Hidden Skills

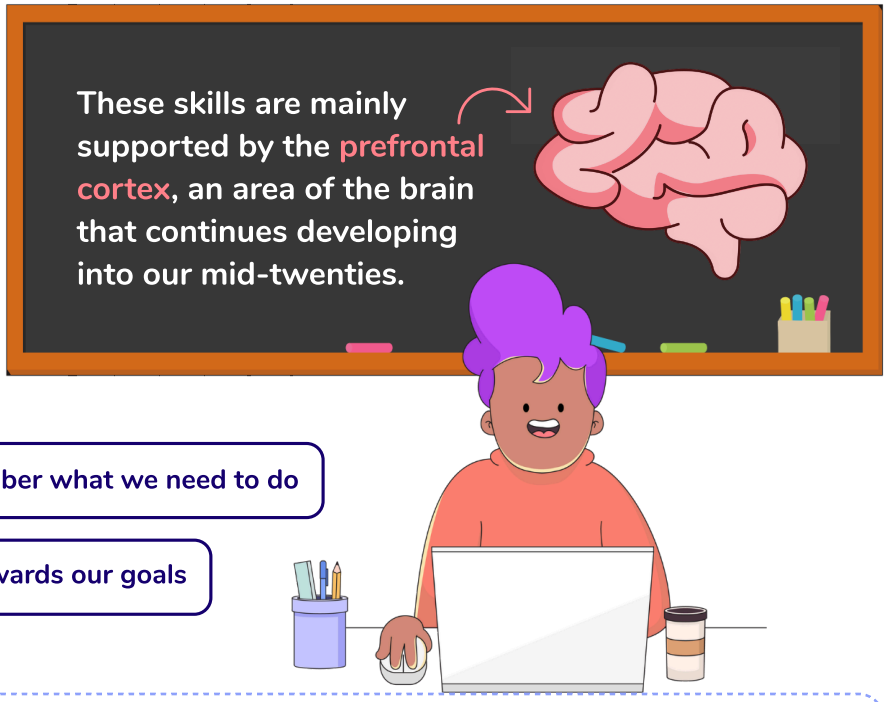
What is executive function?

connections in mind

Hidden Skills: What is Executive Function?



Executive function skills help us manage ourselves and get things done.

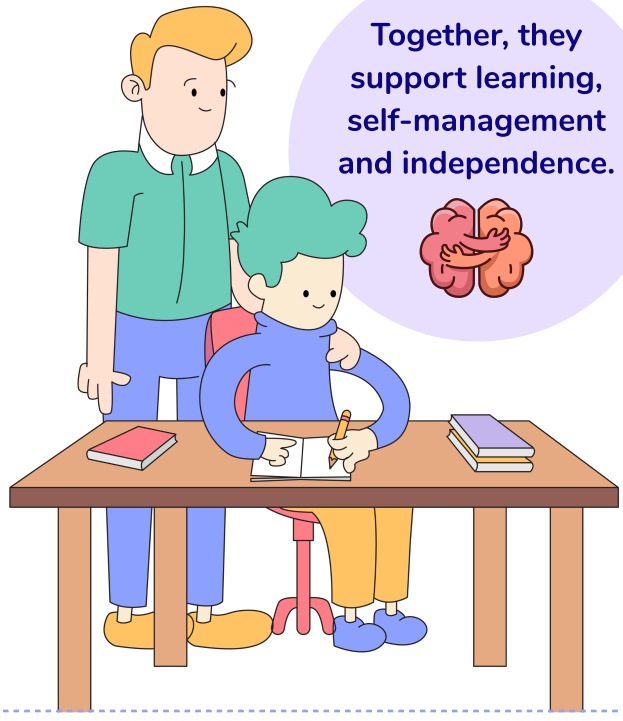


They help us:

- Plan
- Focus
- Remember what we need to do
- Manage emotions
- Work towards our goals

3 brain processes, 11 skills

Executive function includes three core brain processes and a wider group of connected skills.



Together, they support learning, self-management and independence.

They include:



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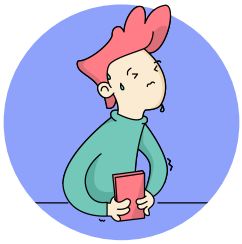
Executive function differences may look like difficulty with:



Getting started



Finishing tasks



Staying focused



Resisting impulses



Managing strong emotions



Organising belongings or information



Estimating and managing time



Adjusting when plans change



Remembering several instructions

People may understand what they need to do but still find the process of doing it difficult.

Who experiences executive function differences?

Executive function differences are commonly associated with:

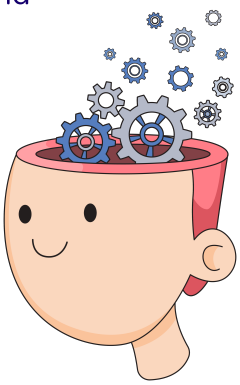
- ADHD
- Autism
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Anxiety
- Developmental Language Disorder

However, anyone can experience executive function challenges, particularly during periods of stress, tiredness, illness, change or increased demands.

Executive Function Differences Are Universal

Everyone has different executive function strengths and challenges. Executive function skills develop gradually and can change depending on our **age**, **stress levels**, **relationships**, **surroundings** and **what is being asked of us**.

A person may have a skill but find it difficult to access in a particular moment. Support that makes tasks clearer and more manageable can benefit everyone, not only people with a diagnosis.



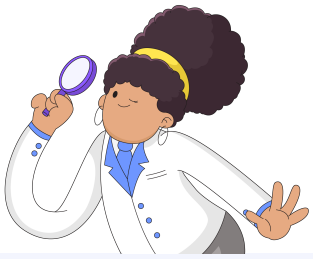
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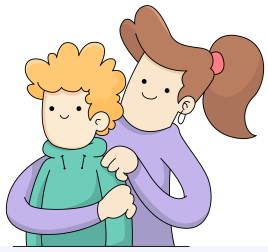
Can executive function skills develop?

Yes. Executive function skills develop through:



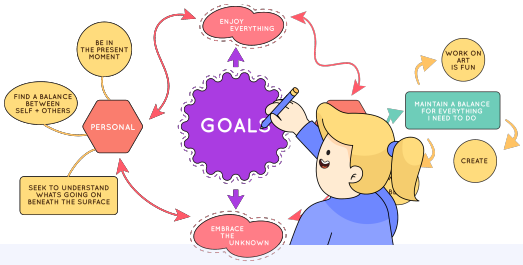
Modelling

Seeing and hearing how someone else approaches a task.



Co-regulation

Having calm, supportive help when something feels difficult.



Structured opportunities to practise

Using strategies repeatedly until they become easier to use independently.



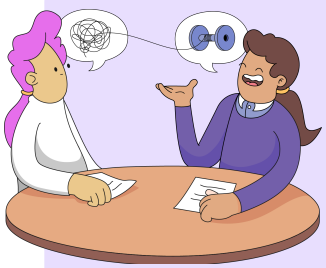
Stress and executive function

When we feel overwhelmed or unsafe, the brain focuses more of its resources on responding to the situation. This can make it harder to think clearly, remember instructions, manage emotions, make decisions or get started.

Young people often need **connection**, **reduced pressure** and **practical support** before they can use strategies effectively.

Key things to remember

- Executive function skills continue developing into our mid-twenties.
- Finding the process difficult does not mean a lack of effort or ability.
- Everyone has their own executive function strengths and challenges.
- Stress can make executive function skills harder to access at times.



Support and repeated practice make executive function skills easier.