

Executive Skills Questionnaire —

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Step I: 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 on page 2 to determine your executive skill strengths (2-3 highest scores) and weaknesses (2-3 lowest scores).

Strongly disagree	1	Tend to agree	5
Disagree	2	Agree	6
Tend to disagree	3	Strongly agree	7
Neutral	4		

Item	Your score
1. I don't jump to conclusions	_____
2. I think before I speak.	_____
3. I don't take action without having all the facts.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
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	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
7. My emotions seldom get in the way when performing on the job.	_____
8. Little things do not affect me emotionally or distract me from the task at hand.	_____
9. I can defer my personal feelings until after a task has been completed	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
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	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
13. I find it easy to stay focused on my work.	_____
14. Once I start an assignment, I work diligently until it's completed.	_____
15. Even when interrupted, I find it easy to get back and complete the job at hand.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
16. When I plan out my day, I identify priorities and stick to them	_____
17. When I have a lot to do, I can easily focus on the most important things	_____
18. I typically break big tasks down into subtasks and timelines.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
19. I am an organized person.	_____
20. It is natural for me to keep my work area neat and organized.	_____
21. I am good at maintaining systems for organizing my work.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____

Strongly disagree	1	Tend to agree	5
Disagree	2	Agree	6
Tend to disagree	3	Strongly agree	7
Neutral	4		

Item	Your score
22. At the end of the day, I've usually finished what I set out to do.	_____
23. I am good at estimating how long it takes to do something.	_____
24. I am usually on time for appointments and activities.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
25. I take unexpected events in stride.	_____
26. I easily adjust to changes in plans and priorities.	_____
27. I consider myself to be flexible and adaptive to change.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
28. I routinely evaluate my performance and devise methods for personal improvement.	_____
29. I am able to step back from a situation in order to make objective decisions.	_____
30. I "read" situations well and can adjust my behavior based on the reactions of others.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
31. I think of myself as being driven to meet my goals.	_____
32. I easily give up immediate pleasures to work on long-term goals.	_____
33. I believe in setting and achieving high levels of performance.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
34. I enjoy working in a highly demanding, fast-paced environment.	_____
35. A certain amount of pressure helps me to perform at my best.	_____
36. Jobs that include a fair degree of unpredictability appeal to me.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____

KEY

Items	Executive Skill	Items	Executive Skill
1 - 3	Response Inhibition	4 - 6	Working Memory
7 - 9	Emotional Control	10 - 12	Task Initiation
13 - 15	Sustained Attention	16 - 18	Planning/Prioritization
19 - 21	Organization	22 - 24	Time Management
25 - 27	Flexibility	28 - 30	Metacognition
31 - 33	Goal-Directed Persistence	34-36	Stress tolerance

Strongest Skills

Weakest Skills

Managing ADHD by Targeting Executive Skills

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?

Part II Assess Executive Skills

Step 1: Complete the ESQ

Step 2: Identify strengths and weaknesses

Executive Skill Strengths

Executive Skill Weaknesses

Part III Develop Long Term Goal

GOAL-SETTING. Start by thinking of a goal you'd like to work on. It could be a task you've been putting off, or a project you want to start or a behavior you want to change. If you can, identify more than one, so that you have a few to choose from.

Possible goals
1.
2.
3.

Select one of the goals and place an asterisk next to it. Now think about some of the potential obstacles that might prevent you from reaching your goal. How can those obstacles be overcome or avoided?

Potential obstacle	Ways to overcome the obstacle
1.	
2.	
3.	

Part IV Creating a SMART Goal

SMART Goal Planner		
Specific	What EXACTLY do you want to happen?	
Measurable	I will know I have reached my goal when . . .	
Attainable	Can I reach my goal by the deadline?	How confident am I that I can reach my goal? 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Not very So-so Very!
Relevant	Is this goal important to me?	How important is it to me to reach my goal? 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Not very So-so Very!
Time-bound	I will reach my goal by:	

Part V Developing an Action Plan

Steps to Follow or Tasks to Accomplish to Complete Goal	Target Completion Date	Done!
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Part VI
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: _____					
Short-term Incentives for Motivation						
<input type="checkbox"/> A preferred activity to do once the work is done: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Choose something from a reward menu: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>						
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?						

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

Short-term Incentives for Motivation
<input type="checkbox"/> A preferred activity to do once the work is done: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Choose something from a reward menu: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
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.

Strategies to Improve or Reduce the Impact of Weak Executive Skills

Strategy Options

I. Identify environmental modifications 1. Alter the physical or social environment 2. Modify the task 3. Enlist help from others	II. Find a motivator/incentive
	III. Practice a strategy for skill enhancement

Executive Skill	Environmental Modification
Response Inhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Emotional Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preplan to minimize surprises • Build in “wait time” to adjust to the unexpected • Avoid situations that require flexibility • Learn to recognize the physiological cues and put in place a default strategy • Create an <i>If...then</i> plan.
Task Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)
Sustained Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Planning/Prioritizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do something fun <i>while</i> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preplan to minimize surprises • Build in "wait time" to adjust to the unexpected • Avoid situations that require flexibility • Learn to recognize the physiological cues and put in place a default strategy • Create an <i>If...then</i> plan.
Metacognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a system for analyzing mistakes • Learn to ask for feedback from others • Use a problem-solving template
Goal-Directed Persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mental contrasting, implementation intentions, 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
Stress Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a personalized stress inoculation plan • Steer clear of stressful situations • Mentally prepare yourself for anticipated stressful situations • Build in recovery time

Putting It All Together: Let's Practice

Scenario: 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 a while and had an array of technical skills that exceeded most of the people who worked at the company. As a result, people came to him frequently for assistance in solving technical problems, both large and small. He found that even when he was able to prioritize his workload, when someone asked for help, he usually dropped everything to help them, even if he had deadlines looming. As a result, his projects were chronically behind schedule. At home, Frank had two young children and a wife who also worked at a demanding job. Just getting through everyday chores and handling child care (tasks he and his wife agreed to share equally), left him no time to do longer term projects. There were household repairs that were being neglected and he had had to file for extensions on his taxes for the last three years because he hadn't completed the IRS forms. In fact, he had yet to finish his taxes from two years ago, let alone this year...and April 15 was looming.

Executive Skill	Specific problem situation to tackle first
Goal behavior	<i>Frank will</i>
Possible environmental modifications/motivators/incentives	