



Weekly Newsletter: November 28-December 3, 2016

Toolbox Tip of the Week— Jane Reid

ENHANCING AND PRACTICING EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

Executive function and self regulation skills provide critical supports for learning and development. They allow us to retain and work with information in our brains, focus our attention, filter distractions, and switch mental gears. There are three basic dimensions of these skills:

Working memory – The ability to hold information in mind and use it.

Inhibitory control – The ability to master thoughts and impulses so to resist temptations, distractions, and habits, and to pause and think before acting.

Cognitive flexibility – The capacity to switch gears and adjust to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives.

These skills help us remember the information we need to complete a task, filter distractions, resist inappropriate or non-productive impulses, and sustain attention during an activity. We use them to set goals and plan ways to meet them, assess our progress along the way, and adjust the plan if necessary, while managing frustration so we don't act on it. Although we aren't born with executive function skills, we are born with the potential to develop them. The process is a slow one that begins in infancy, continues into early adulthood, and is shaped by our experiences. Children build their skills through engagement in meaningful social interactions and enjoyable activities that draw on self-regulatory skills at increasingly demanding levels.

Executive Function Activities:

Card games and board games:

Card games in which children have to track playing cards exercise working memory and promote mental flexibility in the area of planning and strategy. Hearts, spades and bridge are popular examples.

Physical activities/games:

Organized sports help children's ability to hold complicated rules and strategies in mind, monitor their own and others' actions, make quick decisions and respond flexibly to play.

Games that require constant monitoring of the environment and fast reaction times also challenge selective attention, monitoring, and inhibition. For younger children, hiding/tag games, particularly in the dark, like flashlight tag and ghosts in the graveyard are fun. Older children may enjoy games like laser tag and paint ball.

Brain teasers:

Puzzles that require information to be held and manipulated in working memory can be terrific challenges. Examples, crossword puzzles, Sudoku and classic spatial puzzles like Rubik's Cube.

Yoga and meditation:

Activities that support a state of mindfulness, or a nonjudgmental awareness of moment-to-moment experiences, may help develop sustained attention, reduce stress, and promote less reactive, more reflective decision-making and behaviour.

**NO MATTER
HOW MANY MISTAKES
YOU MAKE OR HOW
SLOW YOU PROGRESS,
YOU ARE STILL
WAY AHEAD OF
EVERYONE WHO
ISN'T TRYING.**

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*Putting children and families first as we support them in reaching
their potential*

Grades 1—2 With Sam and Sara

MONDAY November 28, 2016

Compromising - We will learn about why it is necessary to consider the opinions of others and come to an agreement that all parties accept. Then we will play a game where we make teams, decide names, and come up with compromises for fictional scenarios, compromising with our teammates the whole way through.

Create a social superhero: We will learn about superflex, and using him as an example will create and draw our social superhero with social super powers that could help us out when we are having trouble being flexible.

WEDNESDAY November 30, 2016

Imagination Bag for Flexible Thinking - We will play a game where we practice being flexible by playing with objects in ways that aren't immediately clear, which will help us to learn that there is usually more than one way to think about things, and we can have more fun if we do this.

Arguing, discussing, persuading, and letting go - We will go over the differences between these things as it is often difficult to tell. Arguing tends to make others have not so good thoughts about us and is usually loud. Discussing and persuading are good alternatives, but often times we will simply have to let things go in order to stay green and follow the rules. Then we will pull random topics from a jar, and in pairs come to a compromise over each of them.

FRIDAY December 2, 2016

Being Flexible - We will practice the 6 steps to being flexible: 1. stop 2. take a deep breath, 3. Let it go. 4. Think: "What is happening here?" 5. Make a plan. 6. remember, there is more than one way. Then we will build a lego structure where the rules and the structure changes every few minutes, but we go through the 6 steps and let things go.

Lego Maze: We will continue to practice flexibility using lego structures. We will make two teams and each build a maze for a marble, then test each others mazes out. While building we will focus on listening to what our team members have to say, compromise, and everyone have a turn building.

Milk Pail Obstacle Course: We will learn about how some people, like parents and teachers, know what's best for us, and it is a good idea to listen to what they say and do it. We will wear blindfolds and complete an obstacle course where we pick up all of the cotton balls and put them in a bucket, being directed by our partner.

Grades 3-5 with Ruth and Becca

TUESDAY November 29, 2016

Sometimes when we aren't being flexible we can snap easily and then we become like Glassman. Today we are going to learn all about Glassman and how we can defeat him. We will be working on big deal little deal to help us understand if the problem we face needs to have a big reaction or small reaction. We will also watch a video demonstrating the expected and unexpected ways to handle Glassman and then discuss the strategies we have.

THURSDAY December 1, 2016

Worry Wall is all about making us worry about every little thing. Today we are going to learn about Worry Wall and how we can take control of our worries in a Superflex way. We will visualize ourselves letting our worries go through drawing a picture of us letting go of our worries, and we will talk about the tools we can use to let go of those worries. Another tool we can use to defeat Worry Wall especially at night is a dreamcatcher that works to catch our worries.

FRIDAY December 2, 2016

Today we are going to review GlassMan and Worry Wall through different activities including a few science experiments. First activity will be about GlassMan and to remind the youth on what they learned we will be making glass rock candy. Next we will move on to Worry Wall and have the youth identify some worries and anxieties they may have and what happens when we hold on to our worries. Lastly we will be learning about and making Mexican worry dolls to help us let go of our worries.

Grades 4-6 with Ruth and Cindy

Monday November 28, 2016

Sometimes when we aren't being flexible we can snap easily and then we become like Glassman. Today we are going to learn all about Glassman and how we can defeat him. We will be working on big deal little deal to help us understand if the problem we face needs to have a big reaction or small reaction. We will also watch a video demonstrating the expected and unexpected ways to handle Glassman and then discuss the strategies we have.

Wednesday November 30, 2016

Worry Wall is all about making us worry about every little thing. Today we are going to learn about Worry Wall and how we can take control of our worries in a Superflex way. We will visualize ourselves letting our worries go through drawing a picture of us letting go of our worries, and we will talk about the tools we can use to let go of those worries. Another tool we can use to defeat Worry Wall especially at night is a dreamcatcher that works to catch our worries.

Grade 6-10 with Joni, Meghan, Cindy and Kurtis

Our activities this week will be focusing on working together as a group, with some review of conversations and emotions along the way. Our groups will need to work together to disassemble a television, engage in group games, and create their own games and activity.

MONDAY/TUESDAY November 28-29, 2016

Activity 1

Expected Conversation

A review activity for the groups to assess their knowledge of what conversation topics most people would engage in and which ones are really only interesting for ourselves.

Activity 2

Emotion Charades

Our goal for the activity will be to engage the group in what for some would be a nonpreferred activity and also review what they know about inferring emotions

Activity 3

Group Deconstruction

This activity will emphasize cooperation and teamwork, as well as leadership, as they work together to take apart a television

WEDNESDAY/THURSDAY November 30-December 1, 2016

Activity 1

Conversations

In this activity the group will be roleplaying and demonstrating appropriate conversation and behaviour in a variety of settings

Activity 2

Self Awareness

This activity is meant to have the group look ahead and develop awareness for what they believe some of their challenges will be as well as what their strengths are.

Activity 3

Symbol Drawing

A mindfulness activity where the group will have to pass along a message by "drawing" on the other person using only their finger.

Grade 6-10 with Joni, Meghan, Cindy and Kurtis

FRIDAY December 2, 2016

Activity 1

Observations

The group will try their hand as consultants and take data for themselves and observe how groups function from a different perspective

Activity 2

Create a Game

A group work and leadership activity where our groups will work together to develop a game, then explain it to and engage with the rest of the group.

Activity 3

Correcting

This activity will be practice for some and a chance to self-assess how often they correct people and how it affects them.

Tween and Teens with Sara

Saturday December 3, 2016

This week we will be revisiting our conversation skills. We will consider expected ways to express our opinions by talking about the differences between arguing, discussing, and persuading. We'll discuss how persuasion and compromise can help us communicate better and practice these skills by having a mock debate. We will also be talking about the hidden social rules that when followed can help us to have meaningful conversations, and play a game to demonstrate the effectiveness of these rules. Using clear communication is always important when conversing with others. We will finish the day by doing a blindfolded obstacle course to practice giving clear directions.

Transition Group with Sam and Ray

Tuesday November 29, 2016 & Thursday December 1, 2016 from 6-8pm

This week we are back at the office as normal. We will continue work on creating a yearly example budget, working on specific areas of need for each client. In addition we will continue on with the discovery process, as well as our D and D campaign, which will include more budgeting work, as well as opportunities to work on social skills such as initiating friendly conversations and maintaining them.