BRIC SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

seeing the world through the eyes of AUTISM

Autism Spectrum Disorders Information for Families

Autism Spectrum Disorders
Executive Functioning Skills
...Continued…

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.

Working Memory Tendencies:
- Abandon activities before completing them
- Appear to be daydreaming often
- Fail to complete assignments
- Raise hand to answer questions but forget what they wanted to say
- Mix up material inappropriately – combine two sentences
- Forget how to continue an activity they started, even though the teacher has explained the steps

Working Memory Scenario: *Johnathan is in math class attempting to solve a mathematics word problem in which he needs to* *remember the numbers he has heard, think about what the word problem has asked him to solve, and then apply the mathematical operations to the information he has stored in memory.*

Working Memory Strategies:
- Teach the student to create a picture in their mind of what they just read or heard
- Have the student teach you
- Make the task multisensory
- Chunk the information into smaller bites

First → Then → Next
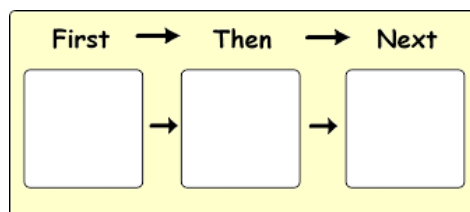
Sustained Attention – The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.

Sustained Attention Tendencies:
- Fail to complete work on time
- Stop before his/her work is completed
- Frequently switch between activities (including play)
- Have difficulty listening to stories read aloud
- Get distracted by things happening around him/her when doing seatwork

Sustained Attention Scenario: Timothy is taking a test in math class, his most difficult subject. He is tired due to having to babysit his younger siblings the night before. Timothy knows that he needs to get a good grade to pass his math class. Timothy uses self-talk and asks his teacher for a break to get a drink to assist him with maintaining his attention on the test.

Sustained Attention Strategies:
- Ask the student how a teacher knows when students are paying attention
- Practice paying attention by monitoring with timer or random intervals
- Break tasks into subtasks and give the student short breaks after each subtask

Task Initiation – The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion.

Task Initiation Tendencies:
- Need reminder to get started on classwork, homework, or chores
- Be slow to start a second task after the first is completed
- Wait for someone else to begin in group activities
- Need cues to begin over-learned routines
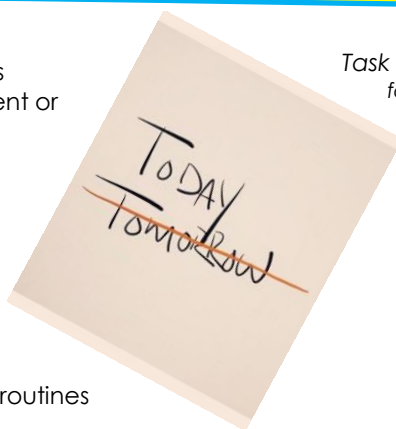
*Task Initiation Scenario: Think back to your child's last science fair project!*

Task Initiation Strategies:
- Teach the student to use self-talk – "the teacher told us what to do and now it's time to start"
- Have the student make a written plan for doing the task
- Be diligent about consistency during the habit-forming first few weeks
- Fade the cueing system gradually

Planning/Prioritization – 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 is important to focus on and what is not important.

Planning/Prioritization Tendencies:
- Assistance needed to organize assignments and activities in order of priority
- Difficulty with time management – whether immediate (within a given day) or extended (over a period of time)
- Often provide late or incomplete assignment(s)
- Struggle with vague or general questions/directions
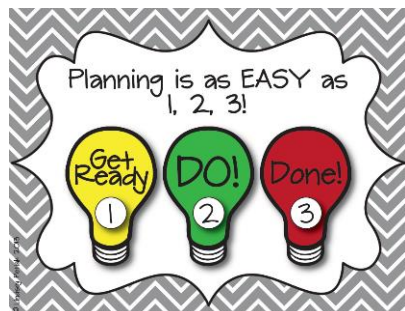
Planning/Prioritization Scenario: Savannah is an enthusiastic student and always tries to get her work done at school. But she gets so excited that she doesn't always pay attention to the order of events when completing her chapter reviews in science. As a reminder that she must read the content in each chapter thoroughly before attempting to answer each question, Savannah's teacher made a first-then note on a sticky note (first you read the chapter, then you answer the questions.) She puts the note on Savannah's desk just prior to the transition to science and Savannah now clearly understands that the expectation is that she reads the chapter before she can start answering the questions.

Planning/Prioritization Strategies:
- Teach kids to review homework and gather materials before starting work so that everything is collected before they start working
- Store the most commonly used items within easy reach in accessible locations
- Help kids prioritize homework tasks based on due dates, difficulty level or the level of stress they have about the tasks
- Encourage them to list the steps needed to complete long-term projects
- Help them sequence tasks logically. For instance, before looking up vocabulary words in the dictionary, they could alphabetize the list first

Resources:
Books:

"Executive Function "Dysfunction" Strategies for educators and Parents" By: Rebecca Moyes

"Executive Functioning in the Classroom"
By: Christopher Kaufman

"Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents"
By: Peg Dawson

"Flipp the Switch - Strengthen Executive Function Skills" By: Sheri Wilkins

"Smart But Scattered" By: Peg Dawson

"Solving Executive Function Challenges"
By: Lauren Kenworthy

"The Eclipse Model" By: Sherry Moyer

"The Executive Functioning Workbook for Teens" By: Sharon Hansen

"Unstuck and on Target" By: Lynn Cannon

Websites:

https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/executive-functioning-issues-strategies-you-can-try-at-home

https://jillkuzma.wordpress.com/teaching-ideas-for-executive-function-skills/

https://www.understood.org/~/media/040bfb1894284d019bf78ac01a5f1513.pdf

Reminders:

1. We would like to send out the newsletters via e- mail, please email Jill Yost at jyost@bric.k12.mn.us to be added or taken off the e-mail list.

   E-mail addresses will be confidential when newsletters are sent.

2. All the newsletters will be available on the BRIC web-site, http://www.bric-k12.com/ look under the "Resources and Services" dropdown then click on "parent resources".