

ADDRESSING EXECUTIVE FUNCTION DIFFICULTIES

Children with executive function difficulties need to be taught how to improve their performance.

What difficulties is your child having? There may be many different areas you feel need work but don't overwhelm your child or yourself. Work on one thing at a time. Building your child's confidence is the main key - so take things slowly and use lots of praise and rewards. Always try to focus on positive behaviour.

Decide on one problem to tackle with your child and discuss it with them. Encourage them to help come up with solutions.

Most children who have these difficulties will find it hard to keep their bedroom tidy. This is a good place to start.

Try to reduce the number of toys, books etc. that your child has in their room. Less stuff, the easier it will be to organise and keep tidy.

Encourage your child to get involved in setting up a system in their room. Explain and demonstrate how this could make their life easier:

- Use different coloured boxes for different activities
- Label boxes – use pictures too
- Label drawers – underwear, t shirts, pyjamas etc.
- A hanger for school bags
- A box for uniform
- A laundry basket/bag
- Take a picture of how the room should look so your child can use this for reference.

Don't expect miracles but with patience and prompting this can work and can then be replicated for other organisational skills.

School bags:

- Using different coloured folders for each subject and one for homework and notes from school
- Checklists for going to school and for coming home
- Too many pens and pencils are never a good idea (too much choice) and an excuse to fidget
- Provide a zippy bag to contain those sweets/crisps that usually end up at the bottom
- Lunch box and water bottle should both be clearly labelled with the child's name

- Separate bags or boxes for different items
- Wet wipes
- Zippy bag for rubbish as your child may not want to use the bins provided

Difficulty sitting still/paying attention:

- A fidget toy or some theraputty
- A wobble cushion

Chewing clothes etc:

- Provide “chewelry” or chew toys

Difficulty following routines:

- Consider simple charts with the steps for daily routines that cause problems i.e. mornings: getting out of bed, dressed, toilet, teeth brushing, breakfast etc. ending with picking up schoolbag and going out the door.

Difficulty switching between tasks:

- Using now and next cards
- Using a timer
- Issuing a verbal countdown i.e. five minutes left, three minutes, one minute

Some of the difficulties, such as interrupting others and inability to wait their turn, can be worked on both at home and at school by gently reminding the child each time of how well they are doing by waiting their turn and reminding them each time that the other child/children are also waiting. Things won't change immediately so be patient.