

Executive Functions

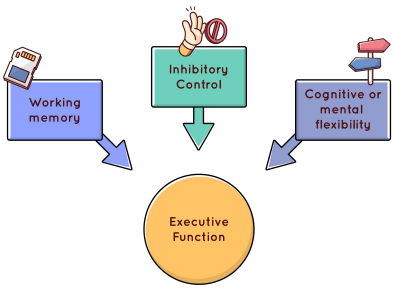
Executive functions are brain processes found in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. They are called executive functions because they help us to **execute tasks**.

Everyone has a unique executive function skills profile and can benefit from working to improve their executive function skills:

You can find out your unique EF profile for **free** here:

For your self
https://su.vc/executivefunction

For your children:
https://s.surveyanyplace.com/dczyblq



We work with **11 associated executive function skills -** see chart overleaf.

Why are long term projects so hard: EF perspectives and solutions

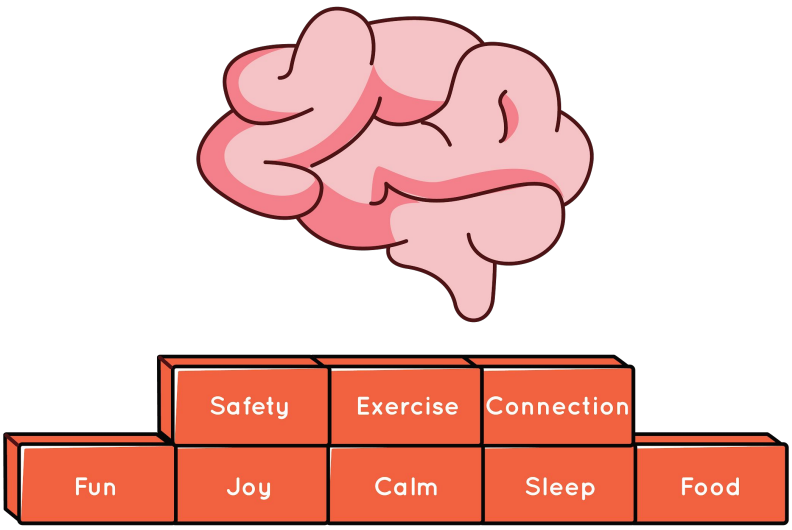
Long term projects are the academic tasks we ask of young people which are most closely aligned with the world of work. However, many young people struggle to plan and complete long term projects. This is not because they are "lazy".

Research tells us that young people don't develop these skills naturally, they need to be taught. Some young people need more support in developing these skills than others.

This webinar will explore why this is, and suggest some workable strategies and tools that learners, teachers and parents can use to support the development of long term project skills and strategies.

"Acute psychosocial stress impairs the flexible implementation of task goals"
Plessow et al. (2011)

Building Blocks for Optimal Brain Functioning



Executive Function Definitions

Skill	Definition
Response inhibition 	The capacity to think before you act; this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows your child the time to evaluate a situation and how his or her behaviour might impact it.
Working memory 	The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future.
Emotional regulation 	The ability to manage emotions to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behaviour.
Sustained attention 	The capacity to keep paying attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.
Task initiation 	The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion.
Planning/ prioritisation 	The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what's important to focus on and what's not important.
Organisation 	The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.
Time management 	The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important.
Goal-directed persistence 	The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of the goal, and not be put off by or distracted by competing interests.
Flexibility 	The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes. It related to an adaptability to changing conditions
Metacognition 	The ability to stand back and take a bird's-eye view of yourself in a situation, to observe how you problem solve. It also includes self mentoring and self evaluative skills (e.g., asking yourself, "How am I doing?" or "How did I do?"

EFS and Long Term Projects

Skill	Challenges in Projects	Strategies
Planning/ prioritisation 	Where to start. How to break it down.	Breaking it Down (p4) Critical Path (p5) Project Planner (p6)
Flexibility 	Developing new habits Overcoming Obstacles Shifting from preferred task	Neuroplasticity video Getting Going Tool (p7)
Task initiation 	Overcoming the fear of failure	Procrastination Reflection (p8) Voice to Text Software (p11)
Sustained attention 	Avoiding distractions to keep focused on the task in hand.	My Project Strategies (p9) My Study Space (p10) Forest App (p11)
Working Memory 	Keeping the task at hand in mind.	Dictapen (p11) Breaking it down (pg4)
Emotional regulation 	Managing sensory overload Staying regulated when it feels too much.	Self Regulation Strategies (p12) 5 Senses - grounding exercise. (p13) Regulation Mapping Tool (p14)
Goal-directed persistence 	Keep going when it gets hard. Doubts (should I change track)	Growth MIndset Poster (p15) My Intentions (p16) Progress Tracker (p26) Should I change track? (p17) Self Evaluation Form (p18)
Metacognition 	Awareness of dysregulation Self evaluation and strategy.	Body Mapping (p19) Self Evaluation Form (p18) EF Building Blocks (p20)
Organisation 	Having everything you need.	My Study Space (p10) Stationery Checklist (p21)
Time management 	Sensing time passing.	Visual Timer (p11) Time Estimation (p22) Meal & Evening Routines (p23/24)
Response inhibition 	Resisting temptation.	Space Between Emotions/Actions (p25) Rewarding Progress (p26)
General	Not sure the challenge yet.	Self Care Menu (p27) My Plan (p28) WOOP Template (p29)



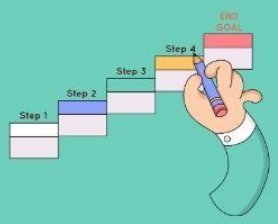
Breaking it Down

Small Acheivable Chunks

Bite size tasks to make it less daunting

Task	How Long	Done?

Add your own here



Critical Path

Work from the deadline backwards

Long term research projects have lots of tricky steps - use this critical path analysis framework to help you plan your time.

Choose Topic
Time Needed

Decide Focus
Time Needed

Choose Title
Time Needed

Reading
Time Needed

Research
Time Needed

Pick Evidence
Time Needed

Plan Content
Time Needed

First Draft
Time Needed

Second Draft
Time Needed

Last Draft
Time Needed

Final Checks
Time Needed

Due Date

Start here and work backwards



Project Planner

Project Planner

Complete this planner for to schedule your weekly project work

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Session					
Break					
Session					
Break					
Session					
Break					
Session					

Getting Going Tool

Use this sheet to work out what's getting in the way of getting started



I am looking forward to...	I am worried about ...	My strategies to try...







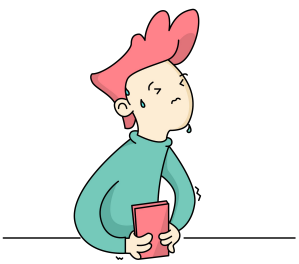
Getting Going

www.connectionsinmind.com

Procrastination Reflection

Complete with an adult to help them understand why getting started is hard for you.
Rank the most important as 1 and the least as 6.

Reason	Rank
Feeling Overwhelmed – A feeling that there is too much that needs to be done;I feel frozen.	
Task Unpleasant – The task is boring or tiring or it will make me uncomfortable in some way.	
Fear of Failing – If I get started, and then can't do it, I will feel like I failed and I hate failing.	
Looking foolish - If I can't do it I fear being rejected or made to look like a fool.	
Lacking Motivation – I can't see the point of doing the task. The cost in terms of time and energy seem to be more than the benefits.	
Lacking Focus – I am unable to stay on task because something has come up for me and I can't concentrate.	









My Project Strategies

What works for me?

Not all strategies work for everyone.

Strategy	Date Tried	How did it go?	Which subjects?
First Work, Then... (Have a reward for after it's done)		😊 😐 😔	
Eat the Frog (Do the hardest bit first)		😊 😐 😔	
Pomodoro (Work for 25 mins, rest for 5 mins)		😊 😐 😔	
Study Buddy (Work alongside friends - without distracting each other)		😊 😐 😔	
Fixed Schedule (Set number of hours a day and no more)		😊 😐 😔	
		😊 😐 😔	
		😊 😐 😔	
		😊 😐 😔	

Add your own here



My Study Space

Getting it right for you

Everyone needs a different environment for studying.

Aspect	For me?	Plan	Ready?
Declutter workspace			
Place for phone away from desk			
Comfy Chair and Desk			
Well lit (natural or lamps)			
Snacks & Drinks			
Noise Levels (Ear phones / music)			
Time keeping (Clock / timer)			
Personalised (favourite things)			



Top Tech Tools For Projects

Don't type. Talk.

Using **voice-to-text** software for projects can save time and effort. Just speak your thoughts, let the software transcribe them, and proofread for errors. It's a quick and natural way to get projects done efficiently.

A **visual timer** is an excellent tool for enhancing your productivity. By setting specific time limits for each task and watching the timer count down, you can better manage your time, stay focused and keep motivated.





A **voice recorder pen** is a convenient solution for keeping track of your projects. With just a click of a button, you can quickly record the details of tasks you want to complete, without written notes. Listen back to keep on task

The Forest app is a fantastic tool for staying focused and productive during project work sessions. By setting a timer, you commit to working for a specific period, during which a virtual tree grows. If you exit the app before the timer, your tree dies. Projects gamified.



SELF REGULATION STRATEGIES



focus on your breathing



relax your muscles



talk to your loved one





find a focus object

close your eyes



do light exercise





recognize your emotions



write down your thoughts

5 senses technique

focus on these when you feel anxious:

5 **things you can see**



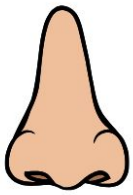
4 **things you can feel**



3 **things you can hear**



2 **things you can smell**



1 **thing you can taste**



Stressors

External stressors most likely to cause dysregulation

Unmet Needs

Internal unmet needs (circle):
Physiological: hungry, tired, hot etc.
Safety: physical or psychological
Connection: love & belonging
Self-esteem: competence, respect, autonomy

CRISIS

Behaviours that challenge dysregulation

Regulating but sensitive to stressors

Escalation of distress

Prewarning of CRISIS

Signs of distress increasing

Signs of distress increasing

Early warning signs of distress

Co-regulation strategies

Self regulation strategies

Signs of regulation

Regulated What does it look like to feel regulated? Activities and behaviours which signal regulation.

Growth Mindset

Let's make learning challenges an opportunity to grow. Say it with us:





Intentions

My Intentions For The Project

Having good intentions about keeping on top of your project is one thing, but how will you reach your goal?

How do you want to feel at the end of the project?

I want to feel.....

Four things you can do to help you get there:

1.

2.

3.

4.



Should I Change Track?

Cost Benefit Analysis

It might feel easier to start again, but what will I lose in the process?
Give each cost/benefit a value out of 5 (5 large impact 1 tiny impact)
In total are there more costs or benefits?

Cost	Value
Eg. Lost time researching current topic	5

Benefit	Value
Eg. Will get rid of feeling lost/full of doubt	2

Add your own here

Self Evaluation Form

Complete to help you reflect on what when well and areas for improvement.

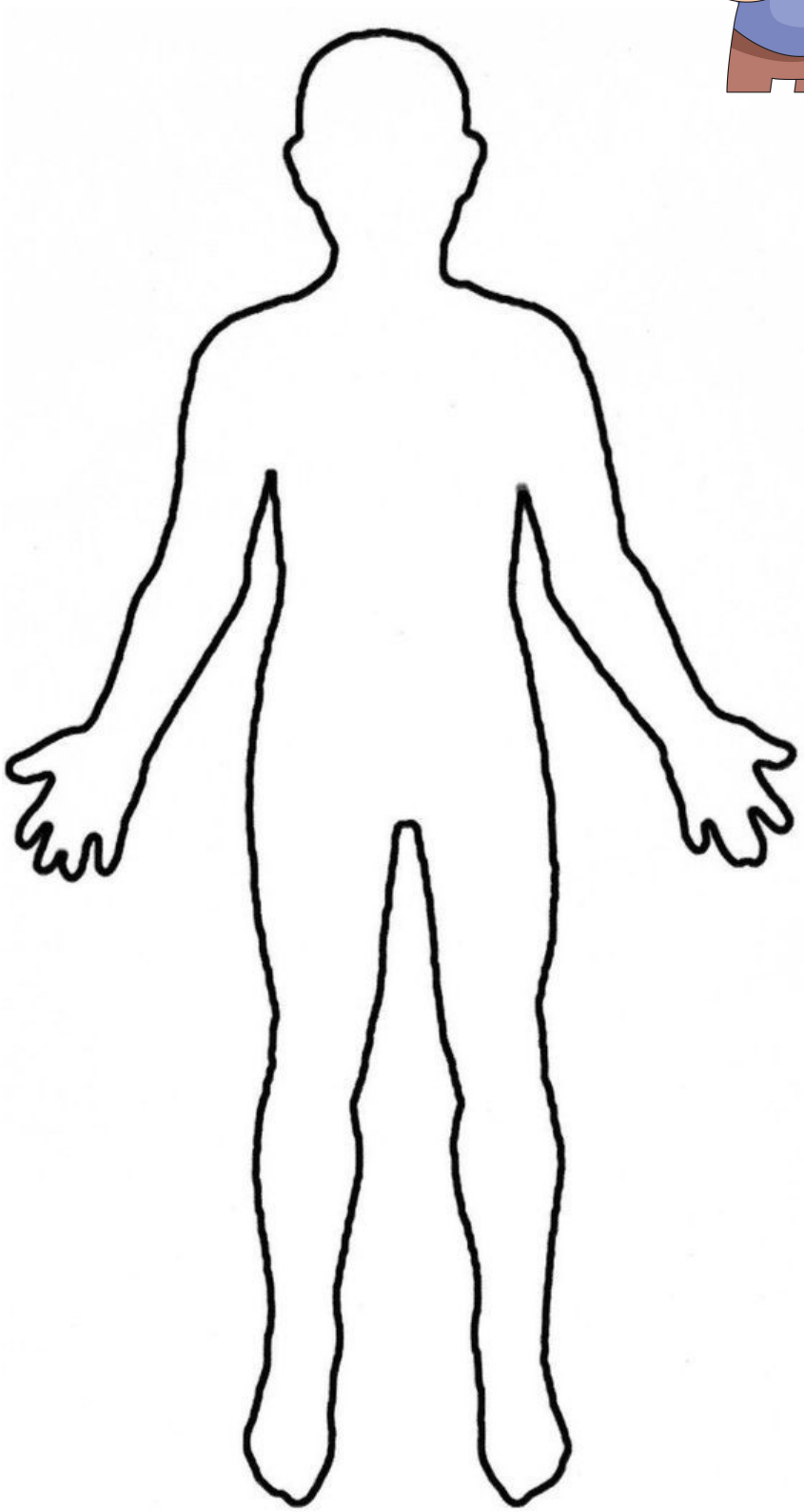
Task:			
I knew what I had to do.	 Yes	 A bit	 No
I completed the work I planned.	 Yes	 A bit	 No
I feel that I understood the topic.	 Yes	 A bit	 No
I used a strategy which worked for me.	 Yes	 A bit	 No
I feel happy with the work I did.	 Yes	 A bit	 No
.....	 Yes	 A bit	 No
Even Better If (EBI)...			

Body Mapping

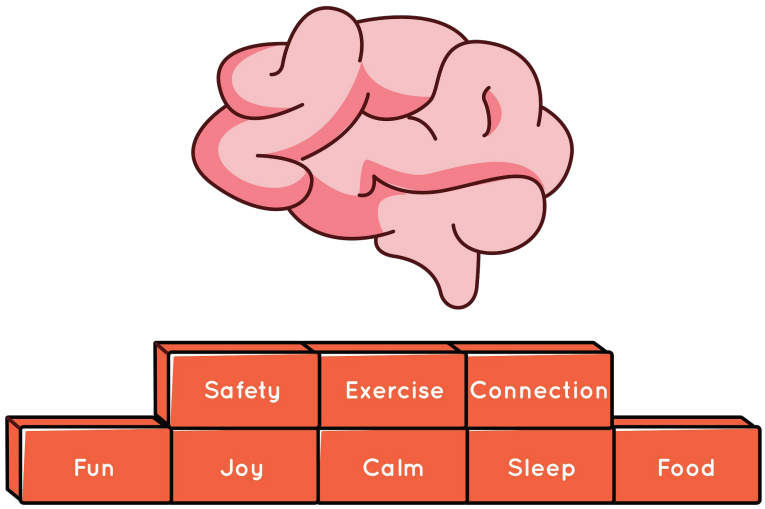


How do my emotions manifest in my body?

Instructions: Mark on the model where you feel your emotions. What is the sensation? How often I feel it? Use colours if it helps to visualise the feelings.



Building Blocks for Optimal Executive Functioning



How would you rate your building blocks right now?
(Circle below: 0=poor, 5=great)

	0	5
Safety		
Exercise		
Connection		
Fun		
Joy		
Calm		
Sleep		
Food		

Which of your blocks do you feel need attention?

Do you have an idea as to why these may be low?



Stationery

My Stationery Stock List

Make sure your are well-stocked to avoid frustration

Pens, Pencils Etc.

- □ Pencil case
- □ Blue/black rollerball pens
- □ Handwriting pen
- □ Highlighters
- □ HB pencils
- □ Pencil sharpener
- □ Rubber
- □ 30cm ruler (folding)
- □ Ink eraser/correction fluid

Art Supplies

- □ 2B/4B pencils
- □ Set of colouring pencils
- □ Glue stick
- □ Scissors

Language Supplies

- □ Dictionary & thesaurus

Maths Supplies

- □ Compass
- □ 360-degree protractor
- □ Scientific calculator

Computing Supplies

- □ Memory stick
- □ Earphones

General Stationery

- □ A4 ring binder/lever arch file
- □ A4 subject divider cards
- □ A4 punched pockets
- □ Hole punch
- □ Spiral bound jotter
- □ Clear sticky back plastic for covering exercise books
- □ _____
- □ _____



Time Estimation

How long will it take?

Improve your time estimation by assessing your accuracy

Subject	Topic	Time Estimate	Actual Time

Weekly Meal Planner



Plan out your meals to reduce wastage and stress.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lunch					
Snack					

Meal Planner



Evening Routine

My checklist

Prioritise good rest for strong executive functioning.

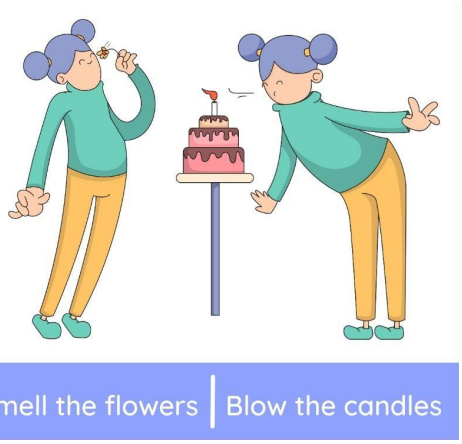
Time	To Do	Visual	Done?
	Snack		
	Reflect on Day		
	Project		
	Eat		
	Project		
	Chill Time		
	Wash		
	Bed		

Add your own here

Making Space Between Our Emotions and Our Actions

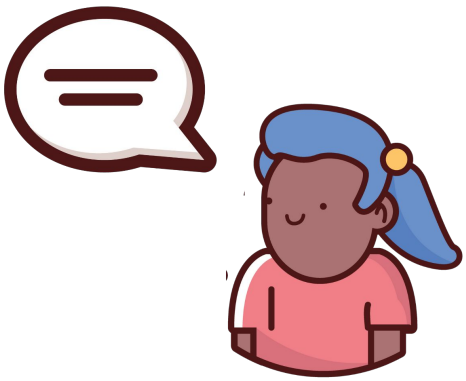
Often we take our emotions as directions to act in a certain way. It's hard, but we can make space between our emotions and our actions to give ourselves time to think about how to act.

1



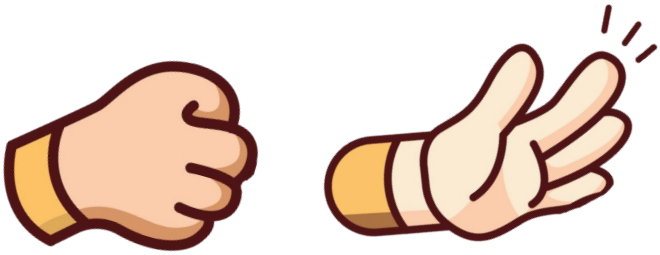
Take 10 breaths

2



Slow down your speaking

3



Tense and release



Date _____

REWARDING PROGRESS

TASK	REWARD

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

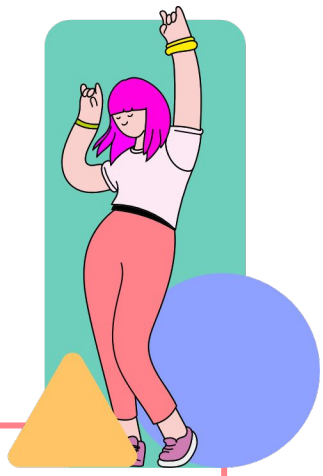


Self-Care Menu

Activity	Cost	Time Investment	Impact (1-5)
Eg. Make a cup of tea	*5p*	*5 mins*	*2*

My Plan

To improve my relationship with Project Work.

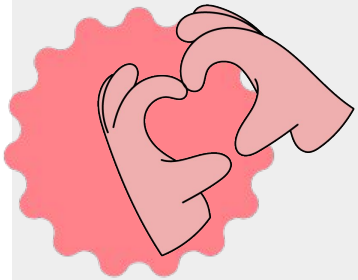


MY GOAL/WISH *at the end*	
OUTCOME - *visualise how this will change my world*	
OBSTACLES - *what will get in the way? Think about:* • *My EFs* • *Knowing my limits* • *Sensory overwhelm* • *Neglecting building blocks* • *Other*	
PLAN - *use the obstacles to make a realistic plan.* *How am I going to:* • *Work on EF strategies* • *Understand my limits* • *Settle for good enough* • *Find an accountability partner* • *Prioritise my building blocks* • *Other*	
VERBALISE - Who am I going to tell?	
SUPPORT & ENCOURAGEMENT - Who can help me stay on track?	
MONITOR MY PROGRESS -Decide a way to measure and track your progress	
SMALL TWEAKS - Minor adjustments using make it even better.	
REWARDS - Looking after myself - I am building my EFs, and I deserve it.	

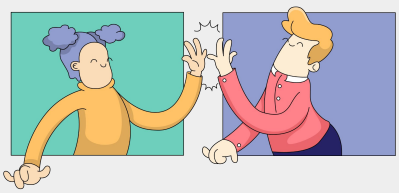


	Instructions	My WOOP
W	What is an important **wish** you want to achieve? It should be challenging but realistic.	My Wish:
O	What would be the best **outcome** from achieving this wish. How will you feel?	Best Outcome:
O	What is the main **obstacle**, inside of you, which might prevent you from achieving your wish?	My Obstacle:
P	What is an effective **plan** to overcome your obstacle. Make a when-then plan.	Plan - When: Then I will:

Looking for more support?



1 : 1 support



Executive function coaching

Find out more here:
https://connectionsinmind.com/coaching/

Support Worker

Find out more here:
https://connectionsinmind.com/support_worker/

Have you seen our Connected Club?

https://cimlearning.com/connected-club-intro-landing-page/

Intro to Executive Functions course
https://www.cimlearning.com/courses/intro-efs/

Free Neuroplasticity Video
https://youtu.be/ObD7sUrC5s4?si=bEsQLjU2fgp1j7DL

Creating Neuroinclusive Schools Webinar
https://youtu.be/n-pf8IaEc7M?si=6HGTZE33kt22Kfdl

Recommended Reading
https://cimlearning.com/reading-and-resources/

Schools Training & Support
https://connectionsinmind.com/schoolseducators/

Executive Function Coach Training
https://cimlearning.com/coach-training-for-schools/

Support for Workplaces
https://connectionsinmind.com/workplaces/

Parent Facebook Group
https://www.facebook.com/groups/executivefunctionssupportgroupparents

Adult Facebook Group
https://www.facebook.com/groups/204786124308836

Linked In
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