We are a national project funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment through the Helping Children with Autism program.

Let’s talk about language
Learning intentions

To explore executive functioning skills and the implications for home and school

Consider practical strategies to support the development of executive functioning skills

Diversity of autism

The outside of the circle indicates the individual may need less support in that area

The middle of the circle indicates the individual may need more support in that area

What executive functioning skills support you daily?

Executive functioning and you
What is executive functioning?
Executive Functions

- Planning
- Organisation
- Time management
- Working memory
- Thinking about our own thinking
- Response inhibition & emotional control
- Flexibility
- Attention
- Task initiation
- Persistence

Planning

- Planning how to complete a task
- Understanding what finished looks like
Organisation

• organising thoughts
• equipment
• time
• work space

Time management

Understanding and knowing how to complete an activity in a given timeframe
Working memory

Remembering information whilst working on other tasks.

Meta-cognition

Thinking about one’s thinking
Emotional regulation
Managing emotions

Cognitive flexibility
Being able to change plans and adapt to a new situation
Attention

Paying attention to a task, even if we are bored, tired, or it is not our interest area.

Task initiation

- The ability to start a task
- Waiting until the last minute to start
Persistence

The ability to keep going to finish a task and re-visiting the task if necessary.

- planning for assignments
- working as part of a group
- handwriting and being neat
- coping with change
- coping with bullying or teasing
- staying calm when the classroom is very noisy

- the speed at which handwriting needs to be completed
- copying information from the board
- doing homework
- staying calm when other kids annoyed them

Saggers et al, 2015
Let’s look at the skill of task initiation

Does the person know when to begin and how to begin?

Does the person have an understanding of beginning a task in a timely manner?

Is the person able to initiate a subsequent task, especially when they are slow to begin the first?

Is the person dependent on others to initiate or begin a task or activity?

Does the person appear unmotivated or non-compliant?

Does the person wait until the last minute to start a task and then become overwhelmed?

Executive functioning in action
Executive functions and learning styles

Benefits of student voice
Strengths and interests

The Planning Cycle

1. Observe
2. Plan
3. Implement
4. Evaluate

14/1/21
1 Observe

Use the Planning Tool

Executive Functioning Tool

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Executive functioning skills e.g.</th>
<th>Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?</th>
<th>What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on the child and others?</th>
<th>What strategies &amp; adjustments might help the child?</th>
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<td>Josh had trouble starting a task because he was not able to remember what the teacher had said</td>
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<td>Noticing &amp; remembering</td>
<td>Talks too loud in the hall and misses the instructions to leave</td>
<td>He becomes isolated from his peers and unsure of what to do next and has trouble regulating his emotions</td>
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Identify a strategy
## Strategies to support executive functioning

| being able to use technology to support their educational needs in a variety of ways (e.g. to type or help with school work) | being able to take a break and having time away from others | being reminded of pending changes |
| getting copies of things teachers wrote on the board | using special interests to do projects | help with organising themselves |
| receiving rewards for jobs well done | a quiet space to do assessment | 1:1 help from an adult |

Saggers et al., 2015


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<td>Have a checklist showing what Josh needs to have with him before he leaves home</td>
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<td>Josh had trouble starting a task because he was not able to remember what the teacher had said</td>
<td>He became frustrated and overwhelmed as he could not start the required task</td>
<td>Have the teacher repeat the instructions to Josh and allow processing time</td>
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<td>Have visual reminders displayed regarding level of noise expectations</td>
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Implement a new strategy

Consider:

- Who needs to be informed and taught how to use the strategy?
- What materials do we need?
- What environments do the materials need to be available in?
- Does your young person need to be taught something?
- Trial and observe their response.
Evaluate a strategy

- What is the purpose of the strategy?
- Is the strategy working for your young person?
- Is the strategy appropriate for the environment?
- Is the strategy being safely implemented and not causing stress, anxiety or discomfort?
- Is the strategy easy to use?
- Is the strategy negatively impacting the young person's learning or the learning of those around them?

Some other resources

www.autismtraining.com.au