

QUICK TIPS TO DEVELOP EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS



BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Develop your child's feeling vocabulary. Expand their knowledge and use of various feelings to describe experiences and emotions. "It sounds like you felt frustrated when..." or "It seems like you feel very hurt by what your sister said to you."
- Use various feeling words and connect them to an event.
- Use mindfulness to help your child calm their mind.



PASSIVE DEFIANCE

- Give a command, have the child repeat it, and then praise the child in advance for their listening and follow through.
- Catch them being good and tell them specifically and immediately what you noticed.



ORGANIZATION

- Develop an organizational system along with your child.
- Help them think through and organize their things so that everything has its place.
- Help them label and place things where they belong.
- Encourage them to keep a planner or agenda for school to track projects, deadlines, and upcoming games/events.



PROBLEM SOLVING

- Help your child learn to solve potential problems proactively – before the problem even occurs.¹⁰
- Role-play various scenarios that they have already encountered and may not have responded to effectively.
- Role-play and talk through other situations they have not yet encountered.



SELF-MONITORING

- Meet with your child and their teacher to identify a time they can start monitoring behaviors.
- Develop a list of behaviors to track.
- A child becomes aware of his own behaviors, he will start to make the necessary adjustments.
- Video recording certain behaviors and showing them to your child (habits, tantrums, non-verbal behaviors) are also great self-monitoring awareness tools.

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JUDGMENT

- Teach your child to stop, think, and then respond when in new or familiar situations.
- Teach them to engage in self-talk prior to responding (“Is what I’m about to say kind? Appropriate? Helpful? Encouraging?”).
- Come up with an acronym, funny song, or rhyme to serve as reminders for appropriate behaviors.



DECISION MAKING

- Teach your child ways to think through situations by having an internal dialogue.
- Help your child find ways to get unstuck when in a tricky situation.
- Teach your child there is more than one way to solve a problem and that most problems have solutions.



TASK INITIATION

- Teach your child to first organize by writing down the things that need to get done.
- Organize the tasks further by writing down what needs to get done now, by the end of the day, and by the end of the week.
- Teach them to chunk tasks and then just start.
- Even if they work on a bigger task for 10 minutes, it’s a start.



TASK PERSISTENCE

- Work with your child to gauge when a break is needed.
- Teach them that taking a break before a meltdown occurs is a sign of maturity.
- Brainstorm various “healthy break” ideas (i.e. going for a walk, drawing, talking to someone).



TASK COMPLETION

- Have them set small goals (i.e. “After I work on math for 10 minutes, then I’ll take a 2-minute break” or “When I finish these 5 problems, then I’ll color one page”).
- Encourage them to work for longer and longer periods of time before taking a break again.

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BED-WETTING

- Do not allow your child to have any liquids 1-2 hours before bedtime.
- Go to bed at a consistent time every night - not when they're overly tired or exhausted.
- Track bed-wetting episodes vs. dry nights (see if there is a pattern).
- Consider buying a "dry bed alarm" (one that makes a sound) along with incorporating behavioral strategies. Consider seeing a psychologist who specializes in dry-bed training (or see me remotely for coaching).



LOGIC VS EMOTION

- Teach your child to take a breath, practice thought stopping, and replace negative, irrational thoughts with healthier, positive thoughts.
- Teach your child to de-escalate their emotions and thoughts by doing things that are rhythmic and self-soothing (i.e. reading, singing, dancing, playing instruments).
- Once your child is calm enough, encourage your child to revisit the situation and notice triggers, and then celebrate accomplishments in managing oneself.
- Read books and watch movies about characters who learn to control their thoughts and emotions.