



OKLAHOMA AUTISM NETWORK

The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

ON A ROAD TO... SOMEWHERE? ANYWHERE?
AND HOW ON EARTH DO WE GET THERE??

CREATING A ROAD OF POSSIBILITIES IN THE MIDDLE CHILDHOOD YEARS

BUILDING EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRIENDSHIP WEBINAR WORKSHEET

About this Webinar:

Executive functions (EF) are the skills that help us manage ourselves and manage the resources we use to make plans and achieve our goals. Many people think about EF skills related to academics, organization, and household related tasks but there is so much more! Response inhibition, emotional control, sustained attention, flexibility and metacognition are all EF skills we use in a variety of settings and situations – including social relationships such as friendship. The importance of friendship typically grows during the middle childhood years, and this makes 6-12 years of age a prime time to address these skills. In this webinar, we will cover strategies to help strengthen EF skills in the context of friendship for children ages 6-12.

Purpose of this Worksheet:

This worksheet is a tool you can use during the webinar to take notes about how you can apply the information you learn. There is also a resource guide for parents and professionals to refer to when creating an intentional plan to build opportunities and executive function skills related to social relationships.

The content included is general information and is not specific medical or behavioral advice. The information provided may not work for every child with autism or their family. We recommend working closely with your child's doctor(s), therapist(s), and/or educator to discuss how the ideas shared may be individualized to meet your child's needs. If you have an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

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Middle Childhood

Building Executive Function Skills Related to Friendship

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Executive Functioning Skills

Executive Functions (EF) are a group of interrelated, complex mental abilities that are involved in planning and initiating goals and carrying them through despite interruptions (Salimpoor & Desrocher, 2006).

Another way to think about it is that executive function is the brain's air traffic control system.

Some of the executive functioning skills that contribute to making and keeping friends are:

- *Emotional control* - The ability to manage emotions, control and direct behavior to accomplish a task.
- *Flexibility* - The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes.
- *Metacognition* - The ability to stand back and take a bird's eye view of yourself in a situation. Self monitoring and self evaluation.

Thinking about your learner..... Strengths, Interests and Motivation

Please take some time to reflect upon the person you are supporting and answer the following questions.

What are my child's strengths? What is working well for my child?

What are the moments and activities that bring my child joy and happiness? What are the activities that give my child a sense of pride or accomplishment?

Who are the people that my child enjoys to be around? Why does he/she enjoy that person? How can I tell when my child feels comfortable and/or connected with someone?



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Thinking about your learner.... Current Skills and Actions

Please take some time to think about your learner's current skills in the areas of emotional control, flexibility, and metacognition. What are some of the behaviors that you see when the child uses these skills? What do the actions of the child look like when you do not see this skill in action?

Specific Executive Function (EF)	When I see this EF skill in action, the behaviors look like....	When it's hard or I do not see this EF skill being used, the behaviors look like....
<p>Emotional Control</p> <p><i>The ability to control and direct behavior to accomplish a task.</i></p>		
<p>Flexibility</p> <p><i>The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes.</i></p>		
<p>Metacognition</p> <p><i>The ability to stand back and take a bird's eye view of yourself in a situation.</i></p> <p><i>Self-monitor and self-evaluate.</i></p>		



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Setting Priorities and Making a Plan

REMEMBER – PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION!

Which one of these skill sets (emotional control, flexibility, or metacognition) is working well for my child?

Is there one skill set that is harder than the others? Or is there a skill set that is not working well now and is preventing my child from participating in opportunities to spend time with friends?

Out of the 3 skill sets (emotional control, flexibility, or metacognition) listed above, which one of these skills would I like to practice first? How will this skill set help my child have more opportunities to meet and spend time with friends?

What is one way that I can help my child practice this skill? What do I need to do (planning, materials, actions) to help the child practice this skill?

After you and the child have spent some time practicing the skill, ask yourself – What is working well? What could I do differently to help set my child up for further success?



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RESOURCES

Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary Executive Skills Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential

By Peg Dawson, EdD, and Richard Guare, PhD

Executive skills are the fundamental brain-based skills required to execute tasks: getting organized, planning, initiating work, staying on task, controlling impulses, regulating emotion, and being adaptable. This book includes easy-to-follow steps to identify your child's strengths and weaknesses, activities and techniques proven to boost specific skills, and guides the reader through how to problem-solve daily routines. Helpful worksheets and forms can be downloaded for purchasers of this book. Focus age group is 4-13 years old. Book available through Guilford Press and on Amazon.

Teaching Good Learner Repertoires and Teaching Advanced Learner Repertoires

By Steven Ward, MA, BCBA and Teresa Grimes, MS, BCBA

These two books cover some of the behavioral skill sets that can make learning easier for our students and loved ones. The topics addressed include resilience and regulation, readiness to learn, perseverance and focus, flexibility, consequences, preferences for learning, and others. The books expand upon "The Inventory of Good Learner Repertoires," an assessment tool created by Steve Ward (2008). More information can be found at www.wholechildconsulting.com. These books and the assessment tool are available at www.lulu.com.

What You Need to Know about Teaching Motivation and Teaching Games: An In-Depth Analysis

By Steven Ward, MA, BCBA

This book provides an analysis of how to teach games, in general, and offers recommendations on how to teach 12 specific games that can provide opportunities to build skills such as turn-taking, joint attention, play, development of conversational skills, and many other skills. The book contains scripts for teaching 12 games and the book is intended to improve a teacher's ability to teach play in general and be a part of any learner's curriculum. More information can be found at www.wholechildconsulting.com. The book is available on Amazon and www.lulu.com.

Unstuck and on Target: An Executive Function Curriculum to Improve Flexibility for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

By Lynn Cannon, Lauren Kenworthy, Katie C. Alexander, Monida Adler Werner and Laura Anthony

This how-to manual was written for professionals to help students with ASD develop skills related to flexibility and goal-directed behavior. It was written as a classroom-based, comprehensive curriculum for students and the curriculum activities are best suited for students with average cognitive ability or above and language skills matching ages 8-11. You can find this book and the newer, second edition (2021) through Brookes Publishing and on Amazon.

The Oklahoma Autism Network strongly encourages families and providers to review these materials for goodness of fit before sharing them with the individuals they support.



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