



Executive Functioning

Executive functions are skills performed by our brain that help us to control and manage our thoughts and actions. Having the skills to organise and plan, shift attention, be flexible with thinking and self-regulate can all have an impact on how a young person copes with daily tasks. Some individuals on the autism spectrum may have difficulties with some or all areas of executive functioning.

There are two main areas for executive functioning skills:

Choose goals & achieve them

- **Planning:** This includes deciding on what's important (and not important) and then making a plan to get a task done. It includes the ability to sequence sections of the tasks in order, to best achieve the overall task.
- **Organisation:** This is about staying on task and the preparation of what is needed to undertake the task. For example; collecting equipment at the end of a lesson in preparation for a transition to another lesson.
- **Time management:** This involves understanding how important time is and how to get jobs done on time.
- **Working memory:** This is being able to remember information while working on other tasks.
- **Thinking about our own thinking:** This includes checking on how things are going for ourselves.

Guide behaviour

- **Response inhibition:** This is about stopping ourselves from doing something so that we can think through what we should do next.
- **Emotional control:** This is about managing emotions so that we can finish a task.
- **Attention:** This involves being able to pay attention to a task we need to do, even if we're bored or tired.
- **Task initiation:** Being able to start a job when needed.
- **Flexibility:** Being able to change plans.
- **Persistence:** This is about being able to keep going to finish a job and re-visiting the job if necessary.

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