

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING EXPLAINED:



A QUICK GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND TEENS

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING?

Executive functioning (EF) skills are brain tools that help us manage emotions, control impulses, focus, remember things, switch tasks, manage time, and stay organized. These skills are key for success at school, home, with friends, and in daily life.

WHAT IT IS:

WHY IT MATTERS:

REAL LIFE EXAMPLE:

1. SELF-AWARENESS / SELF-MONITORING

Noticing your own personal actions, thoughts and feelings.

Helps you understand yourself better and how you affect others.

Noticing when you're losing focus in class and redirecting your attention.

2. IMPULSE/SELF CONTROL (ALSO KNOWN AS INHIBITORY CONTROL)

The ability to pause and think before you act.

Prevents blurting out or overreacting during conflict with friends or family.

Pausing to think before yelling during an argument.

3. EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Managing strong emotions when they feel overwhelming.

Helps reduce meltdowns or shutting down under stress.

Taking some deep breaths instead of slamming a door or yelling.

4. WORKING MEMORY

Holding and using information in your mind for a short time.

Important for multi-step directions and problem-solving.

Remembering steps while solving a math problem or homework.

5. COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

Adjusting and adapting to new situations and perspectives.

Helps you adapt when plans change, or new rules are introduced.

Switching from frustration to problem-solving mode after a setback.

6. TASK INITIATION

The ability to start a task without delay or procrastination.

Helps you start homework, chores, or projects on time without constant reminders.

Starting homework right after school without being told.

7. PLANNING AND PRIORITIZING

Setting goals and knowing what needs to get done first.

Helps with school projects, chores, and long-term goals.

Breaking a science project into smaller deadlines.

8. ORGANIZATION

Keeping materials and thoughts in order.

Reduces forgetfulness and overwhelm.

Keeping a binder and backpack neat so nothing gets lost.