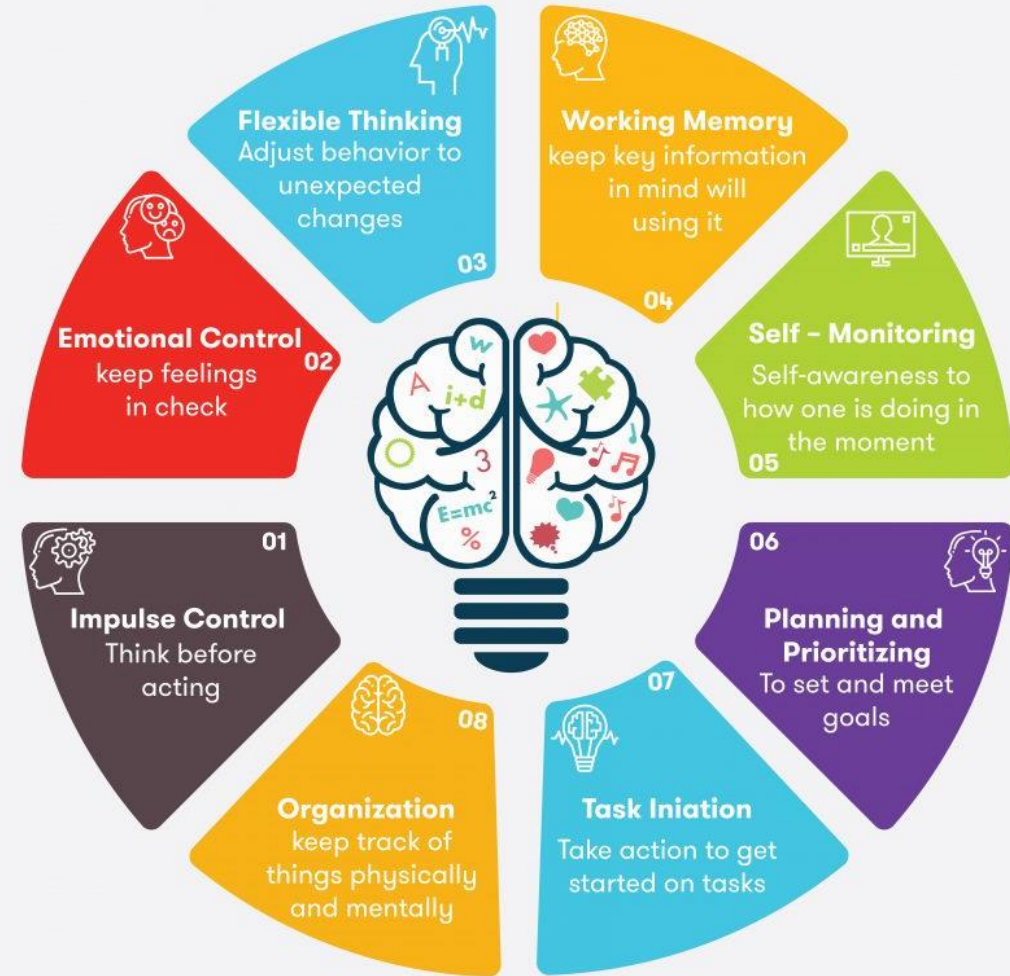


Executive Functioning

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EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING





Executive Functioning (EF) is a general term for a variety of functions that are responsible for purposeful, goal-directed, and problem-solving behavior.

Facets of Executive Functioning:



Behavioral Control



Emotional Control



Cognitive Control

Behavioral Control

Inhibition/impulse control

is the ability to resist impulses and to stop one's behavior at the appropriate time.

Self-monitoring

is the ability to exhibit interpersonal awareness. Self-monitoring allows children to show awareness of how their behavior affects others.

Emotional Control

Shifting from one activity/problem to another: is the ability to make transitions, tolerate change, problem solve flexibly, and switch or alternate one's attention from one focus or topic to another.

Emotion regulation: reflects the influence of the executive functions on the expression and regulation of one's emotions.

Cognitive Control

Initiation is the ability to begin a task or activity without being prompted to do so.

Working memory is the ability to hold information in mind for the purpose completing a task, solving a multi-step problem or following instructions.

Cognitive Control, continued

Planning is the ability to anticipate future events, set goals and figure out steps to carry out a task.

Task monitoring : This includes task-oriented monitoring or work-checking habits.

Organization of materials: orderliness of work, play, and storage space (e.g. desks, lockers, and backpacks).

How EF Challenges Impact the Academic Day

Organization: Tracking Assignments

- Difficulty keeping track of daily homework assignments
- Difficulty utilizing tools, such as planners for noting due dates and test dates

Organization: Managing Materials

- Difficulty filing papers in the appropriate folder
- Losing materials for assignments
- Forgetting to bring materials back and forth for homework completion

Time Management

- Difficulty returning daily homework
- Difficulty with planning enough time to complete work
- Unable to complete tasks in a timely manner
- Difficulties with sustaining attention

Task Planning

- Difficulty getting started
- Challenges with breaking tasks down into steps
- Handing in assignments with missing components

What EF
Challenges
may look like
at home...



**What EF challenges
may look like at
school**



Behavioral Control: Inhibition

The ability to inhibit or not act on an impulse and to stop one's behavior at the appropriate time

Social intrusiveness

Lack of personal safety

High levels of physical activity

Inappropriate physical responses to others

Tendency to interrupt or disrupt group activities

Inability to consider the consequences of their behavior at the time

Strategies to support inhibition weaknesses:

Highlight consequences.

Reinforce appropriate behaviors and natural consequences of appropriate/inappropriate behaviors.

Maintain consistency.

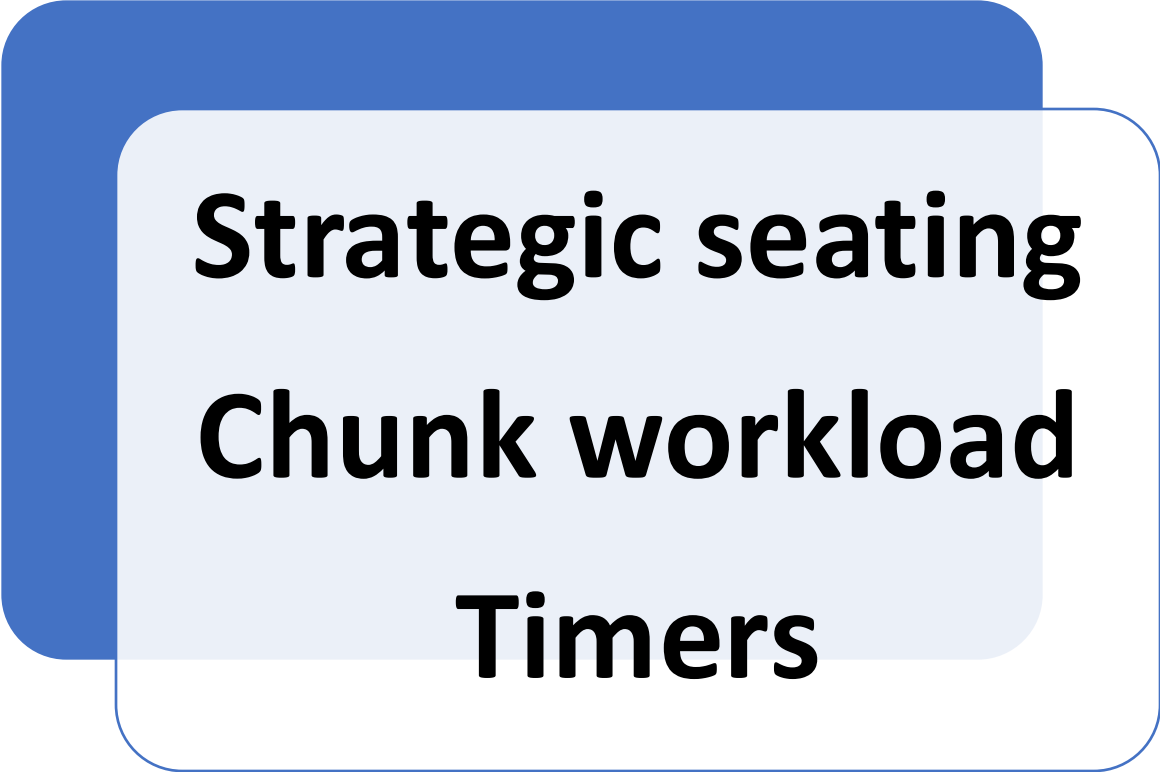
Parents should be consistent with responses to behavior.

Strategies continued

Set clear rules and expectations. Explicit, clear rules and expectations are better than long explanations. You may need to review the rules and children might require frequent reminders.

Limit distractions. This might include visual and auditory distractions. (siblings, television, phone, etc.)

Classroom Strategies



Strategic seating
Chunk workload
Timers

Behavioral Control: Self-Monitoring

Poor self-monitoring may lead to social difficulties

It can be difficult for a student to see the impact of their behavior during a situation. It may be helpful to discuss or review behavior once they are removed from the situation and from peers.

Discussing experiences afterwards allows them to practice the skill of considering what went well and what did not.

Strategies to assist with self monitoring

Teach Self Talk and Problem Solving Skills

Children may benefit from talking through an upcoming task or social situation to increase awareness of how to prepare.

Model and teach **goal setting** (What do I want to accomplish?) and **planning** (What might work? What might not work?)

Strategies continued

Discussing strengths and weaknesses ahead of a task can provide more conscious awareness of potential challenges.

For example, ask 'how long do I think this will take?' and compare your prediction with how long it actually took.

Helping students reflect on how a task went is a good way to set goals for the future.



Emotional Control

Emotional Control: Shift

Students with mild difficulties shifting may be described as inflexible, rigid in their thinking, or unable to change topics.

More severe difficulties demonstrate resistance to change, or emotional outbursts when confronted with change.



*Strategies to
support
Shifting
difficulties*

- Displaying a daily schedule
- Visual organizers using pictures
- Planners
- Calendar boards
- Using erasable white boards that children can write on/erase themselves can also be helpful.

Develop positive, alternative routines

To help teach flexibility, you may want to create potential alternative routines, such as taking different way to school that can be swapped in and out of the larger routines.



Shifting strategies continued

Changing Schedules

- **Provide advance notice of change**
- **Include children** in physically changing a written schedule when possible.

Transitioning between tasks

- **Present one task at a time**
- **Set time limits for each task before a shift to the next task**
- **Prepare for change with alerts** (2-minute warning)
- **Use of a timer can facilitate adjustment to change in activity.**

Emotional *Control*

Learning to regulate our emotions helps when planning, organizing, and self-monitoring. Difficulties with emotion regulation can be expressed as explosiveness and overblown emotional reactions to seemingly minor events.

Cope Ahead

- **Increase awareness of triggers**

Discuss upcoming situations that may be emotionally challenging ahead of time and offer an opportunity to brainstorm or role play ways to manage emotionally charged situations.

- **Set clear rules and expectations**

Clear rules and expectations for behavior, including emotional modulation. Explicit expectations can provide predictability and a feeling of control over the situation, which in turn can facilitate better emotional modulation.



Emotional Control Skills:

Process emotional outbursts: Processing what led to an emotional outburst once everyone is calm is helpful. Choose a situation where the student is relaxed and therefore more receptive to a conversation about what happened.



COPING SKILLS

- Stop, Name your feeling, Calm Down
- Pause Button
- Deep Breathing, Walking away, Counting
- Taking a break/Moving body
- Anger Thermometer
- Speedometer
- Seeking adult intervention



Teach coping skills



The **BIG** Coping Skills LIST

Use positive self-talk	Eat a healthy meal	Host a dinner party
Do deep breathing	Watch your favorite TV show	Do your homework
Watch your favorite movie	Do a word search	Think of your strengths
Take a shower	Write a short story	Talk in a funny voice
Go for a walk	Play your favorite sport	Volunteer your time
Talk to a counselor	Take a nap if you need it	Have a picnic
Laugh	Do a crossword puzzle	Rearrange your room
Paint or draw	Play a game outside	Call a relative
Exercise	Cook or bake with a parent	Meet someone new
Play with your pet	Ask for a hug	Create an action plan
Go for a jog	Set a goal	Draw a comic
Talk to a friend	Think of your favorite memory	Talk to your pet
Play a video game	Dance	Read a positive quote
Hang out with friends	Go for a bike ride	Write your feelings in a journal
Listen to your favorite song	Go to the park	Pick out an outfit for tomorrow
Take a time out	Stretch or do yoga	Try to make your sibling laugh
Think of something funny	Clean your room	Try to make your parents laugh
Play with your favorite toy	Do something kind	Walk the dog
Use an I-Feel message	Smile until you feel better	Create jewelry
Count to 10	Think of the consequences	Write your own song
Spend time with family	Learn a new skill	Play a board or card game
Go for a hike	Listen to calming music	Play on your phone
Flip through a magazine		Answer a "Would You Rather" question
Visit somewhere new		Sing
Face your problem		Read this whole list!



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Cognitive
Skills

Initiation

Working Memory

Planning

Organization

Task Monitor

Initiate

Initiation refers to the ability to begin or get started on a task or activity and to independently generate ideas, responses, or problem-solving strategies.



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

Increase environmental structure:

- Prompt
- Reframe the problem (initiation difficulty as opposed to not motivated)
- Increase arousal or energy
- Provide structure and example
- Support independence



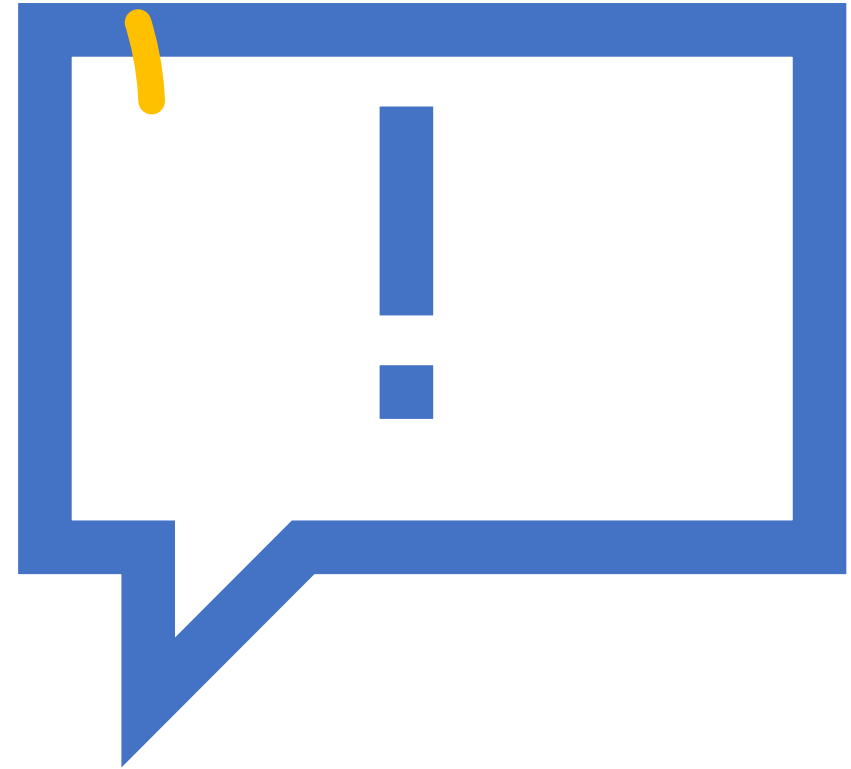
Cognitive Skills: Working Memory

Working memory is the ability to hold information in mind for the purpose completing a task, solving a multi-step problem or following instructions.



How you can help...

- Establish eye contact
- Give information slowly
- Limit the number of steps to follow (chunking)
- Write it down or ask the student to write it down.
- Reduce distractions
- Provide attention breaks
- Consider best seating arrangement



Planning


Planning is the ability to anticipate future events, set goals and figure out steps to carry out a task.

Children with difficulties in planning may not start assignments in a timely manner or may start a project without thinking through the steps.





HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Show your child how to plan a task.
 - Create a binder/lists/visual aids of steps for common routines.
 - Discuss plans of the day at the breakfast table.
- 

Organization


Children with organization difficulties may have difficulty:

- grasping key points or the main idea of new information
- communicating verbally or in writing
- keeping tasks and schoolwork in order





How you can
help...

- Work on complex tasks one step at a time
 - Support organization at the beginning and end of the day
 - Provide support for studying
 - Encourage your child to summarize new learning
- 



Task Monitoring

a student's ability to attend to their own work output.

Students with difficulties in this area often miss minor errors, such as math operation signs, spelling errors, or details in text. They often make minor errors that interfere with showing their actual abilities.



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Encourage reviewing and checking
- Set accuracy goals:
Setting goals for accuracy rather than speed can help increase attention to errors.



Questions?