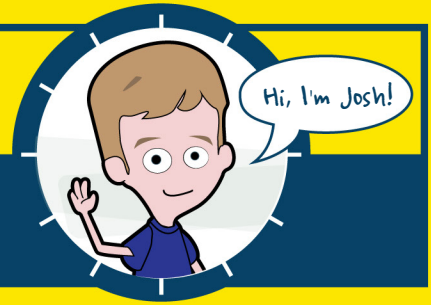


EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AROUND THE CLOCK



Meet Josh, a sixth grader who struggles with executive function.
This is a day in his life.



7 A.M.

Argh! Josh knows that he has forgotten something. Ah, that's it—his cleats for today's game. He sprints back inside the house to get them ... and leaves his backpack in the kitchen. He walks right past the checklist his mom made to help him remember what he needs for school. But it's too late: The bus is here and about to pull away! He's going to miss it again.

EF Area: ORGANIZATION

11 A.M.

Josh's English teacher stands at the blackboard and asks: "Tell me how last night's reading relates to the words on the board." Every hand in the class goes up...except for Josh's. His heart sinks thinking about all the steps answering this question takes.



I don't know...
I wasn't thinking about those words when I read last night.
I'm so overwhelmed.



EF Area: WORKING MEMORY

Last night I was playing my video games and it was AMAZING!!! There were like eighty-five CRAZY MONSTERS and I GOT ALL OF THEM, POW-POW-POW-POW-POW-POW!!

Sooooo weird.

He never lets anyone else talk!



1 P.M.

It's the best part of the school day...lunch! At a table with his friends, Josh shouts at a mile a minute and jumps in and out of his seat. He doesn't even notice that the lunch monitor is glaring at him and that his friends look annoyed.

EF Area: SELF-MONITORING, IMPULSE CONTROL

3 P.M.

Time for soccer! A teammate kicks the ball toward Josh. He knows that in soccer, you do one thing—you kick that ball as hard as you can! But where? He can't exactly remember, so he just kicks. *Wham! Uh-oh.* He's sent the ball right into his own team's net. Anger brews on his teammates' faces as Josh's heart sinks yet again.



EF Area: FLEXIBILITY, WORKING MEMORY

Moooo-ooooom.

Josh didn't put the cups on the table AGAIN!

6 P.M.

It is time for dinner — but first, Josh has to set the table. *Hmm.* Josh scratches his head and tries to remember exactly what goes at each place setting. He thinks he has got it right this time, but his little sister reminds him that he doesn't. *How dare she!* He blows up screaming at her.

EF Area: ORGANIZATION, EMOTIONAL CONTROL

8 P.M.

After hours of cajoling from his mom, Josh finally sits down to do his homework. But, ugh, where to begin? He knows he has several projects and papers that need attention, but what's due when? What needs done for tomorrow? Overwhelmed, he puts his head down.



I don't even know where to **start**.



EF Area: TASK INITIATION



12 A.M.

Delays and procrastination mean that Josh is burning the midnight oil. He is exhausted, but his history paper is due tomorrow. But he just can't figure out a structure for his paper and the steps he needs to take to get it done.

EF Area: PLANNING & SETTING PRIORITIES

3 A.M.

Finally, the paper is done and Josh can catch a few hours of Z's. But he can't seem to drift off to sleep—he's worried that he didn't do the paper right. And then there's the problem he'll discover tomorrow morning: His disorganization has gotten the best of him, and he forgot to put the finished paper in his backpack.



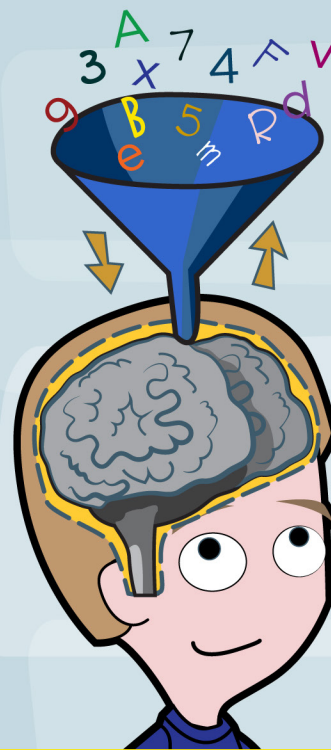
EF Area: SELF MONITORING, ORGANIZATION

Illustrations by Fil Vocasek

ABOUT EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Executive function is a set of mental processes that help us connect past experience with present action. These are skills and processes each of us use every day. Children and adults with learning and attention issues often struggle profoundly with many of these skills.

The model of a “clogged funnel” (Meltzer, 2004, 2007, 2010) helps us understand the challenges faced by Josh and students like him. They struggle with open-ended tasks because they’re unable to prioritize and organize the various steps. They have difficulty shifting between aspects of a task and often over-focus on details. They lose track of main ideas. They have difficulty checking their work and often forget to hand in completed work.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION PROCESSES

- Organizing
- Prioritizing
- Shifting / Thinking Flexibly
- Accessing Working Memory
- Self-Monitoring / Self-Checking

This infographic was adapted from a “Clogged Funnel” infographic created by ResearchILD.



National Center for Learning Disabilities

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