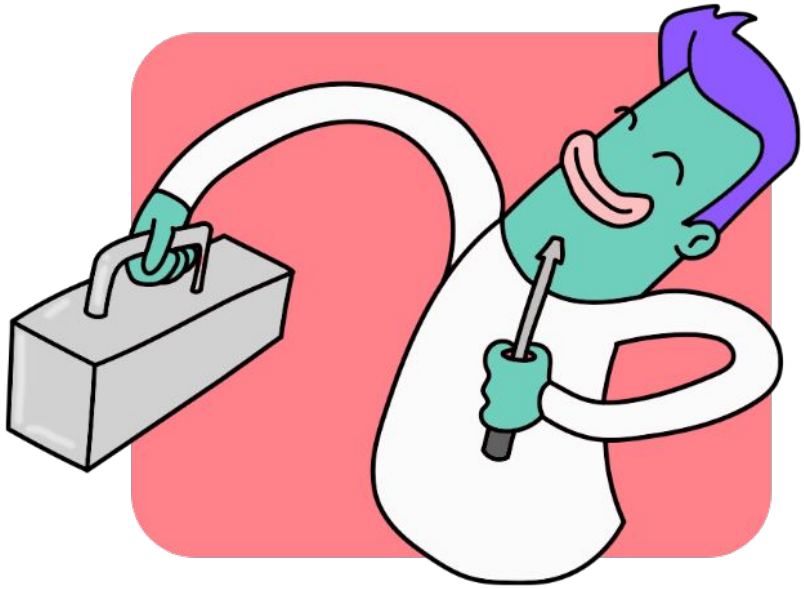
Executive Function Skills

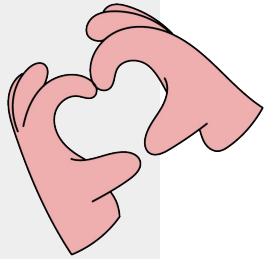
Strategy Bank



connections in mind

CONNECT

Empathise with the child - feel the emotions with them.



Get EF literate.

Complete our questionnaire

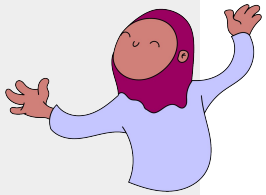
See behaviour through an EF lens.

Talk about your executive function challenges.

COLLABORATE

Focus on autonomy.

Get them involved in everything.



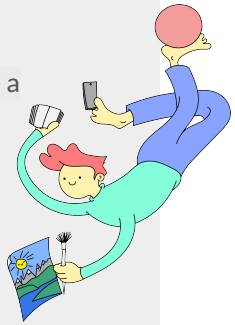
Resist jumping in.

Ask questions.

Co-design bespoke strategies which really work for the children in your care.

SUPPORT

Genuine specific praise for effort to use a strategy



Develop routines to repeat 60+ times

Use checklists and visual prompts to aid working memory.

Ensure well-being and psychological safety.

For use only as part of our 3 Step Approach

At Connections in Mind we get feedback all the time from professionals and parents who simply want strategies to deploy with children, learners, and adults in their care. We know from the research and from our lived experience that a great strategy is only a small part of the process to build lasting habits and executive function skills.

The strategies in this pack are advised to be used as part of our 3 step approach to building strong executive functions: Connect, Collaborate, Support. This approach is the result of years of research, expert knowledge and experience. These three steps build on each other and whilst it might seem quicker to jump in with strategies, the outcomes you get from following the approach fully will be much more effective and long standing.

As highlighted to the right, these strategies should be used as part of a co-design process. As each person is a unique product of their genes and environment, every strategy will not work for everyone. Remember: Just because they work for one person (or you) doesn't mean they will work for another. Therefore, it is essential to invest time in co-designing strategies which really work for the people in your care.

Finally and most importantly, please remember the rule of 60. It takes, on average, 60 repetitions to embed a new habit - so make sure you create routines and scaffolding that can support the development of the new habit (within their zone of proximal development) until the habit is embedded and seems automatic.

Please reach out to us for further training or support in our approach.

Response Inhibition

The ability to stop and think before you act. Resisting the urge to say or do things.

Behaviour clues

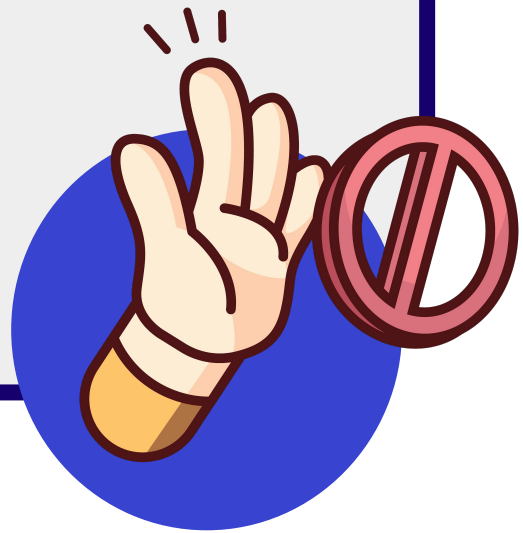
- Calling out in class
- Pushing to the front of the line
- Grabbing toys
- Doesn't listen to all of the instructions before getting started
- Needing to go first

Educators can...

- Give one instruction at a time
- Record your instructions to the class
- Give preferential seating
- Redirect calmly and patiently
- Provide time for the student to talk. If they know they will have your attention later they may be able to hold their comments or questions.
- Remove distractions in the environment
- Teach kids to stop and wait - play games like Red Light Green Light & Simon Says

Learners can....

- Record the instructions
- Use a fidget tool
- Make a good choice about who to sit with
- Jot down questions to ask at an appropriate time
- Take one deep breath before you speak when you're upset.
- Keep your hands in your pockets



Working Memory

Holding information in your memory while performing complex tasks.

Behaviour clues

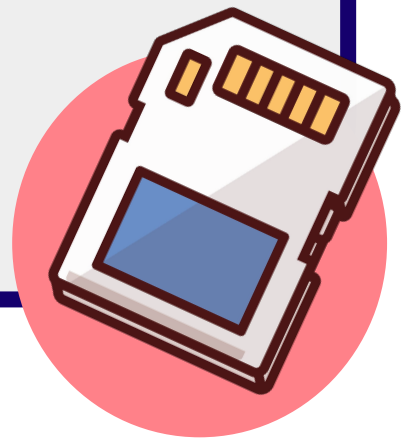
- Forgetting instructions
- Forgetting information that was just given
- Losing train of thought halfway through a ...

Educators can...

- Provide copies of anchor charts, multiplication charts, etc. for the student to access when needed
- Pair verbal instructions or information with visuals
- Believe the child when they say they forget
- Make connections between new material and what is important to the student
- Record instructions
- Provide copies of notes

Learners can....

- Use memory tricks and neumonics like BEDMAS
- Make use of anchor charts, etc.
- Make lists or charts. Try an app like Google Keep
- Highlight important information
- Make voice notes in a “what’s important for today” list
- Visualise what you are hearing



Sustained Attention

Paying attention even if you are tired, bored or not interested.

Behaviour clues

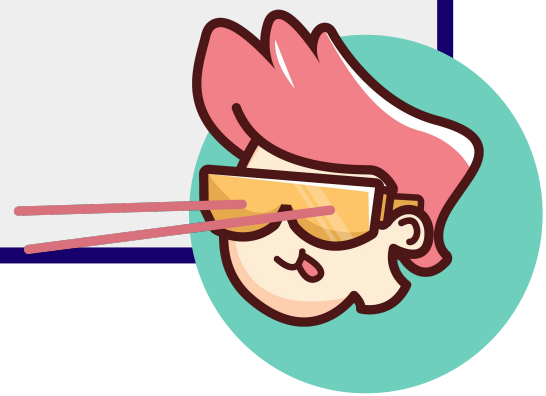
- Easily distracted
- Can't listen to a lot of information or instructions at once
- Misses out on details like spelling, punctuation, etc.

Educators can...

- Provide breaks
- Minimise distractions
- Ensure that the student knows what to do
- Come up with a private signal to prompt the student to return to task
- Routines let students know what is coming next - make this visual and accessible to students
- Options to work in a different space
- Frequent check ins
- Chunk information and tasks

Learners can....

- Record the instructions - listen again if you get off track
- Use a fidget tool
- Make a good choice about who to sit/work with
- Use proofreading tools
- Take breaks
- Use headphones/earbuds to block noise
- Break tasks into small chunks
- Remove clutter or distractions



Emotional Regulation

Managing feelings so you can be successful and productive.

Behaviour clues

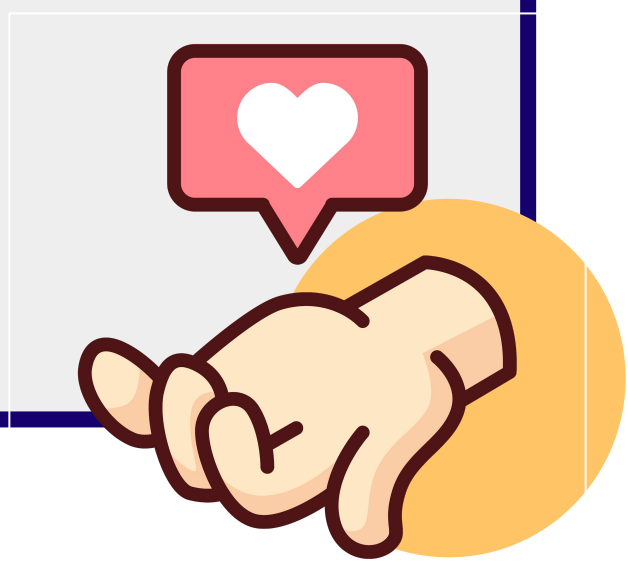
- Has difficulty accepting feedback
- Holds grudges and has trouble getting over things
- Hesitant to take risks if it might not go well
- Big outbursts
- Emotional roller coaster
- Reactions out of proportion to what has happened

Educators can...

- Use a system like Zones of Regulation to teach students about managing their emotions
- Allow the student to take a break when feeling frustrated
- Come up with a signal that you and the student can use to check in about how they are feeling
- Practice calming strategies with your class
- Reinforce students for using strategies

Learners can....

- Learn to name your emotions
- Accept what you are feeling
- Recognise how your body feels with different emotions
- Take care of yourself - get enough sleep, eat healthily
- Use your calming strategies



Cognitive Flexibility

Adapting to changes, obstacles and/or mistakes by revising your plan. Seeing things from different sides.

Behaviour clues

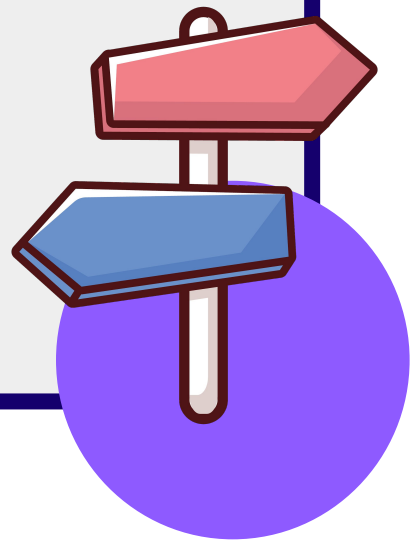
- Has trouble with changes to the schedule
- Struggles with group work
- Doesn't see multiple solutions to a problem
- Has trouble trying a new strategy when things don't work
- Has challenges moving from one task to the next
- Struggles with transitions

Educators can...

- Give lots of notice and reminders about changes to the schedule
- Give prompts in new situations - don't assume the student will generalise from one situation to another

Learners can....

- Practice scripts for new situations
- Make self advocacy cards to let teachers know more about you
- Use calming strategies



Organisation

Coming up with and following strategies to keep track of information, materials and tasks.

Behaviour clues

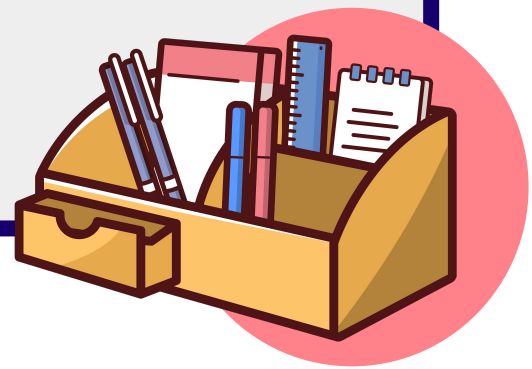
- Messy desk or locker
- Loses things frequently

Educators can...

- Show students how to organise their binders, etc.
- Review binders weekly to help with organisation
- Teach effective use of graphic organisers
- Clearly mark places for the student to keep blogs or classroom materials
- Establish a daily routine

Learners can....

- Always find five things to put away, sort, or tidy up
- Colour code your notes and binders
- Use technology so pages don't get lost
- Use a planner or calendar (digital or otherwise) to schedule upcoming events and tasks.
- Use graph paper for math to keep numbers and columns lined up
- Clean out your backpack once a week



Prioritising & Planning

Deciding what taska are the most important and making a plan to complete them. Knowing what is important and what isn't.

Behaviour clues

- Has difficulty keeping track of upcoming events
- Often misses deadlines and due dates
- Difficulty deciding what is important
- Gets stuck on small, unimportant details
- Not able to imagine what the finished task looks like

Educators can...

- Check in with student on a regular basis to make sure they are not falling behind
- Use graphic organisers to help student break down the task into chunks
- Use rubrics and checklists
- Begin with the end in mind and encourage learner to picture what the finished task looks like, and the steps needed to get there.

Learners can....

- Set smaller deadlines along the way
- Use graphic organisers to break down the task into chunks
- Make sure you know exactly what your task is
- Break your task down into steps
- What needs to be done first
- What things need to happen before other steps



Time Management

Estimating and using time effectively to stay within time limits and deadlines.

Behaviour clues

- Unfamiliar with the schedule even though it has been the same for a while
- Doesn't finish tasks on time
- Doesn't have a sense of what time it is or how much time has passed

Educators can...

- Remind students when there are 5 minutes left, etc.
- Use an app like Remind to notify parents and students of upcoming assignments and events.
- Use a visual timer
- Make a visual schedule and post it in your classroom

Learners can....

- Set alarms on phone, iPad or Smartwatch to remind yourself about events and daily transitions
- Take a picture of the classroom schedule and/or homework board
- Make use of a time blocking tech tool like Pomofocus



Task Initiation

Getting started on a task.

Behaviour clues

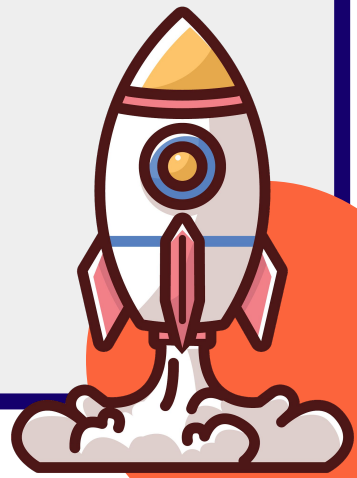
- Difficulty getting started
- Trouble getting to school on time
- Hesitant to jump into new tasks

Educators can...

- Provide visuals reminders of what is expected
- Teach self talk
- Be clear about exactly what you
- want the student to do
- Modify if it looks too daunting
- Have a variety of levelled pages (some with less text)
- Give them just one thing to start
- Do a bit of a task analysis to figure out which part is stressing them out

Learners can....

- Use advocacy skills to ask for help getting started
- Make sure you understand what to do - ask for clarification if needed
- Use positive self talk



Goal Directed Persistence

Preserving and completing tasks.

Behaviour clues

- Gets distracted part way through a task
- Doesn't finish tasks
- Gets frustrated if the computer acts up

Educators can...

- Clearly outline learning goals and success criteria
- Provide models and exemplars
- Opportunities for peer editing and revising
- Use a visual timer - make it seem doable
- Connect to something valuable and interesting to them - build in choice
- Turn rubrics and checklists
- Check in often
- Simplify expectations
- Provide options and choices

Learners can....

- Advocate for choice
- Set small goals for yourself and take breaks when you meet small goals
- Work with someone to make a plan for what getting it done looks like



Metacognition

Noticing how you're doing and thinking about how you're thinking.

Behaviour clues

- Not knowing when things aren't going well
- Not responding to feedback

Educators can...

- Reinforce success criteria and Learning goals
- Go over work with them to develop next steps together
- Give descriptive feedback

Learners can....

- Read/ listen to teacher feedback
- Assess your own work - can you give yourself stars and steps?
- Check in part way through the process to make sure you are on the right track
- Use self-talk: "Okay. What might I be forgetting" or "How can I improve this?"
- Think of someone you admire and ask yourself, "How would they have done this differently?"



Reflection Space

What went well and what would be even better?

Date	Strategies Used	Reflections