



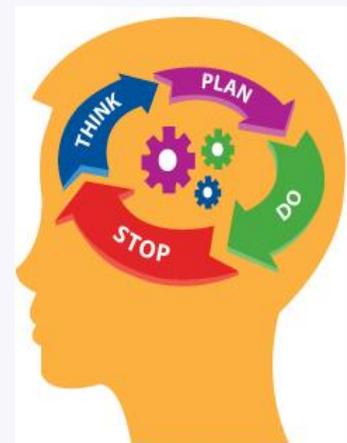
Teaching Executive Functioning Skills for Task Completion

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING?

Executive function is a term used to describe an array of skills that have to do with an individual's ability to manage time, initiate and complete tasks, and organize thoughts. Deficits in these skill areas can make, what for many of us would be simple tasks – like cleaning our rooms – complicated or seemingly impossible for an individual with autism.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING AND AUTISM

Individuals with autism often struggle with executive functioning skills. They may have a difficult time with completing tasks, remembering what they have been told, following instructions, switching tasks, keeping track of belongings, and managing time. The absence of adult supervision and direction may make completing homework or daily living tasks difficult for children with autism. Caregivers may become frustrated and experience higher levels of stress as they may perceive their child as being non-compliant. Implementing behavioural strategies such as schedules, timers and rewards to support the needs of your child can allow them to independently initiate and complete daily tasks. This in turn can reduce family stress levels and allow your child to feel accomplished and proud. These skills can then be generalized to other settings such as school, social situations and, in the future, the workplace.



Example: Completing Homework

- Ask your child what they would like to get or do if they complete all their homework assignments independently (e.g., watch their favourite TV show, eat a snack)
- Let your child know what assignments they have to complete – work together to list them out in an agenda or on a phone
- Ask your child if there are certain assignments that they would like to do first or last (e.g., if your child likes math but does not like science, they may want to do math homework first)
- Give them a checkmark every time they have completed an assignment or if they have stayed on task for a certain amount of time.
- Once they have collected all of their checkmarks, provide the reward immediately (e.g., they get to watch their favourite show)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

[Reward Charts 4 Kids](#) – printable homework and reward charts

[Left Brain Buddha](#) – list of games and activities to practice executive functioning skills

[Developing Child - Harvard](#) - list of activities to practice executive functioning skills.

[Pathway 2 Success](#) – intervention strategies



IF YOUR CHILD IS LACKING MOTIVATION:

- Start with tasks that are fun and play to your child's strengths
- Make instructions/expectations clear so your child knows what to do to get a reward
- Build in choices for your child so they have some control over their tasks
- Reassess whether the task is too large for your child to complete and consider breaking the task down into smaller steps – make tasks achievable!
- Reassess whether your child is motivated for the rewards offered
- Provide more and frequent rewards for more challenging tasks
- Ensure that your child is unable to access rewards independently, so they have to complete their task in order to access it

REFERENCES

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