

March

Executive Functioning

Executive functions are skills that allow us to organize, plan, control our emotions, initiate work, organize the thoughts in our brain, handle more than one thought in our mind at once, and focus our attention on the task at hand. Some types of executive functions include:

Planning/organizing: Does your child have their school work organized? Try utilizing color coordinated folders/notebooks as well as keeping an agenda for homework.

Problem solving: Will your child spend the time to figure out a problem or just ask for help immediately? Prompt your child to figure something out before asking for help.

Working memory: Working memory is using long term memories/short term memories and being able to manipulate them to complete tasks.

Task initiation/completion: Does your child initiate activities and work to make sure the task is complete? Try setting visual timers.

Attention: Does your child stay focused on the task at hand? Try to provide your child with a workspace without distractions. Setting up manilla folders in a quiet space can help your child to concentrate on their homework.

Processing speed: Make sure when you ask them a question you give them 20 seconds at least to answer. Time it out, it may seem like they are avoiding your question but they just might need more time to answer.

Prioritizing: Make a list of their tasks and help your child sort them. Every child is different, some prefer to do the easier homework first to warm up their brain, others like to get the difficult homework out of the way first.

Emotional control: Does your child have difficulty staying calm and focused throughout tasks? Some items that may help to calm them include: allowing them a fidget to help them stay focused, ask them if they want gum, or you can ask them if they need a break before completing more work. Sometimes the environment can be stressful for them, causing them to appear not in control.

For more information on executive functioning please visit:

<https://childmind.org/article/helping-kids-who-struggle-with-executive-functions/>

Or

https://pathways.org/topics-of-development/executive-function/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwutaCBhDfARIsAJHWNHvahlGEMhV3kgyUrx2kXIOTew7dBpm3LIMRjHlj42H3-W7dz_OO2QcaAmmAEALw_wcB



OT Tip of the Month

Additional simple strategies to improve executive functioning skills in your child!

- Have a reliable and predictable schedule.
- Bring your child out to run errands with you. Can they remember a items from your grocery list?
- Allow your child to make their own choices when possible.
- Walk your child through the process of how to solve the problem.
- Implement chores. Provide rewards as a way to increase motivation for your child.
- Play board games focusing on following the directions.

"When they use strategies that address the core executive function processes, they also become independent learners and flexible thinkers, and can more easily bypass their weaknesses while using their strengths to learn efficiently." Dr. Lynn Meltzer

For additional information about executive functioning please contact Catherine_hill@ewg.k12.ri.us or Christine_conley@ewg.k12.ri.us