

Smart but Scattered Adults: How to Work with Clients to Strengthen Executive Skills

Peg Dawson, Ed.D.
Seacoast Mental Health Center
Portsmouth, NH
dawson.peg@gmail.com
Smartbutscatteredkids.com

TAKE THE EXECUTIVE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

What are your weakest
executive skills?

What are your strongest
executive skills?

Response inhibition



The capacity to think before you act – this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows us the time to evaluate a situation and how our behavior might impact it.

Strategies: Response Inhibition

- Remove/sequester temptations
- Create a cueing system as a reminder to use self-control
- Build in “wait time”
- Allow a small reward in exchange for giving up a big one
- Announce your goal to a friend

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.

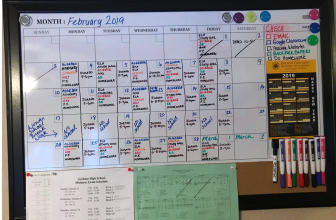
Strategies: Working Memory

- Create a checklist
- Put visual cues in your environment
- Have a duplicate set (home/work)
- Apps/technology (e.g., Wunderlist, Instapaper, Tile, phone reminders)
- Mentally rehearse what you need to remember

Use cues, prompts, reminders to support weak working memory



Use visual cues to support weak working memory



Emotional Control



The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.

Strategies: Emotional Control

- Practice mindfulness meditation
- Use self-talk
- Avoid situations that trigger poor emotional control
- Use a relaxation strategy in the moment
- Rehearse in advance how you will handle an emotionally charged situation

Flexibility



The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions.

Strategies: Flexibility

- Preplan to minimize surprises
- Build in redundancy (Plan B)
- Avoid situations that require flexibility
- Learn to recognize the physiological cues and put in place a default strategy
- Create an *If...then* plan.

Sustained Attention



The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.

Strategies: Sustained Attention

- Set a “Personal Best” goal (PB)
- Limit access to distractions (e.g., shut down access to time-wasting websites)
- Screen out unpredictable distractions (e.g., by listening to quiet music on an iPod)
- Pair the aversive task with something pleasant

Attention Self-Monitoring

App Store Preview



Original Beeper App
Norman
USD 1.99
[View in Mac App Store](#)

Screenshots



Task Initiation



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

waitbutwhy.com/2013/10/why-procrastinators-procrastinate.html

WAIT BUT WHY
new post every tuesday^(ish)

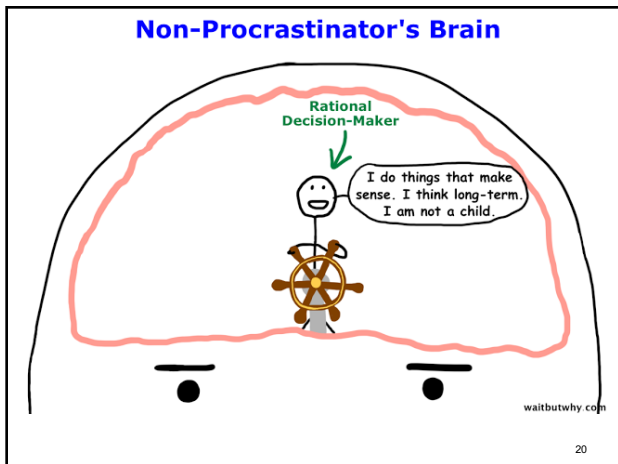
archive the shed about faq contact store support wbw

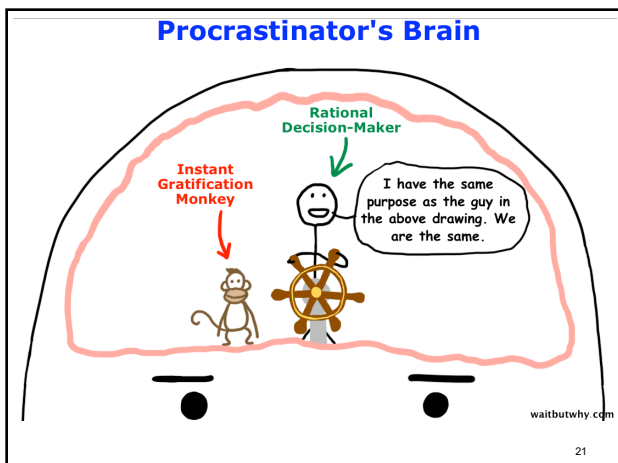
Why Procrastinators Procrastinate

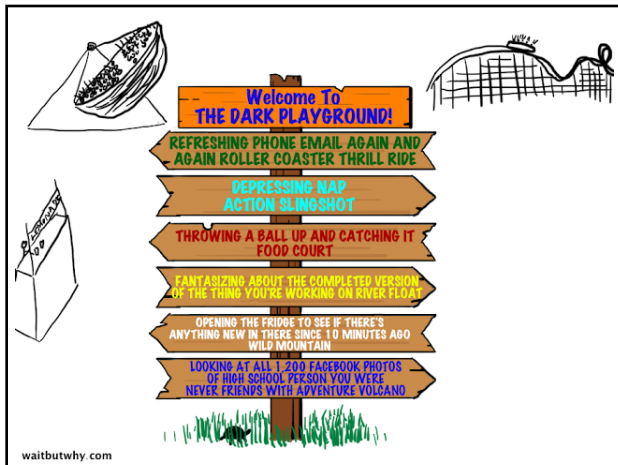
By Tim Urban

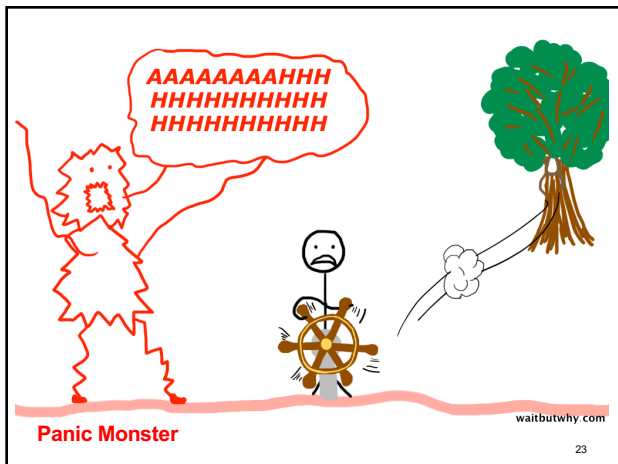
<http://waitbutwhy.com/2013/10/why-procrastinators-procrastinate.html>
https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_urban_inside_the_mind_of_a_master_procrastinator

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Strategies: Task Initiation

- Hold off a pleasurable activity until the task is done (or started)
- Suspend access to distractions
- Keep the degree of required effort low (e.g., by limiting the time spent on the aversive task).
- Technology (snooze alarm on phone)
- Identify obstacles and strategies to overcome them

What's Getting in the Way of Getting It Done?

Task _____ Date _____


DIRECTIONS: Check off all that apply and see if you can come up with a strategy to overcome each obstacle.

| Obstacle | Strategy |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't understand the assignment. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can't think of how to start the assignment. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I could probably do the assignment but it will take a lot of work and just the thought of that hurts my brain. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The task is way too boring for me even to contemplate doing it. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This assignment is pointless. I would get nothing out of doing it. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The conditions for working aren't perfect—when they are, I'll get started. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have way too many things to do and don't know how to prioritize my time. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's going to take way too long and I don't want to commit that amount of time. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There are other things I'd rather be doing that are more fun or more important to me. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wait, what assignment? When I leave school at the end of the day I just school behind me (i.e., the cues that remind me to do schoolwork are missing). | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The assignment isn't going to affect my grade so why bother? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionism—I'm not going to start because I know I won't be able to do work that meets my (impossibly) high standard. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm stressed out about other things (either internal or external) and can't focus because of these preoccupations. I'll do better if I wait until my life calms down. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm too tired. I don't have the energy to do this now. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't want to do this because if I accomplish this, I'm scared of what comes next. | |
| OTHER: | |


What's Getting in the Way of Getting It Done?

Task _____ Date _____

DIRECTIONS: Check off all that apply and see if you can come up with a strategy to overcome each obstacle.

| Obstacle | Strategy |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't understand the assignment. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can't think of how to start the assignment. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I could probably do the assignment but it will take a lot of work and just the thought of that hurts my brain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self talk • Break into steps • Provide time estimates/actual time sheet • Homework plan and reward for any completion • Use timer—work for 30 minutes and then switch to preferred task |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The task is way too boring for me even to contemplate doing it. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This assignment is pointless. I would get nothing out of doing it. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The conditions for working aren't perfect—when they are, I'll get started. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at what about the situation isn't "perfect" and relabel them as "obstacles," then brainstorm strategies to overcome obstacles • Ask student to identify when in the day he has the most focus or the most energy—ask him to allocate the hardest work to those time slots. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have way too many things to do and don't know how to prioritize my time. |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's going to take way too long and I don't want to commit that amount of time. | |

Planning/Prioritizing



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.

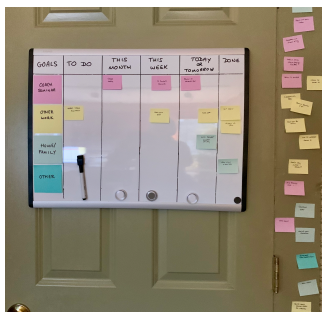
Strategies: Planning/Prioritizing

- Use a planning template
- Use post-it notes to identify steps, so they can be easily re-arranged
- Ask for help from someone who's good at planning
- Practice the skill by starting with something fun to plan

White Board Planner with Post-its

| GOALS | TODO | THIS MONTH | THIS WEEK | TODAY | DONE |
|-------|------|------------|-----------|-------|------|
| #1 | | | | | |
| #2 | | | | | |
| #3 | | | | | |
| #4 | | | | | |
| #5 | | | | | |

White Board Planner with Post-its



Organization



The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.

The organizational system that works for one person may not work for someone else



Strategies: Organization

- Do something fun while you're getting organized
- Start VERY SMALL (both in terms of time and space)
- Work off a checklist
- Trade off with someone who's good at organization

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.

Strategies: Time Management

- Make a deal with someone that includes a reward for being on time
- Practice time estimation
- Set your watch ahead to “trick yourself”
- Ask for help (someone to cue you)
- Use smart phone alarms

Use Toggl

What are you working on?

THIS WEEK: 9 SEC -

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Sun, 15 Nov | 0:15:41 | |
| Couch HW 10 students | 10:25 AM - 10:40 AM | 0:15:41 |
| Sat, 14 Nov | 0:32:08 | |
| Couch HW 10 students | 2:48 PM - 2:58 PM | 0:10:11 |
| Couch homework 10 students | 10:17 AM - 10:39 AM | 0:21:57 |
| Fri, 13 Nov | 0:34:40 | |
| Couch homework | 9:47 AM - 10:21 AM | 0:34:40 |
| Wed, 11 Nov | 0:39:17 | |
| Couch homework | 2:18 PM - 2:58 PM | 0:39:17 |

Goal-Directed Persistence



The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of the goal and not be put off or distracted by competing interests.

Strategies: Goal-Directed Persistence

- Use mental contrasting, implementation intention and process visualization
- Identify potential roadblocks and systematically eliminate them
- Build automaticity (do the same thing at the same time every day)
- Post visual reminders of the goal

Strategies: Stress Tolerance

- Create a personalized stress inoculation plan
- Steer clear of stressful situations
- Mentally prepare yourself for anticipated stressful situations
- Build in recovery time

Metacognition



The ability to stand back and take a birds-eye view of oneself in a situation. It is an ability to observe how you problem-solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (e.g., asking yourself, "How am I doing? or How did I do?").

Strategies: Metacognition

- Create a system for analyzing mistakes
- Learn to ask for feedback from others
- Use a problem-solving template

Stress Tolerance

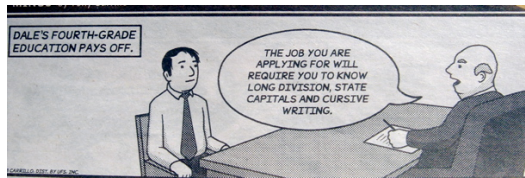


The ability to thrive in stressful situations and to cope with uncertainty, change, and performance demands.

Strategies: Stress Tolerance

- Create a personalized stress inoculation plan
- Steer clear of stressful situations
- Mentally prepare yourself for anticipated stressful situations
- Build in recovery time

Executive skills are critical not just to school success...



How do we describe people with ADHD?

Instead of calling them this:

- Lazy
- Unmotivated
- Not working to potential
- Disruptive
- Oppositional
- Messy
- Tardy
- Forgetful
- Absent-minded
- Lacking a work ethic

Describe them as having challenges in this:

- Task initiation
- Sustained attention
- Response inhibition
- Emotional control
- Flexibility
- Organization
- Time management
- Working memory
- Goal-directed persistence

Biological underpinnings of ADHD

A study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) has found differences in dopamine processing in the reward pathways in the brains of subjects with ADHD compared to non-ADHD controls. The study focused on the nucleus accumbens (a brain structure involved with reinforcement and reward) and suggests that people with ADHD may release dopamine at a lower rate compared to normal controls or might have a net dopamine deficit.

Biological underpinnings

Because dopamine enhances the level of interest a person attaches to a stimulus, people who release dopamine at a lower rate might find it more difficult to work up the enthusiasm to act on stimuli they don't find naturally appealing.

Implication: individuals with ADHD find it much more difficult to apply themselves to tasks that are not intrinsically interesting to them.

ScienceDaily®

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Brain scans show children with ADHD have faulty off-switch for mind-wandering

Date: January 10, 2011

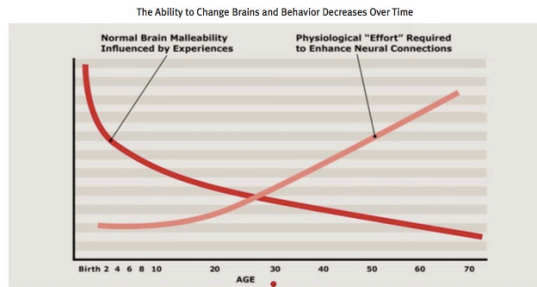
Source: Wellcome Trust

Brain scans of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have shown for the first time why people affected by the condition sometimes have such difficulty in concentrating. The study, funded by the Wellcome Trust, may explain why parents often say that their child can maintain concentration when they are doing something that interests them, but struggles with boring tasks.

Using a 'Whac-a-Mole' style game, researchers from the Motivation, Inhibition and Development in ADHD Study (MIDAS) group at the University of Nottingham found evidence that children with ADHD require either much greater incentives -- or their usual stimulant medication -- to focus on a task. When the incentive was low, the children with ADHD failed to 'switch off' brain regions involved in mind-wandering. When the incentive was high, however, or they were taking their medication, their brain activity was indistinguishable from a typically-developing non-ADHD child.

ADHD is the most common mental health disorder in childhood, affecting around one in 50 children in the UK. Children with ADHD are excessively restless, impulsive and distractible, and experience difficulties at home and in school. Although no cure exists for the condition, symptoms can be reduced by medication and/or behavioural therapy. The drug methylphenidate (more often known by the brand name Ritalin) is commonly used to treat the condition.

Previous studies have shown that children with ADHD have difficulty in 'switching-off' the default mode network (DMN) in their brains. This network is usually active when we are doing nothing, giving rise to spontaneous thoughts or 'daydreams', but is suppressed when we are focused on the task before us. In children with ADHD, however, it is thought that the DMN may be insufficiently suppressed on 'boring' tasks that require focused attention.

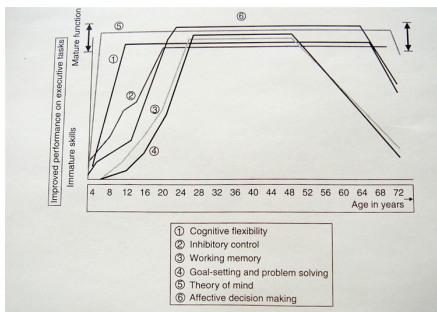


7 As the maturing brain becomes more specialized to assume more complex functions, it is less capable of reorganizing and adapting. For example, by the first year, the parts of the brain that differentiate vocal sounds are becoming specialized to the language the baby has been exposed to and are already starting to lose the ability to recognize important sound distinctions found in other languages. As the brain prunes away the circuits that are not used, those that are used become stronger and increasingly difficult to alter over time. Declining plasticity means it's easier and more effective to influence a baby's developing brain architecture than it is to rewire parts of its circuitry in the adult years. In other words, we can "pay now" by ensuring positive conditions for healthy development, or "pay more later" in the form of costly remediation, health care, mental health services, and increased rates of incarceration. (Graph Source: A. Levitt (2004))

www.developingchild.harvard.edu Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY 49

Frontal lobe development across the lifespan

[from Anderson, V.A., Jacobs, P., & Anderson, P. (Eds.). (2008). *Executive functions and the frontal lobes: A lifespan perspective*.



ScienceDaily®
Your source for the latest research news

Cognitive Decline Begins In Late 20s, Study Suggests

Date: March 20, 2009

Source: University of Virginia

A new study indicates that some aspects of peoples' cognitive skills — such as the ability to make rapid comparisons, remember unrelated information and detect relationships — peak at about the age of 22, and then begin a slow decline starting around age 27.

"This research suggests that some aspects of age-related cognitive decline begin in healthy, educated adults when they are in their 20s and 30s," said Timothy Salthouse, a University of Virginia professor of psychology and the study's lead investigator.

His findings appear in the current issue of the journal *Neurobiology of Aging*.

Salthouse and his team conducted the study during a seven-year period, working with 2,000 healthy participants between the ages of 18 and 60.

Participants were asked to solve various puzzles, remember words and details from stories, and identify patterns in an assortment of letters and symbols.

Many of the participants in Salthouse's study were tested several times during the course of years, allowing researchers to detect subtle declines in cognitive ability.

Top performances in some of the tests were accomplished at the age of 22. A notable decline in certain measures of abstract reasoning, brain speed and in puzzle-solving became apparent at 27.

Salthouse found that average memory declines can be detected by about age 37. However, accumulated knowledge skills, such as improvement of vocabulary and general knowledge, actually increase at least until the age of 60.

What's the Relationship Between ADHD and Executive Skills?

- ALL individuals with ADHD have executive function challenges, BUT
- Not all individuals with executive function challenges have ADHD

DSM-V Diagnosis: 3 Types of ADHD

- Predominantly Inattentive Presentation
- Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive Presentation
- Combined Presentation

DSM-5® DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR ADHD IN ADULTS¹

All criteria must be met for a diagnosis of ADHD in adults¹:

- ① Five or more symptoms of inattention and/or ≥5 symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity must have persisted for ≥6 months to a degree that is inconsistent with the developmental level and negatively impacts social and academic/occupational activities.
- ② Several symptoms (inattentive or hyperactive/impulsive) were present before the age of 12 years.
- ③ Several symptoms (inattentive or hyperactive/impulsive) must be present in ≥2 settings (eg, at home, school, or work; with friends or relatives; in other activities).
- ④ There is clear evidence that the symptoms interfere with or reduce the quality of social, academic, or occupational functioning.
- ⑤ Symptoms do not occur exclusively during the course of schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder, and are not better explained by another mental disorder (eg, mood disorder, anxiety disorder, dissociative disorder, personality disorder, substance intoxication, or withdrawal).

Diagnosis should be based on a complete history and evaluation of the patient.

| ADHD SYMPTOMS OF INATTENTION | ADHD SYMPTOMS OF HYPERACTIVITY/ IMPULSIVITY |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes careless mistakes/lacks attention to detail Difficulty sustaining attention Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly Fails to follow through on tasks and instructions Exhibits poor organization Avoids/dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort Loses things necessary for tasks/activities Easily distracted (including unrelated thoughts) Is forgetful in daily activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fidgets with or taps hands or feet, squirms in seat Leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected Experiences feelings of restlessness Has difficulty engaging in quiet, leisurely activities Is "on-the-go" or acts as if "driven by a motor" Talks excessively Blurts out answers Has difficulty waiting their turn Interrupts or intrudes on others |

Assessing ADHD/Executive Skills in Adults

ALWAYS

- Clinical interview
- Rating Scales

SOMETIMES

- Clinic tests of attention or executive functioning

Behavior Rating Scales

- Barkley Deficits in Executive Functioning (BDEFS)—Guilford Press (guilford.com)
- Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning-Adults (BRIEF-A)—PAR (parinc.com)
- Brown ADD/Executive Functions Scales (pearsonclinical.com)

Typical Profiles of ADHD Adults

Executive Skill Strengths

- Flexibility
- Metacognition
- (Stress tolerance)

Executive Skill Weaknesses

- Task initiation
- Sustained attention
- Time management
- (Response inhibition)

3 Key Strategies for Managing Executive Skill Weaknesses

- Intervene at the level of the environment
- Intervene at the level of the individual by—
 1. Teaching the weak skill (via coaching)
 2. Finding ways to motivate the individual to practice the weak skill to increase proficiency.

The Difference Between Working with Adults with ADHD and Working with Kids

We believe the same three strategies will work with both kids and adults—but the emphasis may be different.

Peg's Take on the "Perfect" Intervention for Executive Skills

The perfect intervention to support executive skill development is one

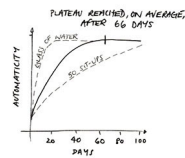
- that takes no more than 5-10 minutes a day
- and that you're willing to do *forever* (or as long as it takes).

Source:

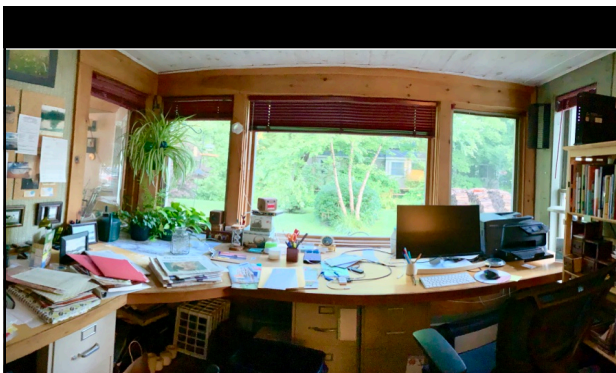
Lally, P., van Jaarsveld, H.M., Potts, H.W.W., Wardle, J. (2009) How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

In Lally's study, it took anywhere from 18 days to 254 days for people to form a new habit.

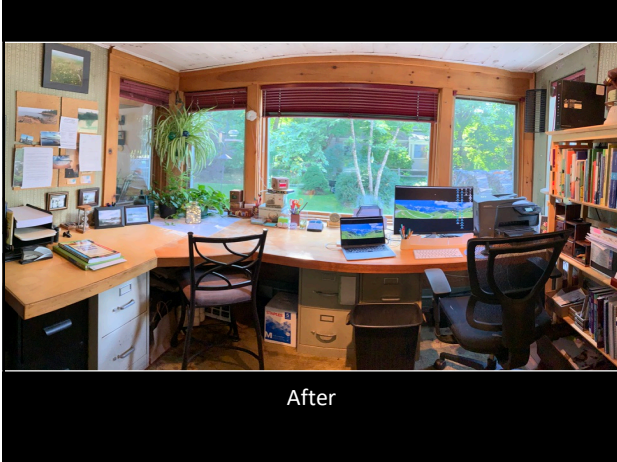
When the researchers examined the different habits, many of the participants showed a curved relationship between practice and automaticity of the form depicted below (solid line). On average a plateau in automaticity was reached after 66 days. In other words it had become as much of a habit as it was ever going to become.

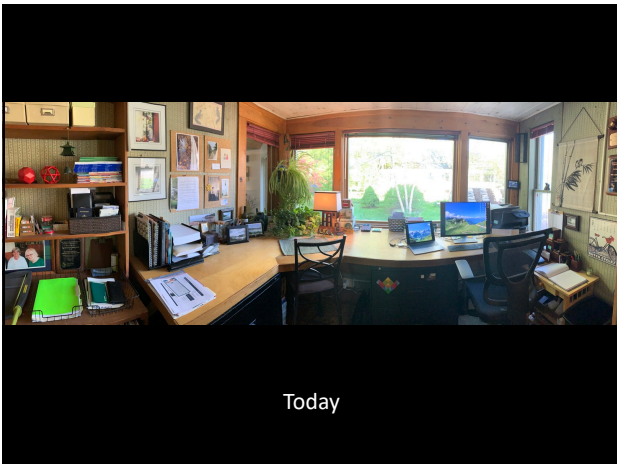


This graph shows that early practice was rewarded with greater increases in automaticity and gains tailed off as participants reached their maximum automaticity for that behaviour.



Before





Working with ADHD Adults

Building a Change Plan Using a
Coaching Model

Coaching

An intervention strategy in which a coach works with a person to set goals (long-term, short-term, or daily) designed to enhance executive skills, lead to improved self-regulation and result in goal attainment.

The Coach's Approach in the Client's Goal-Setting

Working with clients in a way that is *collaborative* rather than prescriptive, honors the person's autonomy and self-direction, and is more about evoking than installing. This involves at least a willingness to suspend an authoritarian role, and to explore client capacity rather than incapacity, with a genuine interest in the client's experience and perspective.
(Stephen Andrew re: MI, 2015)

The Coach's Communication Style in the Goal-Setting Process

- Open-ended questions: The kind of questions that open the door to more words from the client than from you, as opposed to yes-no questions used to collect information or data
- Affirmation: Affirmations comment favorably on a specific positive trait, attribute, or strength of the person that endures over time
- Reflection: Accurate empathic reflections involve listening not only to what the person *says*, but also for what the person *means*.
- Summarizing: A special form of empathic reflection where you collect statements from a part of or the whole of the conversation. (Stephen Andrew re: MI, 2015)

Key components of coaching for executive skills and behavior change

- Goal-setting and goodness-of-fit.
- Regular coaching sessions to make short-term, specific plans to achieve goals.
- Helping people develop and practice self assessment and management strategies to compensate for weaknesses associated with executive skills or use strategies to improve those skills.
- Correspondence training.
- Implementation intentions, mental contrasting, mental simulations to enhance self-management and overcome obstacles.

Why Goal-Setting?

Extensive empirical research has documented the value of goal-setting in promoting high levels of performance—in both adults and children.

Goals serve 4 primary purposes

- They *direct behavior* (toward task-relevant and away from task-irrelevant, immediate gratification behavior)
- They *energize*
- They encourage *persistence*
- They *motivate* people to discover and use task-relevant knowledge and skills

Impact of ADHD on Goal Achievement

- Reduced capacity for self-regulation of behavior
- Behavior is more determined by immediate environment and its demands – that is, behavior becomes “context dependent”
- Result is being “locked in the present” with reduced capacity for future, goal-oriented behavior and increased susceptibility to gratification of immediate needs and wants

How Executive Skill Weaknesses Affect Goal-Directed Actions (Barkley, 2012)

- Using executive skills, especially those that are weak, requires significant effort.
- This results in rapid energy depletion and susceptibility to context-dependent behavior.
- Fatigue and stress weaken executive skills.

The Role of Effort in Executive Skills Interventions

Factors that can replenish the resource pool

- Physical exercise
- Relaxing, meditating following a few minutes of ES exertion
- Visualizing the good outcomes/rewards as a result of successful execution
- Periodic, small rewards throughout the ES task.
- Self-efficacy statements prior to and during task
- Generating positive emotions

Goal Setting and Implementation: Solutions to These Prerequisite Considerations

- Minimize the focus on the long-term goal, especially in the early phases of the process. Short time horizons and small steps that require only limited time and effort are critical.
- Try to insure the person has the skill set to attain the initial goals.

Goal Setting and Implementation: Solutions to These Prerequisite Considerations

For the best chance of success, the ADHD adult needs to succeed in the early stages. Success builds behavioral momentum and confidence, establishes realistic expectations, and builds a working memory of successful problem solving for future reference.

The Coaching Process with ADHD Adults

- Collect background information
- Identify tentative long-term goal
- Assess executive skills
- Determine if coaching is appropriate
- Consider goodness-of-fit
- Identify potential obstacles to goal attainment
- Revise long-term goal
- Create mini-goals (SMART) goals
- Identify strategies for supporting SMART goal attainment
- Write and carry out the action plan
- Meet, review, revise, continue....

Part I Initial Interview

What brought you here?

What are your biggest sources of frustration?

At work

At home

In your personal relationships

What are some things you think are going well?

At work

At home

In your personal relationships

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

If you were going to try to change one thing or improve at one thing in any of these contexts (work, home, relationships), what would you want to tackle?

Are you willing to create a goal around this and work towards it? What's a first pass at describing the goal?

The Coaching Process with ADHD Adults

- Collect background information
- Identify tentative long-term goal
- **Assess executive skills**
- Determine if coaching is appropriate
- Consider goodness-of-fit
- Identify potential obstacles to goal attainment
- Revise long-term goal
- Create mini-goals (SMART) goals
- Identify strategies for supporting SMART goal attainment
- Write and carry out the action plan
- Meet, review, revise, continue....

Executive Skills Questionnaire

Read each item below and then rate that item based on the extent to which you agree or disagree with how well it describes you. Use the rating scale below to choose the appropriate score. Then add the three scores in each section. Use the key at the end of the questionnaire to determine your executive skill strengths (two to three highest scores) and weaknesses (two to three lowest scores).

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------|---------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Tend to disagree | Tend to agree | Agree | Strongly agree |

| Item | Your score |
|---|------------|
| 1. I don't jump to conclusions. | _____ |
| 2. I think before I speak. | _____ |
| 3. I make sure I have all the facts before I take action. | _____ |
| TOTAL | _____ |
| 4. I have a good memory for facts, dates, and details. | _____ |
| 5. I am very good at remembering the things I have committed to do. | _____ |
| 6. I seldom need reminders to complete tasks. | _____ |
| TOTAL | _____ |
| 7. My emotions seldom get in the way of my job performance. | _____ |
| 8. Little things do not affect me emotionally or distract me from the task at hand. | _____ |
| 9. When frustrated or angry, I keep my cool. | _____ |
| TOTAL | _____ |
| 10. No matter what the task, I believe in getting started as soon as possible. | _____ |
| 11. Procrastination is usually not a problem for me. | _____ |
| 12. I seldom leave tasks to the last minute. | _____ |
| TOTAL | _____ |

Part II Assess Executive Skills

Step 1: Complete the ESQ

Step 2: Identify strengths and weaknesses

Executive Skill Strengths

Executive Skill Weaknesses

Executive Skills Assessment
in Specific Contexts

Work: compare job demands with executive skills profile to determine “goodness of fit.”

WORKSHEET 1

Executive Skills in the Workplace

Step 1. Using the Executive Skills Questionnaire you completed in Chapter 2, check off your three executive skill strengths and your three executive skill weaknesses. If you had a lot of “tie scores,” make a decision about which three skills you most want to focus on as strengths and weaknesses.

Executive skill strengths

☐ Response inhibition
☐ Working memory
☐ Emotional control
☐ Task initiation
☐ Sustained attention
☐ Planning/prioritizing
☐ Organization
☐ Time management
☐ Flexibility
☐ Metacognition
☐ Goal-directed persistence
☐ Stress tolerance

Executive skill weaknesses

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Step 2. Think about your job requirements. What aspects of your job do you find easiest or most pleasurable and what do you find hardest or most aversive?

What aspects of your job do you find easiest to do (that is, least likely to put off or most efficient at)?

1.

2.

3.

What aspects of your job do you find require the most effort (that is, most likely to procrastinate on or least efficient at)?

1.

2.

3.

Step 3. Look at the easy and hard parts of your work. Do they align with your executive skill strengths and weaknesses? We’ve found this is often the case. You may use this information with subsequent worksheets, or this knowledge may simply serve to produce an aha moment (for example, That’s why I hate recurring phone calls—because I’m weak in emotional control and flexibility and I’m afraid the person I will be calling will be mad at me for something I didn’t do well).

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| WORKSHEET 3 Executive Skill Weaknesses | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--------------------|
| Executive skill weakness | How do you use this skill in your work? | Are there ways you can adjust your job to allow you to minimize your need to use this skill? | If you were going to focus on one task or one situation in which you need to use this skill and would like to get better at it, what would you choose? | What might you do? |
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |

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Executive Skills Assessment in Specific Contexts

- Work: compare job demands with executive skills profile to determine “goodness of fit.”
- Home: match specific home maintenance tasks with executive skill strengths.

Your List of Low- and High-Effort Chores

| Low-effort chores, tasks, activities | High-effort chores, tasks, activities |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | |

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Your Coping Strategies

| Effortful chores, tasks, activities | Possible coping strategy |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | |

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Executive Skills Assessment in Specific Contexts

- Work: compare job demands with executive skills profile to determine “goodness of fit.”
- Home: match specific home maintenance tasks with executive skill strengths.
- Relationships: compare partners’ profile to identify “tension points” due to profile differences.

Relationships Executive Skills Questionnaire

Directions: Read each pair of descriptions and decide which of the two options best describes you. Then decide how often the statement is true for you (sometimes, often, most of the time). When you have completed all the items for yourself, go back and follow the same process for the person you're in a relationship with. Decide which of the two statements best describes him or her and then choose how often the description applies. Then look for patterns of similarities and differences between self and other.

| RESPONSE INHIBITION | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|----|--|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Sometimes | Often | Most of the time | | | | Sometimes | Often | Most of the time |
| Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Carefully deliberates before making a decision | OR | Jump to conclusions | Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thinks before responding; doesn't interrupt | OR | Blurts out without thinking; may interrupt | Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gathers all the facts before acting | OR | Acts before getting all the facts ("gut instinct") | Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| WORKING MEMORY | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|----|---|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Sometimes | Often | Most of the time | | | | Sometimes | Often | Most of the time |
| Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Has a head for details (memory like an elephant) | OR | Has difficulty remembering details | Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Remembers what has to be done | OR | Forgets what he or she has promised to do | Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Follows through on obligations without reminders | OR | Needs reminders to get things done | Self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(continued)

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The Coaching Process with ADHD Adults

- Collect background information
- Identify tentative long-term goal
- Assess executive skills
- Determine if coaching is appropriate
- Consider goodness-of-fit
- Identify potential obstacles to goal attainment
- Revise long-term goal
- Create mini-goals (SMART) goals
- Identify strategies for supporting SMART goal attainment
- Write and carry out the action plan
- Meet, review, revise, continue....

Part III Refine Long-Term Goal

Step 3: Look at goodness-of-fit: Do you have the executive skills you need to achieve your goal?
How can you use your executive skill strengths? Are there ways you can work around the weaknesses or bypass them altogether?

Step 4: Are there barriers or obstacles you need to overcome in order to reach your goal?

| Potential obstacle | Ways to overcome the obstacle |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Long-Term Goal Statement:

The Coaching Process with ADHD Adults

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Part IV
Write a SMART Goal

SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound

Rules for writing goal statements:

1. Use clear, specific language.
2. Start your goal statement with TO + a VERB
3. Write your goal statement using SMART Goal Criteria
4. Avoid using negative language. Think positive!

An example of a goal statement:

- *To run the mini marathon in May and complete the 10 mile race in under 1 hour to beat my personal best time.*

SMART Goal Statement:

SMART Goal Example 1

By the end of two weeks from today I will have enrolled in a GED preparation program within commuting distance from my apartment and go to class one night per week. I will arrange for my neighbor to take care of the children on that night. During week three I will go to the first preparation class.

SMART Goal Example 2

I will search online for Personal Care Attendant jobs and by Friday of this week, identify four possible jobs that I am interested in, and apply for those jobs by Monday of next week.

SMART Goal Example 3

SMART Goal Statement:

By Sunday May 7th at 8 PM will have three things: 1) a one-page write up of the main points and causal arguments for my talk; 2) I will also have 5-7 post-its or mini pictures to illustrate key moments in the talk; 3) a run sheet delineating the time for each section.

The Coaching Process with ADHD Adults

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- **Identify strategies for supporting SMART goal attainment**
- Write and carry out the action plan
- Meet, review, revise, continue....

3 Key Strategies to Compensate for Weaknesses in Executive Skill Behaviors, or to Enhance Skills to Enable Goal Achievement

1. Environmental Modifications

1. Short-term incentives for motivation

2. Skill Enhancement

| Part V Identify Strategies to Support Goal Attainment | |
|--|---|
| Strategy | Examples (check off choices) |
| | Environmental Modifications |
| Change the physical or social environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove distractions (e.g., turn off social media) <input type="checkbox"/> Create visual reminders <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid settings with temptations <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out people who support your goal; avoid people who don't <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| Modify the task | <input type="checkbox"/> Make task shorter/build in breaks <input type="checkbox"/> Use 1-10 scale to adjust effort <input type="checkbox"/> Pair unpleasant task with something pleasant <input type="checkbox"/> Kill 2 birds with one stone (pair unpleasant task with another obligation) <input type="checkbox"/> Break task into very small pieces and turn into a to-do checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Use technology <input type="checkbox"/> Turn open-ended tasks into closed-ended tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Build in variety or choice (or turn into a game) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| Enlist the help of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Someone to cue you: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Someone to report to: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who will be a cheerleader: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Post goal/progress on social media <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

| Part V Identify Strategies to Support Goal Attainment | |
|--|---|
| Strategy | Examples (check off choices) |
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| Enlist the help of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Someone to cue you: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Someone to report to: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who will be a cheerleader: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Post goal/progress on social media <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

3 Key Strategies to Compensate for Weaknesses
in Executive Skill Behaviors, or to Enhance Skills
to Enable Goal Achievement

1. Environmental Modifications

1. Short-term incentives for motivation

2. Skill Enhancement

Short-term Incentives for Motivation

- ☐ A preferred activity to do once the work is done: _____
☐ Choose something from a reward menu: _____
☐ Other: _____
☐

REWARD MENU CATEGORIES

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Food/snacks | Beverages | Entertainment |
| Hobbies | Exercises | Social |
| Shopping | Sightseeing | Travel |

3 Key Strategies to Compensate for Weaknesses
in Executive Skill Behaviors, or to Enhance Skills
to Enable Goal Achievement

1. Environmental Modifications

1. Short-term incentives for motivation

2. Skill Enhancement

| Practice the Skill | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---------|---------------|----------|--------|----------|
| What will you practice? | | | | | | |
| When will you practice? | | | | | | |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Time: | Time: | Time: | Time: | Time: | Time: | Time: |
| How long will the practice session last? | | | | | | |
| What is your start time? Date: | | Time: | Back-up date: | | Time: | |
| What cues will you use to remind yourself to follow your plan? | | | | | | |

| Practice the Skill | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental contrasting: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think about several positive aspects associated with goal attainment: 2. Identify the <i>most positive</i> aspects and visualize the benefits (with as much detail as possible) 3. Think about several obstacles that might get in the way of goal attainment. 4. Hone in on the biggest obstacles and take a few moments to visualize those obstacles. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation Intentions: FORMULA: When [trigger], I will [action] | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Process visualization: Visualize, with as much sensory detail as possible, encountering the obstacles to goal attainment and then successfully overcoming them. | |

Practice Strategies: Mental Contrasting

This is a visualization technique created by Gabriele Oettingen (2000) to enhance the likelihood that implementations will be successful.

Practice Strategies: Mental Contrasting

1. Think about several positive aspects associated with goal attainment
2. Identify the *most positive* aspects and visualize the benefits (with as much detail as possible)
3. Think about several obstacles that might get in the way of goal attainment.
4. Hone in on the biggest obstacles and take a few moments to visualize those obstacles.

Practice Strategies: Implementation Intentions

Goal setting research shows that the more precise the goal, the more likely it is to be accomplished—anticipating obstacles increases the likelihood that you will overcome them.

– If *X happens*, *then* I will do Y. OR when [trigger], I will [action]

Practice Strategies: Process Visualization

In this step, visualize, with as much sensory detail as possible, encountering the obstacles to goal attainment and then successfully overcoming them.

MCIIPV explanation



Keep Your Product Launch on Track

by Amit Amin

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Part VI Create an Action Plan

Action Plan for Achieving SMART goal

| Steps to Follow To Complete Goal | Target Completion Date | Done! |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |

SMART Goal Example 1

By the end of two weeks from today I will have enrolled in a GED preparation program within commuting distance from my apartment and go to class one night per week. I will arrange for my neighbor to take care of the children on that night. During week three I will go to the first preparation class.

Action steps:

1. Contact local adult ed program by this Wednesday and find out closest GED program to me that meets at night.
2. Call the program on Wednesday and enroll.
3. Ask my neighbor tomorrow if she can watch the kids for the same night each week for two hours starting in three weeks.
4. Go to the first preparation class two weeks from Wednesday.

SMART Goal Example 2

I will search online for Personal Care Attendant jobs and by Friday of this week, identify four possible jobs that I am interested in, and apply for those jobs by Monday of next week.

Action steps: (starts on a Tuesday)

1. Start online search for jobs by tomorrow (Wednesday) at 10 am, keep searching until I find two possible jobs and save the applications.
2. Start searching for the other two jobs on Thursday at 10 am, keep searching until I find two more jobs and save the applications.
3. Contact my 3 references for permission to use them by 4 pm Friday.
4. Complete the 4 job applications by Sunday night at 6pm and submit them.

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Action steps: (starts on a Tuesday)

1. Start online search for jobs by tomorrow (Wednesday) at 10 am, keep searching until I find two possible jobs and save the applications.
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3. Contact my 3 references for permission to use them by 4 pm Friday.
4. Complete the 4 job applications by Sunday night at 6pm and submit them.

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By Sunday May 7th at 8 PM will have three things: 1) a one-page write up of the main points and causal arguments for my talk; 2) I will also have 5-7 post-its or mini pictures to illustrate key moments in the talk; 3) a run sheet delineating the time for each section.

Action Plan for Achieving SMART goal

| Steps to Follow To Complete Goal | Target Completion Date | Done! |
|--|------------------------|-------|
| 1. Set 20-minute timer to work on written version | May 2, 11 PM | |
| 2. Set a 10-minute timer to work on written version and 10 min to sketch at least 3 candidate images for the talk. | May 3, 9 AM | |
| 3. Set 10 minutes timer to create draft run sheet for talk; Set 10 minute timer to craft 3 more candidate images for the talk | May 4, 8 PM | |
| 4. Set 20 min timer to revise written draft; 20 min to revise run sheet (w 2-3 key images); 5 min t to send draft ideas to R, J, D | May 5, 9 PM | |

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Part VII Carry out the Plan and Evaluate Success

Did you follow the plan?

What worked well?

What didn't work so well?

Next step:

☐ Revise plan

| Steps to Follow To Complete Goal | Target Completion Date | Done! |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |

☐ Make new smart goal and action plan

Putting It All Together

Frank came to see a counselor because he was having all kinds of problems with time and task management both at home and at work. He worked for an IT company where he was a project manager. He had specific projects he was charged with managing, but he also had been with the company for awhile and had an array of technical skills that exceeded most of the people who worked at the company...

Let's Practice

| Executive Skill | Problem Behavior |
|--|------------------|
| | |
| Goal Behavior <i>Frank will...</i> | |

Let's Practice

| Executive Skill | Specific Problem Situation |
|--|----------------------------|
| Planning/prioritizing | |
| Goal Behavior <i>Frank will...</i> | |

Let's Practice

| Executive Skill | Specific Problem Situation |
|--|---|
| Planning/prioritizing | Getting sidetracked by requests from colleagues |
| Goal Behavior <i>Frank will...</i> | |

Let's Practice

| Executive Skill | Specific Problem Situation |
|---|--|
| Planning/prioritizing | Getting side tracked by requests from co-workers |
| Goal Behavior <i>Frank will complete top two priorities on to-do list before responding to requests from co-workers</i> | |

Goal Behavior

Frank will complete top two priorities on to-do list before responding to requests from co-workers

Possible Strategies

- Announce plan to co-workers and ask for cooperation
- Institute a closed/open-door policy
- Allot 1 hour per day to responding to co-workers requests
- Put off lunch break until first to-do list item is done
- Don't leave work until 2nd to-do list item is done

Let's Practice

| Executive Skill | Specific Problem Situation |
|--|----------------------------|
| Task initiation | |
| Goal Behavior <i>Frank will...</i> | |

Let's Practice

| Executive Skill | Specific Problem Situation |
|--|------------------------------|
| Task initiation | Not doing taxes by deadlines |
| Goal Behavior <i>Frank will...</i> | |

Let's Practice

| Executive Skill | Specific Problem Situation |
|--|------------------------------|
| Task initiation | Not doing taxes by deadlines |
| Goal Behavior <i>Frank will complete first overdue tax return within 30 days</i> | |

| Goal Behavior | |
|---|---|
| <i>Frank will complete first overdue tax return within 30 days</i> | |
| Possible Strategies | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend 15 minutes on taxes as soon as he gets home from work each afternoon • Make a 30-day plan and post on white board in study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold off preferred activity until he's done his daily allotment of tax work • Make a deal with wife that she'll "cover" for him with other household tasks while he works on taxes |

Last Thoughts?
