



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

WHEN A DIAGNOSIS ISN'T ENOUGH: HELPING YOUR STUDENTS STRUGGLING WITH LEARNING OR BEHAVIOR ISSUES AT SCHOOL

DR. JULES NOLAN, PSY.D., LP, NCSP
PHOENIX SCHOOL COUNSELING

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DIAGNOSES ASSOCIATED WITH DEFICIT IN EF SKILLS

- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Learning Disorder (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia)
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder

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WHAT ARE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS?

- Organization
- Emotion regulation
- Planning
- Flexibility
- Impulse inhibition
- Initiation
- Emotional regulation
- Self-monitoring
- Flexibility
- Working memory
- Attending
- Shifting

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EF DYSFUNCTION LOOKS LIKE:

- trouble controlling emotions or impulses
- problems with starting, organizing, planning, or completing tasks
- trouble listening or paying attention
- short-term memory issues
- inability to multitask or balance tasks
- socially inappropriate behavior
- inability to learn from past consequences
- difficulty solving problems
- difficulty learning or processing new information

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EF DYSFUNCTION CAN LEAD TO

- poor performance at work or school
- problems forming or maintaining relationships
- mood issues
- low self-esteem
- avoidance of difficult tasks
- low motivation or loss of interest in activities

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IF JOHNNY HAS PROBS STUDYING...

Teach Johnny to:

- Develop associations with prior learning.
- Use self-talk when studying.
- Use concept maps.
- Use multiple sources of information.
- Improve his concentration when studying.
- Improve his memorization skills.

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JOHNNY AND STUDYING

- Avoid attempting to train any cognitive processes.
- Studying is a skill that can be taught directly.
- Teach Johnny Study Skills via a model of direct instruction.

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IF LOUISA HAS A PROBLEM PAYING ATTENTION: TEACH LISTENING AND ATTENTIONAL SKILLS

Teach Louisa to:

- Become an active listener
- Listen for and recognize teacher cues. SLANT
 - Sit up
 - Lean forward
 - Active listening
 - Nod
 - Track the teacher
- Be prepared to listen.
- Self-manage and self-monitor her attention.

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THE KEY IS TO IDENTIFY AND ATTACK THE SKILL DEFICIENCY

- Process remediation or process training of EF or EF coaching that doesn't teach skills is rarely the answer.
- Identify the skill deficit.
- Attack the skill deficit directly.
- Education science also says to use direct instruction models to teach these skills.

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INTERVENE WITH THE SKILLS: ATTENTION

- Speak only when you have their full attention
- Timers and prompts
- Be clear and concise – don't lecture
- Work on more challenging tasks early in the day
- Use headphones/earplugs during homework (use music or other distractions during breaks)
- Remove distracting materials
- Play games that teach sensory awareness (I Spy, Charades, concentration, road bingo, in my mother's closet)
- Focused Attention Practices
 - Paying Attention
 - In the moment
 - On purpose
 - Without judgement

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INITIATION

- Routines for tasks that are difficult to initiate with easiest first – behavioral momentum
- Starts early with non-preferred tasks
- Use technology to set reminders to prompt non-preferred tasks
- Use games, fun, silliness
- Find external ways to cue kiddos – timers, sounds, videos,
- Think about what YOU need to reward yourself for doing things you hate (cleaning, laundry, taxes) your kids also need strong rewards to motivate doing things they hate
- Internal vs. external (intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation)

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PLANNING

- Model this out loud. Have kids help plan trips, holidays, use detailed descriptions
- Calendars and planners
- Teach kids to prioritize with high interest activities
- Checklists of step-by-step instructions
- Frequent and shorter work periods
- Define what it means to have a task completed (How do I know when I'm done)
- Kids with disabilities (ADHD, ASD) have poor conceptualization of time
 - How much time something will take
 - How long they have to wait
 - How much time has passed

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ORGANIZATION

- Decrease clutter
- Use email for homework assignments
- A place for everything
- Charts, maps, lists with necessary information for completing tasks
- Allow 5 minutes after an activity to organize self for next activity. MODEL THIS
- Teach problem solving and time management: Talk out loud
- Buddy System

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FLEXIBILITY

- Have rules posted, kids know expectations and consequences: Kid input, consistent at home and school
- Use rewards when they demonstrate
- Set goals
- Create routines
- Discuss and practice **change in routine**
- Use daily schedule that is posted visual and verbal, picture schedule for younger/kids with disabilities
- Use transition warning
- See tips for emotional regulation

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WORKING MEMORY

- Teach study Skills
- Mnemonic strategies (rhymes, acronyms, visuals, method of loci, catch phrases, alliteration)
- See, say, write, do
- Memory log for the child
- Increased exposure to material, visual and audio cues, practice
- Peer tutoring, learning groups
- Study buddies
- Deficits in working memory often look like poor reading comprehension, lagging math skills in kids with ADHD

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SELF MONITORING

- Teach to identify goal, predict performance, outline strategies based on imagined outcomes
- Routine checklists to monitor behavior: use technology
- Model your own self-monitoring by talking out loud when you do tasks
- How do they know if they are off task? Teach cues
- Child to become responsible for cueing own behavior
- Plenty of rewards
- Check YOUR emotion around this: No frustration, yelling, anger. PATIENCE

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INHIBITORY CONTROL

- Help to develop self awareness: MODEL THIS
- Get their input on house rules and consequences
- Ignore unwanted small behaviors
- Deliver consequences without emotion
- Practice your own inhibitory control
- Model mindful practices when under stress
- Lots of positive reinforcement around desired behavior.
Notice when they do it well even if it is not ALL THAT WELL.
Baby Steps.

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EMOTION REGULATION

- Help to develop self-awareness around emotion (How does that FEEL in your body)
- Build emotional literacy. More words around emotion = more emotionally intelligent = better able to regulate emotion
- Make a plan. What makes you “Lose it”, How do you know you are about to?
- Tolerate rather than avoid distress
- Regulate “feeling” opposite emotion. If you don’t grab onto it, emotion passes in 90 seconds. We tend to think of emotions like fire, but they are really more like waves, ebb and flow

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EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- If a student does not have a word for how s(he) feels
 - The emotion will be experienced more intensely (name it to tame it)
 - The emotion will be harder for the student to understand
- Labeling Emotions is an emotion-regulation strategy
- Labeling reduces emotions (both negative and positive)
- Students with Strong Emotional Vocabulary
 - Are 20-50% less likely to retaliate aggressively
 - Handle rejection better
 - Are less likely to resort to unhealthy efforts to regulate their emotions
 - Loss of control, tantrums, out of control
 - More severe anxiety and depression
 - Binge drinking and self injurious behavior

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EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Strong Emotions Vocabulary helps students
 - Be consciously aware of their own and others' emotions
 - Communicate effectively to reduce misunderstanding in social interactions
 - Be better regulators of their emotions and behavior
- When students can label emotions accurately, they have more positive social interactions and perform better in school.
- There is need for greater focus on emotion in adolescence to
 - Manage distress
 - Label and manage strong negative emotions
 - Foster empathy and compassion

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