work
 - Soccer on Tuesdays, Carpool with Johnson family on MWF
- Idea/Redirection
 - Homework kit- plastic box, scissors, tape, pencils, graph paper, paper, crayons
 - Activities rack

Organization of Materials

The ability to manage one's everyday environment with respect to orderliness of work, play and storage spaces (desk, backpacks, lockers)

- Examples
 - Child completed their homework or project and left it at home
 - Messy room
- Idea/Redirection
 - Consistent application of consequence
 - Work with teacher to develop a consistent strategy for helping the child remember materials

Monitor

The ability to measure the effect one's behaviors have on others, including teachers and peers.

- Examples
 - Speaks tersely or disrespectfully to you when angry
 - Brags about abilities
- Idea/Redirection
 - Provide real time feedback to child, "I am not for speaking to in that tone" or "Jenny I noticed the look on Tracy's face when you said that. It seems you may have hurt her feelings."

Resources

www.understood.org

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>

www.ldaonline.org/article291122/

Thank you!

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