

Executive Functioning Challenges

Executive functioning is a term used to describe skills such as planning and organization, social behaviour, and the ability to initiate or inhibit behaviours.

Students with executive functioning challenges experience difficulties like breaking down assignments, organizing their bags, and analyzing/completing tasks. Often, these challenges are present in students with learning and attentional problems such as ADHD or dyslexia.

COMMON ISSUES WITH EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING CHALLENGES

- **Written expression:** Students may struggle when putting ideas into written form.
- **Meeting deadlines and self-monitoring for assignments:** Students may miss deadlines or have incomplete assignments due to difficulties with following steps on assignments.
- **Organization:** Students may misplace or lose items or information such as homework. An inability to prioritize and complete tasks also makes school life very difficult.
- **Relationships:** Students will often find it hard to understand when their behaviour is inappropriate or antisocial and as a result social relationships can suffer.
- **Emotional challenges:** Students will often experience severe frustration at their own lack of organization. They may also become exhausted from having to constantly keep a check on themselves which can lead to embarrassment and, in severe cases, depression.

HOW WE SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING CHALLENGES

- ✓ Teaching organizational strategies such as using calendars, checklists, or phone applications to keep track of assignments and tasks
- ✓ Teaching planning strategies such as dividing work into smaller steps, chunking, and establishing a time management system to complete tasks

- ✓ Using 1-to-1 Direct Instruction that teaches planning and organizing ideas into a written piece using writing programs (Power Sentences, Power Paragraphs, Power Essays)
- ✓ Building rapport with students through weekly interactions, listening to their needs, interests, likes, dislikes and personalizing lessons according to this information

“It feels for me at least like I am constantly waiting for something and I can’t start [the] task because I am waiting on something. I never know what exactly I am waiting for but that doesn’t stop me from wasting hours and days not doing the things I need to do, even when I have the desire to do them.”

- Anonymous



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