Understanding Workplace Behaviour: A Quick Reference Guide

A guide to recognising common behaviours linked to executive function challenges in the workplace, emotional regulation, or sensory needs, and practical strategies to support employees effectively.

Behaviour	Executive Function Challenge	Practical Strategies
Frequently late	Time management	Use clear schedules, reminders, and consistent start expectations
Misses deadlines	Planning, prioritisation, task initiation	Break work into smaller steps with interim check-ins
Interrupts or blurts out	Response inhibition, working memory	Encourage note-taking before speaking; set turn-taking cues
Avoids starting tasks	Task initiation	Provide a “first step” prompt or model starting tasks
Forgets items or loses documents	Organisation, working memory	Use labelled folders, checklists, or digital reminders
Struggles with multi-step instructions	Working memory	Give one instruction at a time; provide written or visual step lists
Appears distracted or “zones out”	Sustained attention	Build in short breaks; allow flexible focus periods
Becomes frustrated quickly	Emotional regulation, flexibility	Offer pause time or calm space before re-engaging
Frequently leaves workspace	Emotional regulation	Agree on safe space or planned short breaks
Perfectionism	Cognitive flexibility, metacognition	Set clear “good enough” criteria; model imperfection
Resistant to changes	Cognitive flexibility	Give advance warning; provide visual schedules for changes
Social anxiety	Emotional regulation, metacognition	Offer small-group collaboration or reduce performance pressure
Sensory overwhelm	Emotional regulation	Provide noise-cancelling headphones or low-stimulation spaces