

Late, Lost and Unprepared: How to Build Better Executive Functioning

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Today's Agenda

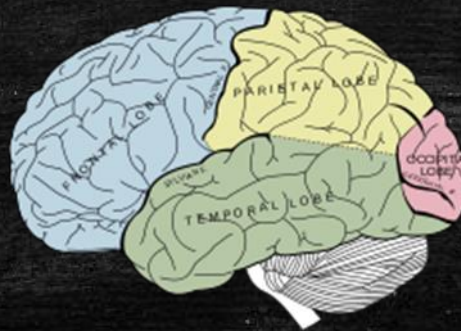
- I. What you need to know about executive functioning
 - A. What is executive functioning?
 - B. How does executive functioning develop?
- II. Who has trouble with EF and why?
- III. Meeting the challenge: what you can do
 - A. General principles
 - B. Specific strategies
- IV. Q & A

What you need to know about Executive Functioning

Research results and clinical knowledge

A formal definition of EF

- Executive functions are the mental processes that serve a supervisory role in our own thinking and behavior.
- The executive functions work together to direct and coordinate our efforts to achieve a goal.



Like A Good Executive...

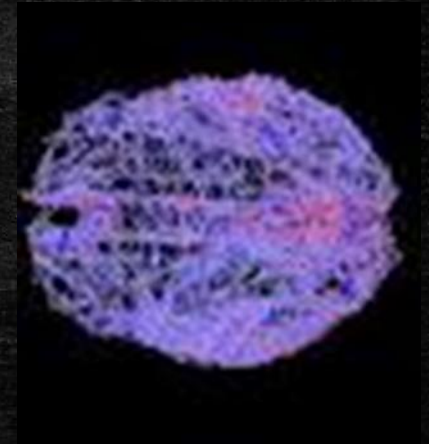
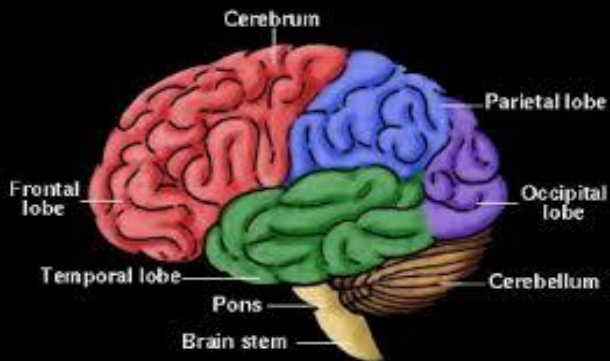
- Good executive functioning allows us to focus on the master plan
- Allow us to keep goals in mind over time
- Allow us to monitor progress and adjust our pace and/or our plan as needed



Neurological foundations of EF

Good executive functioning depends on:

- Sound development of several different brain regions
- Development of efficient connections between regions
- Smooth functioning of the neurotransmitter systems responsible for communication between neurons
- Opportunities for learning and practice
- Good physical and emotional health



Executive Skills

Cool Skills

- Planning/
Organization
- Working Memory
- Initiation
- Task Monitoring

Hot Skills

- Self Monitoring
- Inhibition
- Emotional control
- Shifting

Executive Skills: BRIEF DEFINITIONS

Planning and Organization



The ability to impose order on *thoughts*, tasks, play, and storage spaces

Working Memory



Internal scratch pad; a dynamic process that involves reviewing new information and retrieving, holding, and manipulating stored information in our minds for the purpose of completing a cognitive task

EF Definitions (2)

Initiation



The ability to begin a task or activity and to independently generate ideas, responses, or problem solving strategies

Task Monitoring



The ability to monitor one's own performance and to measure it against a standard of what is needed for any given task

EF Definitions (3)

Self Monitoring



The ability to observe one's own behavior and to determine whether it conforms to explicit behavioral expectations and unwritten social rules

Inhibition



The ability to “put on the brakes” or to stop behaviors at the appropriate time

EF Definitions (4)

Emotional Control



The ability to reflect on one's own feelings and then to use that understanding to guide one's emotional responses

Shifting



The ability to "change gears," to move freely from one situation to another, and to think flexibly in order to respond appropriately to a new or unexpected situation

The Cycling Metaphor

- Smooth executive functioning is like riding a bike. You need to have the foundation skills in place (for example, pedaling, steering, braking, and balancing), but no single skill alone accounts for the magic that happens when you put them all together.



(Cooper-Kahn and Foster, 2013.)

Advancing Development and Increasing Demands



There are predictable surges in the development of executive functions, and school demands are designed to pace these changes.

Who has trouble with EF and why?
