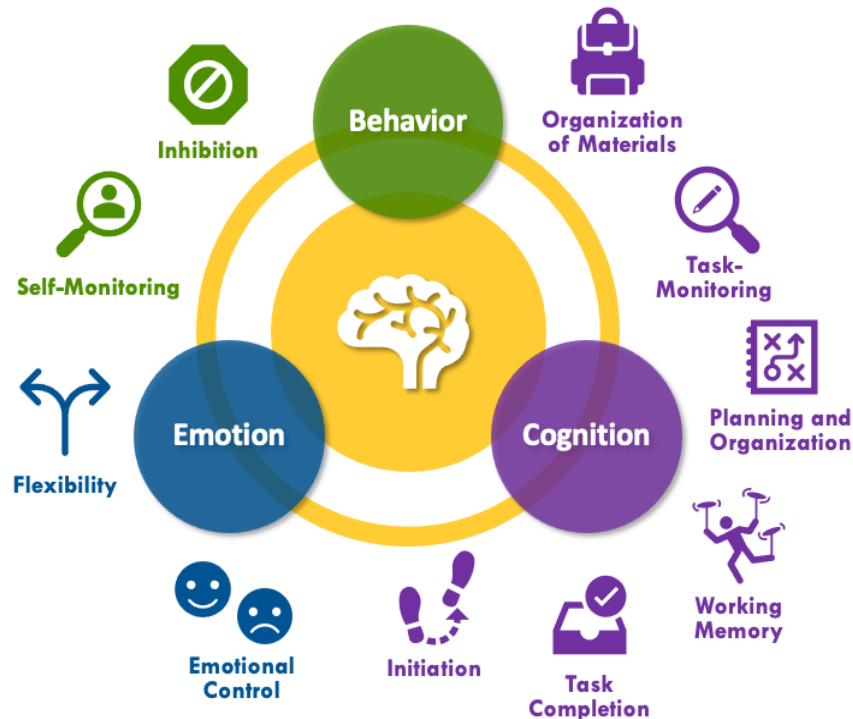


STUDENT HANDOUT

UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING YOUR EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS



Thank you for completing a questionnaire about your executive functions. These abilities help you “execute” tasks well, get the job done, and show what you know. They can impact your success in all aspects of life including school, work, and social and recreational activities. The executive functions are broken down into three main areas: how you manage your behavior, your emotions, and your thinking. Within these three areas are a variety of specific executive functions, and people can have challenges with one, some, or all of them at different times.

People who struggle with executive functions may often be disappointed with the results of their efforts. They can sometimes feel blamed by those around them. They may hear things like, “you aren’t trying hard enough,” “stop being so stubborn,” or just plain, “stop that!” Adults often try to help, but this can be annoying and frustrating as you get older and want to do things on your own. The good thing is that we now know that executive functions are related to how your brain works and that brains are changeable. At your age, your brain is actively developing executive functions and it will continue to do so until your late 20s.

There are many ways to take advantage of your brain’s development and improve

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your executive functioning. Better executive functioning can lead to greater success in many areas of your life, including in school, at home, in extracurricular activities, and with friends. The goal of this handout is to help you understand more about your executive functions and, more importantly, help you learn how you can make them work better for you.

The fact that you are reading this handout means you are aware that some executive functions can be hard for you. Pat yourself on the back, because identifying a challenge is the first and biggest step in fixing it. Habits are hard to break, but we have found that when it comes to executive functions, a little effort can yield big results.

It is very likely that people who care about you also filled out a similar questionnaire. They will probably be coming to you with their own ideas of things that can help. Be patient with them and consider their ideas. The goal is for you to learn to be independent and not need that help. But it's ok to accept some guidance and support along the way.



GENERAL THINGS TO REMEMBER

1

Think positively. Knowing what is hard for you gives you the power to ask for help when you want it, to learn new skills, or to come up with life hacks or work-arounds that will make your life easier. Come up with some positive statements you can say to yourself to remind yourself of your goals. Always remember that they are achievable.

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AREAS YOU IDENTIFIED AS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT



FLEXIBILITY

You reported that you often have difficulties with flexibility. People who struggle in this area can have difficulties adjusting to changes in plans, schedules, or people. They may find it hard to think of new ways to solve problems. They may have trouble accepting feedback from others or changing what they are doing—even if it might lead to more success. Sometimes, people can get stuck on a topic or activity to the point that it interferes with other things. On the other hand, people who are less flexible in their thinking can be very persistent in their focus and become experts in one or more areas. They also tend to have a strong sense of right and wrong and are less concerned about other people's opinions. Some ideas to improve flexibility include:

1

Plan A and B and C. When solving a problem, generate a “plan A,” but then think about alternate ways (“plan B” and “plan C”) to solve the problem as well. Then try to evaluate which one you think works the best. Remember, plan A doesn't work for most people all of the time. It is normal to need a plan B.

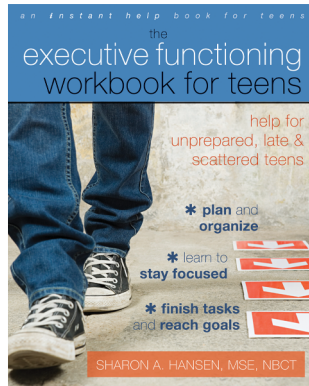
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GENERAL RESOURCES ON EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

If you want to learn more about executive functioning, here are some things you may want to check out:



<https://www.newharbinger.com/executive-functioning-workbook-teens>

[Redacted for Sample Report]