

My Executive Functioning Toolkit

Notice what's hard. Discover what helps. Build strategies that work for your brain. 🧠

Executive functioning skills help us manage everyday life.

They help us **start, organize, remember, focus, adjust, manage emotions, and finish what we set out to do.**

Think of executive functioning like the **conductor of an orchestra.** 🎵

The musicians may all know how to play, but the conductor helps everyone come in at the right time, stay together, adjust when something changes, and eventually reach the end of the song. Sometimes the conductor needs a little support.

This worksheet can help you identify which executive functioning skills feel easier, which ones feel harder, and what strategies might help.

Important: This worksheet is designed for reflection and conversation. It is not a diagnostic assessment.

Part 1

Meet Your Executive Functioning Skills

For each skill, circle the answer that feels most accurate.

- 1 = Rarely difficult
- 2 = Sometimes difficult
- 3 = Often difficult
- 4 = Very difficult

🎯 Attention & Focus

I can stay focused on what I am doing, even when other things are happening around me.

1 2 3 4

I am most likely to lose focus when:

Something that helps me focus is:

Task Initiation

1 2 3 4

I can get started on something I need to do without getting stuck, avoiding it, or needing repeated reminders.

1 2 3 4

Tasks I have the hardest time starting:

Starting feels easier when:

Working Memory

1 2 3 4

I can hold information in my mind long enough to use it.

For example, remembering several instructions, keeping track of what I was doing, or remembering what I need while completing a task.

1 2 3 4

I often forget:

One thing that helps me remember:

Planning & Prioritizing

1 2 3 4

I can figure out what needs to happen, what order things should happen in, and what is most important.

1 2 3 4

Planning becomes difficult when:

One planning tool that might help me:

- ☐ Checklist
- ☐ Calendar
- ☐ Visual schedule
- ☐ Written steps

Timer

☐ Someone helping me plan

☐ Other: _____

☐



Time Awareness

I can estimate how long something will take and notice how much time is passing.

1 2 3 4

I often:

- ☐ Think something will take less time than it does
- ☐ Lose track of time
- ☐ Rush at the last minute
- ☐ Have trouble transitioning when time is up
- ☐ Arrive late
- ☐ Other: _____

A tool I could try: _____



Impulse Control

I can pause before acting, speaking, clicking, interrupting, or making a decision.

1 2 3 4

I find it hardest to pause when: _____

A reminder that could help me create a pause: _____



Emotional Regulation

I can manage strong feelings without becoming completely overwhelmed by them.

1 2 3 4

When I become overwhelmed, I usually: _____

- ☐ Shut down
- ☐ Get angry
- ☐ Cry
- ☐ Leave
- ☐ Become very quiet
- ☐ Talk more or faster
- ☐ Feel restless
- ☐ Get stuck on the problem
- ☐ Other: _____

Something that helps my nervous system settle:

Flexible Thinking

I can adjust when plans change, something unexpected happens, or my first solution does not work.

1 2 3 4

Unexpected changes are especially hard when:

It helps me adjust when:

Organization

I can keep track of my belongings, information, assignments, responsibilities, or workspace.

1 2 3 4

The thing I lose track of most often is:

One system that might make this easier:

Task Completion

I can continue working until something is finished, including tasks that are boring, frustrating, or have several steps.

1 2 3 4

I usually get stuck:

- ☐ Before I start
- ☐ In the first few minutes
- ☐ Halfway through
- ☐ When something gets difficult
- ☐ Near the end
- ☐ When I have to check or submit my work

What might help me get across the finish line?

Part 2: My Executive Functioning Snapshot

Look back at your answers.

Skills That Feel Stronger

1

Three executive functioning skills that usually feel easier for me:

1.

2.

3.

Skills I Want to Strengthen

2

The three areas that currently create the most difficulty:

1.

2.

3.

Of these, the **ONE skill** that would make the biggest difference in my daily life is:

3

Why?



Part 3: What Does "Stuck" Look Like for Me?



Executive functioning struggles do not always look like someone saying:

"I'm having difficulty with executive functioning." 🤔🌴

They may look more like:

- ☐ "I'll do it later."
- ☐ Staring at the task without starting
- ☐ Forgetting instructions
- ☐ Losing things
- ☐ Becoming overwhelmed
- ☐ Avoiding something that feels too big
- ☐ Starting several things but finishing none
- ☐ Getting distracted
- ☐ Becoming frustrated when plans change
- ☐ Procrastinating until there is urgency
- ☐ Getting absorbed in something and losing track of time
- ☐ Knowing what to do but feeling unable to begin
- ☐ Needing repeated reminders
- ☐ Melting down or shutting down
- ☐ Other:



When I seem "unmotivated," I might actually be struggling with:



When I become overwhelmed, what might my brain be needing?





Part 4: Find the Sticking Point

Choose one situation that keeps causing difficulty.



The Situation

What happened?



The Task

What was I expected to do?



The Sticking Point

Where did things become difficult?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Understanding what to do | ☐ Managing time |
| ☐ Getting started | ☐ Handling frustration |
| ☐ Staying focused | ☐ Adjusting to change |
| ☐ Remembering the steps | ☐ Staying organized |
| ☐ Knowing what to do first | ☐ Finishing |
| | ☐ Something else: _____ |

What Did It Feel Like?

My thoughts:

My feelings:

What I noticed in my body:



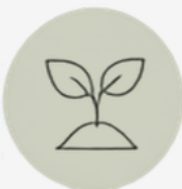
What Happened Next?

Part 5: Don't Just Try Harder. Change the Environment.

Sometimes the best executive functioning strategy is not asking the brain to work harder.

It is making the task easier to manage.

Which of these might help?



If STARTING is hard...

- ☐ Make the first step incredibly small
- ☐ Use a 5-minute starter timer
- ☐ Have someone begin with me
- ☐ Remove unnecessary choices
- ☐ Decide the first step ahead of time

My strategy:



If FOCUS is hard...

- ☐ Reduce distractions
- ☐ Use headphones
- ☐ Work in shorter blocks
- ☐ Add movement breaks
- ☐ Put my phone somewhere else
- ☐ Use a visual timer

My strategy:

If REMEMBERING is hard...

- Write it down
- Use alarms
- Create a checklist
- Use pictures or visual reminders
- Keep important things in the same location

My strategy:



If **PLANNING** is hard...

- ☐ Break the task into smaller steps
- ☐ Ask, "What comes first?"
- ☐ Work backward from the deadline
- ☐ Use a calendar
- ☐ Have someone help me map it out

My strategy: _____



If **EMOTIONS** are getting in the way...

- ☐ Take a movement break
- ☐ Pause before solving the problem
- ☐ Reduce sensory input
- ☐ Take slow breaths
- ☐ Ask for help
- ☐ Name what I am feeling
- ☐ Return to the task after I am more regulated

My strategy: _____



If **FINISHING** is hard...

- ☐ Define exactly what "done" means
- ☐ Create a final checklist
- ☐ Use a timer
- ☐ Add a small reward afterward
- ☐ Work beside someone
- ☐ Break the last step into smaller pieces

My strategy: _____

Part 6: My "Pause Before You Push" Checklist

Before telling myself or someone else to "**just try harder**," pause and ask:

- ☐ Is the task clear?
- ☐ Do I know how to start?
- ☐ Is the task broken into manageable steps?
- ☐ Do I have what I need?
- ☐ Am I distracted?
- ☐ Am I overwhelmed?
- ☐ Am I tired, hungry, stressed, or overstimulated?
- ☐ Do I understand how much time I have?



- ☐ Would a visual reminder help?
- ☐ Would doing the first step together help?
- ☐ Does the environment support the task?
- ☐ Am I expecting a skill that still needs support?

The support that would help most right now is:



Part 7: Build Your Personal EF Toolit

Choose three strategies you want to practice this week.



Tool #1

When I struggle with: _____

I will try: _____



Tool #2

When I struggle with: _____

I will try: _____



Tool #3

When I struggle with: _____

I will try: _____

My One-Week Experiment

Executive functioning skills are not strengthened by expecting perfection.

They grow through **practice, support, repetition**, and discovering what works for you.

This week I want to practice:

The situation where I will practice it:



The person who can support me:



At the end of the week, I will ask:

Did it help?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Not yet
- ☐ I need to change the strategy



What did I notice?



What will I try next?



For Parents, Teachers & Support People

When a child is struggling with executive functioning, behavior is often the part we can **see**.

The challenge underneath it may be harder to see.

Instead of immediately asking:

"How do I get them to do this?"

consider asking:

"What skill is this task requiring, and what support would make that skill easier to use?"



What I am observing:



The executive functioning skill that may be involved:

What I have already tried:



What seems to help:

One support I will try next:



Remember

Difficulty performing a skill consistently does not automatically mean someone doesn't know how to do it.

Sometimes the brain knows exactly what needs to happen but needs additional support with starting, sequencing, remembering, regulating, shifting, or finishing.

The goal isn't to create a "perfect" executive functioning system.

The goal is to discover:



What helps this brain function at its best?

Start there.

