

Recipes for Success: ADHD and Executive Function

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Grade Level: Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle School, High School, Special Ed, Administration, Adult

Description:

ADHD and Executive Function are the topics in this chapter of the “Recipes for Success” series. These articles provide guidance regarding common distractions for children with ADHD or Executive Function Disorder, and offer general encouragement for those who think “I can’t”. Valuable suggestions are offered to improve internal and external organization. The Recipes for Success series is an informative resource for parents and educators in helping children succeed. The articles offer small tips that pack a powerful punch in various frustrating situations. This series covers a number of social-emotional and learning-related topics, including bullying, ADHD and executive function disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, friendship, dyslexia and learning disabilities, life skills and self-esteem, and sensory processing disorder. Each category offers helpful, tried and true advice for helping children overcome their unique challenges. The information is given over in a clear, easy to read format, and employs acronyms to aid in retention. Focus on one tip each day or select a particular chapter based on your child’s/student’s current needs. To view all of the materials in the Recipes for Success series, search for Recipes for Success.

What to download

- Download the print-ready PDF file (includes lesson plan/instructions).

Goals/Objectives:

Teachers and parents will read the tips about bullying and educate themselves about this topic. Teachers and parents will help children apply these tips to enable them to succeed.

Instructions:

1. Read through the article.
2. If you have concerns about a particular child, discuss them with another competent individual.
3. Implement the techniques mentioned in the article.
4. When appropriate, distribute the article to parents or other teachers who may benefit from it.

Additional Tips:

- Principals may choose to present one tip a day to their teachers and cover all of the topics over the course of the year.

- These tips may be a useful addition to a school newsletter.
- Printing Tip: These pages are sized as 8"x12"; set your printer to "fit to printable area" so that it will print properly on 8 ½ " x11" paper.



ADHD & EXECUTIVE FUNCTION



There are many things that we don't realize can distract children with **ADHD** or **Executive Function Disorder**. I have compiled a chart to provide parents with an alternative that is more conducive to learning.

COMMON DISTRACTION	ALTERNATIVE
RANDOM ITEM TO PICK UP AND TOUCH	An "approved item" such as a stress ball. Chewing gum or drinking water can also help.
RINGING PHONE	Disconnect the phone in the room where homework is done.
ITCHY CLOTHES	Buy soft cottony clothing and remove the tags.
LOTS OF PEOPLE WALKING IN AND OUT	Avoid high traffic areas for homework and other thinking activities.
DAYDREAMING	Provide a timer to ensure that he or she is on task.



*A*DHD and Reading: **BOOK** it!

B: BOOST FIDGETING: Though this sounds counter-intuitive, children with ADHD benefit from distractions. So, give them a pencil to tap or a kush ball to squeeze while they are reading.

O: OPEN OTHER AREAS OF THEIR BRAIN: While the child is reading, encourage him to paint a picture in his mind. This will stimulate the optical region of his brain.

O: OPT FOR BOOKS ON TAPE: Reading a book while a tape plays is a great way to give a child with ADHD a multi-sensory experience. You can use books on tape if available or you can read to him yourself, while he reads along.

K: KEEP READING SESSIONS SHORT, but have many: In a classroom setting, this method would be very frustrating to those students who are focused on the text. However, when reading in small groups or individually, it is great to have a child break and tell you a story that is related to the reading.



A “can’t do” attitude or a focus on the negative only helps reinforce those destructive ideas in the mind of the sufferer. So, what are some ways that you can cure a “can’t do” attitude? Instead, think, “Yes, I **CAN**.”

C: CONCENTRATE ON THE POSITIVE. So much of what we hear on the news and in the world around us is negative. The key to success is focusing on the positive in our daily interactions with others. For those dealing with disabilities, focus on the things you can do, for instance, people with ADHD are generally very creative and out of the box thinkers. Instead of focusing on the difficulties paying attention, those with ADHD should channel their energy into their creativity. Even something as small as an intentional smile can set you on the right path. Research in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* found that smiling can actually make you less anxious and self-doubting. When you use the muscles in your face to smile, those muscles trigger hormones in your brain that make you more relaxed and happy.

A: AIM FOR “CAN DO” GOALS. Regardless of the disability or struggle, you should identify where you want to be. This way, you can create a step-by-step plan of how to get there. Breaking apart a long-term goal into multiple shorter steps can help the task seem more manageable. For instance, if you would like to declutter your home, that might trigger the response, “I just can’t do it. There is too much. I don’t know where to start.” Instead, break the goal into smaller pieces: “First, I am going to declutter my living room. I am going to start with the bookshelves and then move to the newspapers and magazines next to the couch.” Once you accomplish that small step, you can move to the next room.

N: NEVER FORCE YOURSELF TO GO IT ALONE. If the people around you don’t believe in you, there is no way that you will learn to believe in yourself. Therefore, separate yourself from your “friends” who put you down or underestimate your abilities. Instead, cultivate friendships with people who support you and your strengths. If your friends and family believe that you can do it, eventually you will start believing it too!



Your child will not necessarily reach his ultimate goal, however striving and succeeding incrementally can be immensely rewarding. Here are some suggestions that might help push your child to continue working toward his goal, together you can come up with a **PLAN**:

P: PAY ATTENTION. Recognize when your child is working towards his goal and praise him for it.

L: LINK SCHOOLWORK AND PERSONAL GOAL. Your child will still be heavily involved in schoolwork, therefore connecting his personal goal with his subject matter will enhance both his performance in school and his perseverance.

A: APPLAUD EFFORT. Don't only pay attention to results, praise your child's attempts as well.

N: NOURISH SUCCESS. When your child succeeds, ask him, "How did you do that?" This will help your child understand that he is highly capable (and will also give him an opportunity to give himself a compliment)!



What are warning signs of **EFD**?

A student may have problems with **EXECUTIVE FUNCTION** when he or she has trouble:

PLANNING PROJECTS

COMPREHENDING HOW MUCH TIME
A PROJECT WILL TAKE TO COMPLETE

TELLING STORIES (VERBALLY OR IN WRITING),
STRUGGLING TO COMMUNICATE DETAILS IN
AN ORGANIZED, SEQUENTIAL MANNER

MEMORIZING AND RETRIEVING INFORMATION
FROM MEMORY

INITIATING ACTIVITIES OR TASKS, OR GENERATING
IDEAS INDEPENDENTLY

RETAINING INFORMATION WHILE DOING SOMETHING
WITH IT, FOR EXAMPLE, REMEMBERING A PHONE
NUMBER WHILE DIALING



*A*s Executive Function Disorder centers on a lack of internal organization and planning, it is extremely important to create external organization. Some forms of organization that may help you play by the **RULES** are:

R: RECORDING (IN WRITING) DIRECTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS. Since working memory is often weaker in people with Executive Function Disorder, writing things down will significantly reduce mistakes and forgetfulness.

U: USE CHECKLISTS. These checklists allow you to keep track of the different components of each task, ultimately leading to a goal.

L: LEAVE A CLOCK IN EVERY ROOM. Having a constant reminder of time will keep you on course. In addition, wear a watch with digital numbers so that the passage of time is immediately apparent.

E: ENJOY A CLUTTER-FREE HOUSE AND OFFICE. Clutter creates visual and physical distraction. Because initially this step might be hard, ask for assistance from someone who is skilled at organizing. Then, do daily checks to make sure the clutter is not piling up.



*H*ow can children manage **EFD**?

If you feel that your child always misunderstands directions, loses track of time, and misplaces his belongings, consider taking him to be evaluated for Executive Function Disorder. With just a bit of organization, your life and his life can get a whole lot easier.

BREAK LONG ASSIGNMENTS into chunks and assign time frames for completing each chunk.

USE VISUAL CALENDARS to keep track of long term assignments, due dates, chores, and activities.

BE SURE TO WRITE THE DUE DATE on top of each project.

PLAN BREAKS IN THE MIDDLE of longer homework assignments.

SIT WITH A PARENT at the beginning of each week to organize assignments into manageable portions of time.

CLEAN OUT BACKPACK at the end of each week.



Children with ADHD and EFD need a lot of sleep, but often have trouble getting it. Here are some ways you can help your child **SLEEP**:

S: SPEND TEN MINUTES CUDDLING with your child. This will build a sense of love and security as well as provide a time to calm down.

L: LOWER DOWN THE ACTIVITY LEVEL for an hour or so before bedtime. Find quieter activities such as coloring, reading or playing quietly.

E: ELIMINATE CAFFEINE from your child's diet.

E: ENGAGE YOUR CHILD'S SENSES through aromas in your child's room. Use lavender or other calming scents. These scent may help to calm your child.

P: PLAY RELAXATION TAPES as background noise for your child when falling asleep. There are many varieties available including nature sounds and calming music. Children with ADHD often find "white noise" soothing.



Children with ADHD and EFD benefit from nutritional changes as well as academic and social accommodations. Prevent unhealthy eating habits by scheduling regular nutritious meals or snacks for your child no more than three hours apart. Physically, a child with ADHD needs a regular intake of healthy food; mentally, meal times are a necessary break and a scheduled rhythm to the day. Below are some other ways to stay mentally **FIT** and healthy:

F: FORGET ABOUT JUNK FOOD.

I: INSIST THAT FATTY AND SUGARY FOODS are off-limits when eating out.

T: TAKE A DAILY VITAMIN-and-mineral supplement.

