


Executive Function Skill-Building:

Overcoming Fear and Procrastination To Improve Time Management




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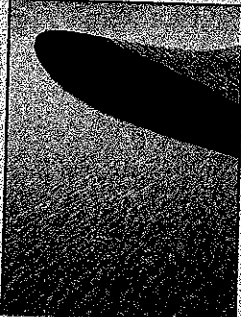
Psych Ed Coaches is the premier Washington, DC metro area ADHD coaching and assessment practice.

Operated by Ph. D. and Master's level clinicians, Psych Ed Coaches offers the following services to clients struggling with ADD and ADHD or similar problems in executive functioning:

- ADHD coaching for individuals using a practical, structured and empirically supported coaching approach.
- Parent/Family coaching to help educate parents and families about what they can do to navigate life with ADHD.
- ADHD Testing and Psychological Assessment for children and adults who have interest in learning of a possible mental health diagnosis.



Dr. Levitt's book includes many of today's strategies for improving EF (APA, 2012).



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION:

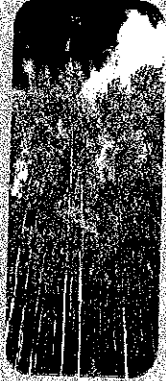
Those "actions we perform to ourselves and direct at ourselves so as to accomplish self-control, goal-directed behavior, and the maximization of future outcomes."

Russell Barkley, M.D., PhD




Specific Executive Functions:

Practically speaking, problems with the "brain's CEO" contribute to several problems: disorganization, difficulty getting started and finishing work, remembering homework, plus difficulty memorizing facts, writing essays or reports, working complex math problems, remembering what is read, completing long-term projects, being on time, controlling emotions, and planning for the future.



- Working memory and recall (keeping facts in mind while manipulating information; accessing facts stored in long-term memory.)
- Activation, arousal, and effort (getting started; paying attention; finishing work)
- Controlling emotions (ability to tolerate frustration; thinking before acting or speaking)
- Internalizing language (using "self-talk" to control one's behavior and direct future actions)
- Taking an issue apart, analyzing the pieces, reconstituting and organizing it into new ideas (complex problem solving)
- Shifting, inhibiting (changing activities; stopping ongoing activity; stopping and thinking before acting or speaking)
- Organizing/planning ahead (organizing time, projects, materials, and procedures)
- Monitoring (self-monitoring and prompting)



In school, at home, or in the workplace, we're called on all day, every day, to self-regulate behavior. Executive function allows us to:

- Make plans
- Keep track of time and finish work on time
- Keep track of more than one thing at once
- Meaningfully include past knowledge in discussions
- Evaluate ideas and reflect on our work
- Change our minds and make mid-course corrections while thinking, reading, and writing
- Ask for help or seek more information when we need it
- Engage in group dynamics
- Wait to speak until we're called on

Quiz Yourself on Time Management

1. Do you procrastinate on everything, putting off tasks until an unwanted consequence has you scrambling to get it done, leaving you stressed and regretful?
2. Are loved ones often upset with you because you commit to doing something and then find you are "too busy" to follow through?
3. Do you have trouble prioritizing the things you need to do?
4. Do you create daily to-do lists with several items and only manage to cross off one or two at the end of the day?
5. Do you over- or under-estimate how long a task will take and attempt to do too much at one time?
6. Does your boss or colleague have to hassle you to get work turned in on time?
7. Do you find yourself putting off items that should be taken care of immediately, such as paying bills, to do something unimportant like rearrange your sock drawer?
8. Do you have trouble starting, continuing, or finishing tasks?
9. Does it feel like everyone around you is getting done three times as much as you in the same amount of time?

What the Experts Say

- Individuals who are able to break down objectives into small steps and set strict timelines are most successful in reaching goals
(Levrini (Reaser), 2008)
- Individuals who consistently write on calendars/planners meet more objectives than those who cannot keep a planning device.
- Individuals who find planning a schedule too rigid and overwhelming are less successful in obtaining objectives.

Why Do I Procrastinate - Identify Your "Type"

Homer Simpson: The Ineffective Prioritizer

- Attend to tasks that are most convenient, salient, or interesting.
- Priority is sacrificed for ease.
- All tasks become urgent.
- Solution: Create and stick to a well laid plan.



Why Do I Procrastinate - Identify Your "Type"

Silly Ol' Bear: The Forgetful Type

- Problems with working memory; the ability to store and manage information required to perform complex cognitive tasks.
- Solution: Use tricks to remember things. Repetition and consistency are key.



Why Do I Procrastinate - Identify Your "Type"

Dug the Dog: The Easily Distracted

- "Short attention span"
- Distraction occurs in the moment, or when things "come up" and unravel a plan.
- Result of impulsivity
- Solutions: Create emotional boundaries. Use rewards and consequences.

Keep Calm and...



SQUIRREL!!!

Why Do I Procrastinate - Identify Your "Type"

Heigh Ho!: The Big Picture Type

- Hold the erroneous perception that most tasks come as an inseparable whole.
- Applies to physical space and time.
- Solution: Divide and subdivide until anxiety is reduced and task is completed.

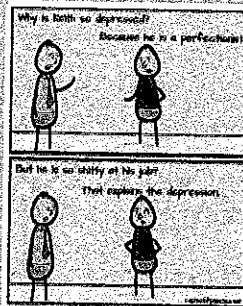


Why Do I Procrastinate - Identify Your "Type"

ADD:

The Perfectionist

- Have unusually high standards.
- Rather than produce a less than superior outcome, they do nothing.
- Solution: Set limits on time allowed to complete a task. Create an incentive system.



How Is Fear Involved?

- Two types of fear in terms of task completion:
 - Fear of Failure & Fear of Success.
- The difference between successful and unsuccessful people is their view of feedback:
 - Successful people take criticism as constructive.
- Ask yourself, "What am I Afraid of?"

Getting Back on Track: Improving Time Management

- Use kitchen timers, clocks, cell phones, computers, and calendars.
- Learn how to plan ahead **REALISTICALLY**.
- Keep a running list of "to-dos" that you can enter into your schedule.
- Give yourself credit when a task is accomplished.
- Stay flexible and be prepared to change your plan.

Help Yourself! Create a Quarter-Hour Schedule:

- Creates a visual representation of time in small segments.
- Invites you to break down large tasks into smaller pieces and help you to see where you can fit a particular task into your busy day.
 - High-Tech Options.
 - Color coding.
 - How to Prioritize.

THANK YOU!

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"Succeeding with Adult ADHD: Daily Strategies to Help You Achieve Your Goals and Manage Your Life" (APA, 2012)

Available on amazon and apabooks.org