

## Executive Skills

**Sustained Attention** is the capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue or boredom.

### Coaching strategies

- Help students identify motivational strategies – pose a question to read for, highlighting when reading
- Set environmental cues – setting timers, adult to check on them periodically to make sure they are working, writing start/stop times on assignments

**Impulse Control** is the capacity to think before you act.

### Coaching strategies

- Find ways to cue the child to control impulses. For example before a student leaves the classroom for lunch, the teacher asks “What behavior are you working on?”
- Give the student a chance to rehearse the desired behavior.
- Select a replacement skill (e.g. hand raising) instead of blurting out in class (ie. teacher attention)

**Flexibility** is the ability to revise plans in face of obstacles, mistakes, new information

### Coaching strategies

- Provide a cue to the child in advance of transitions/being in close proximity at transition
- Develop default strategies students can fall back on during transitions that are difficult
- Teach relaxation, thought-stopping

**Metacognition** is the ability to observe oneself in a situation, self-monitoring/self-evaluation

### Coach strategies

- Questions that provoke self-evaluation – How did you solve that problem? Can you think of another way of doing that? What can you do to help remember that information?
- Teach a set of questions to ask themselves when confronted with problems. Write the questions in a list form and display: What is the problem? What is the plan? Am I following the plan? How did I do?

**Working Memory** is the ability to hold information in mind while performing complex tasks, to draw on past learning or experience to apply to a situation.

### Coaching strategies

- Using planners, “to-do” lists, electronic devices to record things that students will need to retrieve at a later time/date
- Incorporate recurring phrases that teachers/parents might use to signal the student to retrieve information

**Managing Emotions** is the ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks or control and direct behavior

### Coaching strategies

- Teaching coping strategies: creating scripts for students to follow in difficult situations

- Have parent/teacher model making positive self-statement. For example, “Here’s what I want you to say to yourself before starting this: If this becomes a challenge, I will \_\_\_\_\_
- Teach problem solving skills

**Task Initiation** is the ability to begin a task without undue procrastination

Coaching strategies

- Student will record start/stop time on assignments
- Have the student determine what cue (visual/verbal) will be used to remind them to begin a task. For example, a picture taped to a desk, immediately after the bell rings.

**Planning** - the ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what’s important to focus on and what’s not important.

Coaching strategies

- Break long-term projects into clearly defined subtasks and attach deadlines to each subtask.
- Walk them through the planning process many times with multiple kinds of tasks, gradually turning over the process to the student by asking questions that prompt them to think about how to make a plan. “What do you have to do first?” “What kind of list will you need?” “How will you create a timeline?”

**Time Management** - the capacity to estimate, allocate, and execute within time constraints.

Coaching strategies

- Give students a schedule to follow and prompt them at each step of the way.
- Impose time limits and provide reminders for how much time is left.
- Use cuing devices such as clocks, bells or alarms.
- Have system of natural consequences for failing to meet a deadline (homework not done/no hockey practice).

**Organization** - the ability to arrange or place things according to a system. (This is a long term process learning this skill!:)

Coaching strategies

- They need to be given an organizational scheme to work with...a step by step system for organizing schoolwork, such as using different colored folders to distinguish completed assignments from work not yet done.
- Close supervision in the beginning that student follows the scheme (or task list)
  - As student becomes successful with one scheme, help him create different schemes for different tasks (cleaning room, organizing backpack)

Resources:

- Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents’ Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning by Joyce Cooper-Kahn, (PH.D.)
- Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary “Executive Skills” Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential by Peg Dawson, Ed.D.
- Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention by Peg Dawson, Ed.D.

