

# Tips To Support Executive Functioning Differences

## Inhibition

- Support sensory needs through the use of sensory activity which will help to keep their nervous system calm and organised
- Support consideration of alternate responses, for example, raising a hand in class before talking out loud. Possibly create this as visual information to act as a reminder.
- Define boundaries before an event, for example, if a child constantly pulls items off the shelves in the supermarket, place in a boundary that suggests that during this time they will hold onto the trolley instead.
- Use of visual timers will help enable an understanding of how much time is left.

## Attention

- Think about the environment and remove distractions; remember people are distracted by different things and what is distracting to them may not be distracting for you.
- If you are unable to modify the environment, make use of accommodations that help filter out distractions for example sunglasses, ear defenders and music players.
- For people who are under stimulated they may need to be provided with activities and accommodations that alert their nervous system. For example, movement activities and fidget toys.
- Break tasks down into small manageable chunks that match the person's attention span.

## Shifting gears

- Provide predictability by outlining what is coming next.
- Prepare for change in advance by giving countdowns, for example, 'five-minutes left of maths then its break time.'
- Plan in transition routines, for example, singing the tidy up song when play time has finished.

## Organisation and planning

- Use visual planners, schedules, and to-do-lists
- Have a place for things around the home and label them, for example, a school box near the door where the school bag and packed lunch box goes.
- Make use of apps like Trello which allows you to plan and schedule all your activities on your phone.
- Colour-code items
- Break tasks down into small manageable pieces
- Consider how the environment is set up.
- Teach the concept of *finished* from an early age.



## Working memory

- Providing visual instructions, not just verbal ones, can be really helpful. Words are lost instantly whereas visuals will stay with you.
- Avoid multi-tasking and support the person to complete one part of an activity, or one activity, before moving on to another.

## Self-monitoring

- Break activities down into small simple steps and check in at each point to see how the person is doing.
- Add in a checkpoint on visual timetables to encourage the person to check in with how they got on. For example, brush teeth – check - are my teeth clean?
- Provide the person with a picture or model of how the finished product will look.

