

# Executive Functions: What they are, Why They're Important, and How to Help!

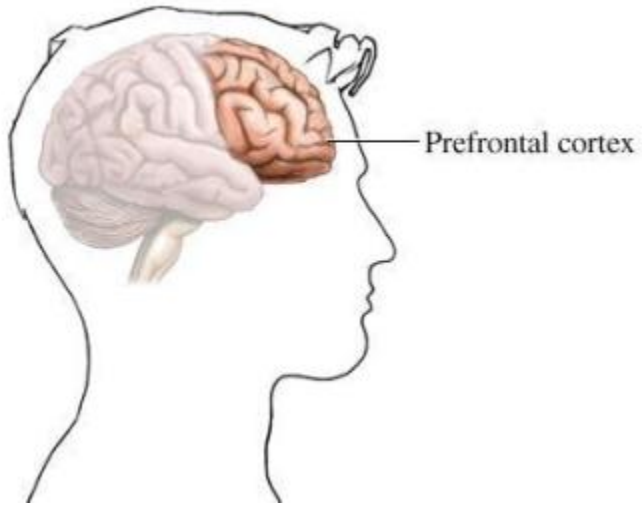
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# + Presentation Goals

- What are executive functions (EF)?
- Why are they important?
- How to help support EF needs in youth
- (...Can't ignore stress/anxiety, especially nowadays)
- Q & A



# + What is Executive Function (EF)?



# + Specific EF Skills



**Cognitive Regulation**

INITIATE

WORKING MEMORY

PLAN/ORGANIZE

TASK MONITOR

ORGANIZATION OF  
MATERIALS



**Behavior Regulation**

INHIBIT

SELF-MONITOR



**Emotion Regulation**

SHIFT

EMOTIONAL CONTROL

Based on the **Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function, Second Edition**  
(**BRIEF-2**; Gioia, Isquith, Guy, & Kenworthy (2015 )

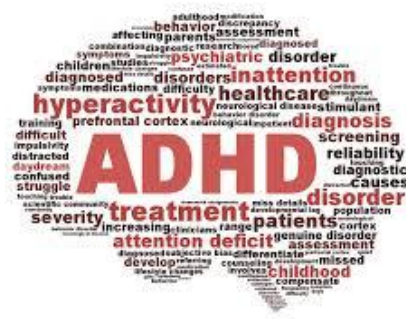
# + Example of complex EF demands on youth





## + EF Can Be Challenging

- ADHD
- Tic disorder/Tourette syndrome
- Learning disabilities such as dyslexia
- Concussions (traumatic brain injury)
- Emotional disorders such as depression, anxiety, and OCD
- Developmental transitions
- Life nowadays
- COVID/Distance Learning!!!



Me trying to excel in my career,  
maintain a social life, drink enough  
water, exercise, text everybody back,  
stay sane, survive & be happy.





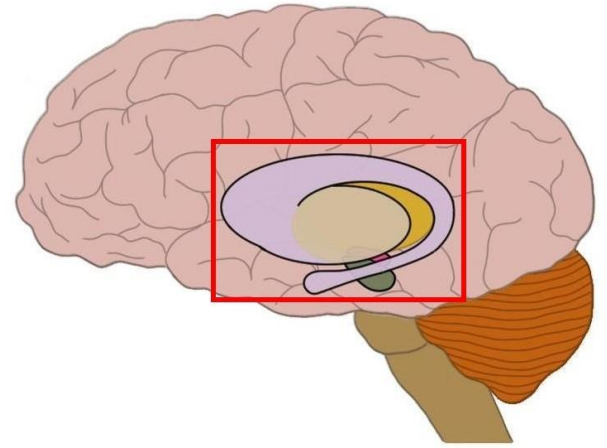
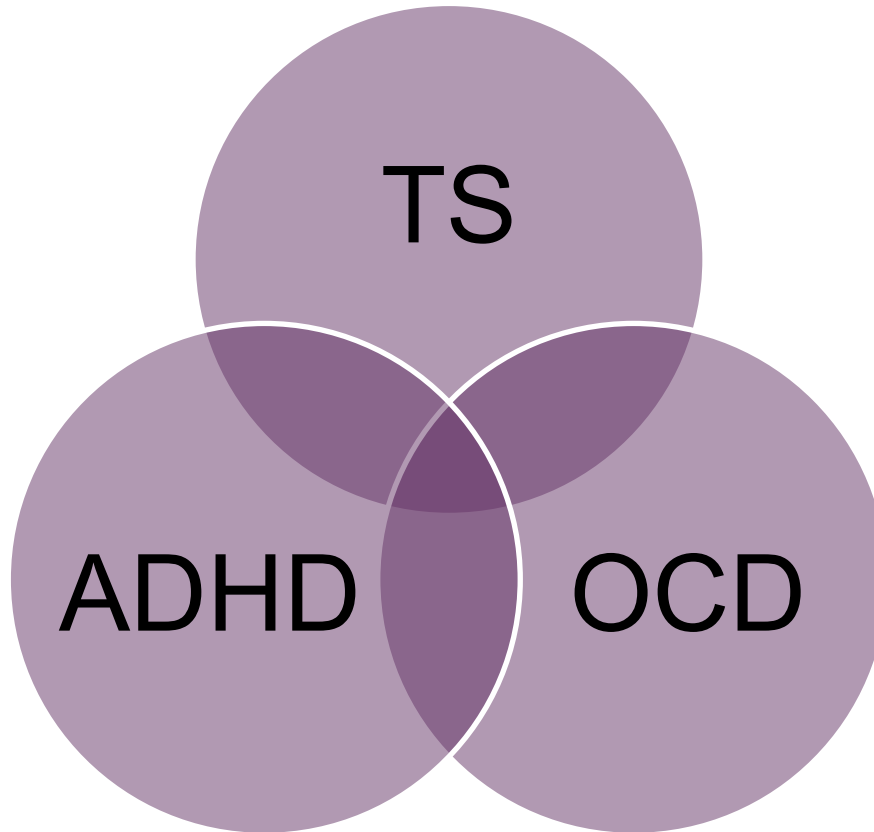
# EF in Tics/Tourette Syndrome



- Mild deficits in impulse control
- EF deficits more apparent when TS is comorbid with other disorders (ADHD)
- 50-75% of individuals with TS also have ADHD



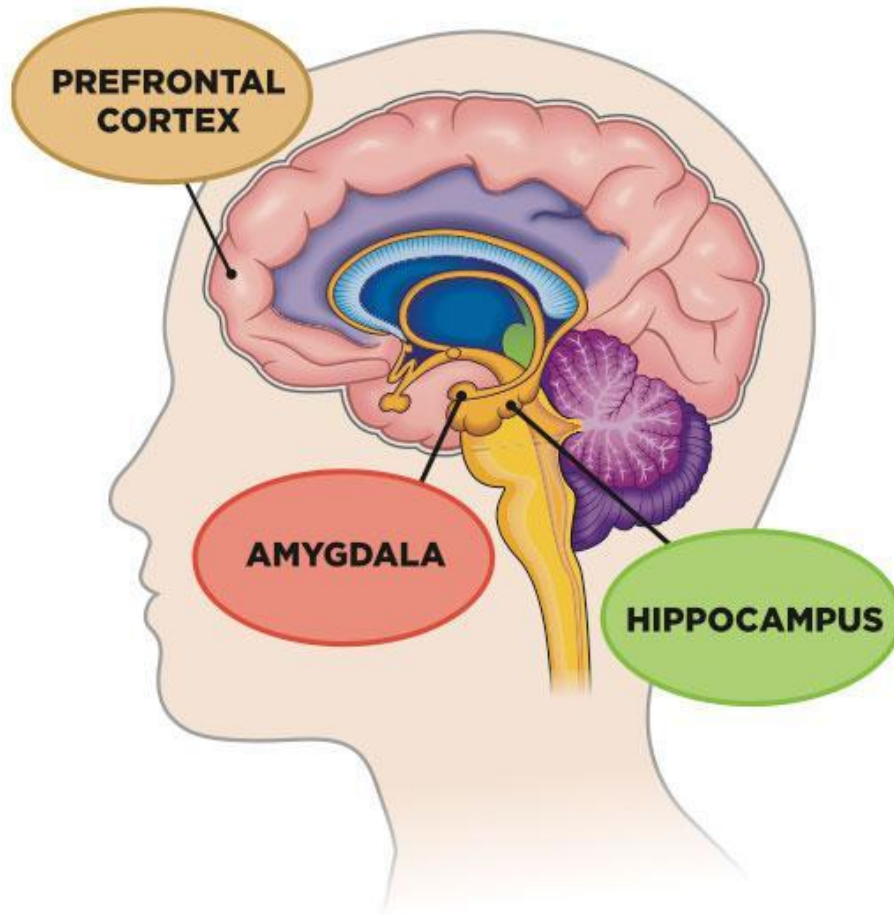
## The “Triad”

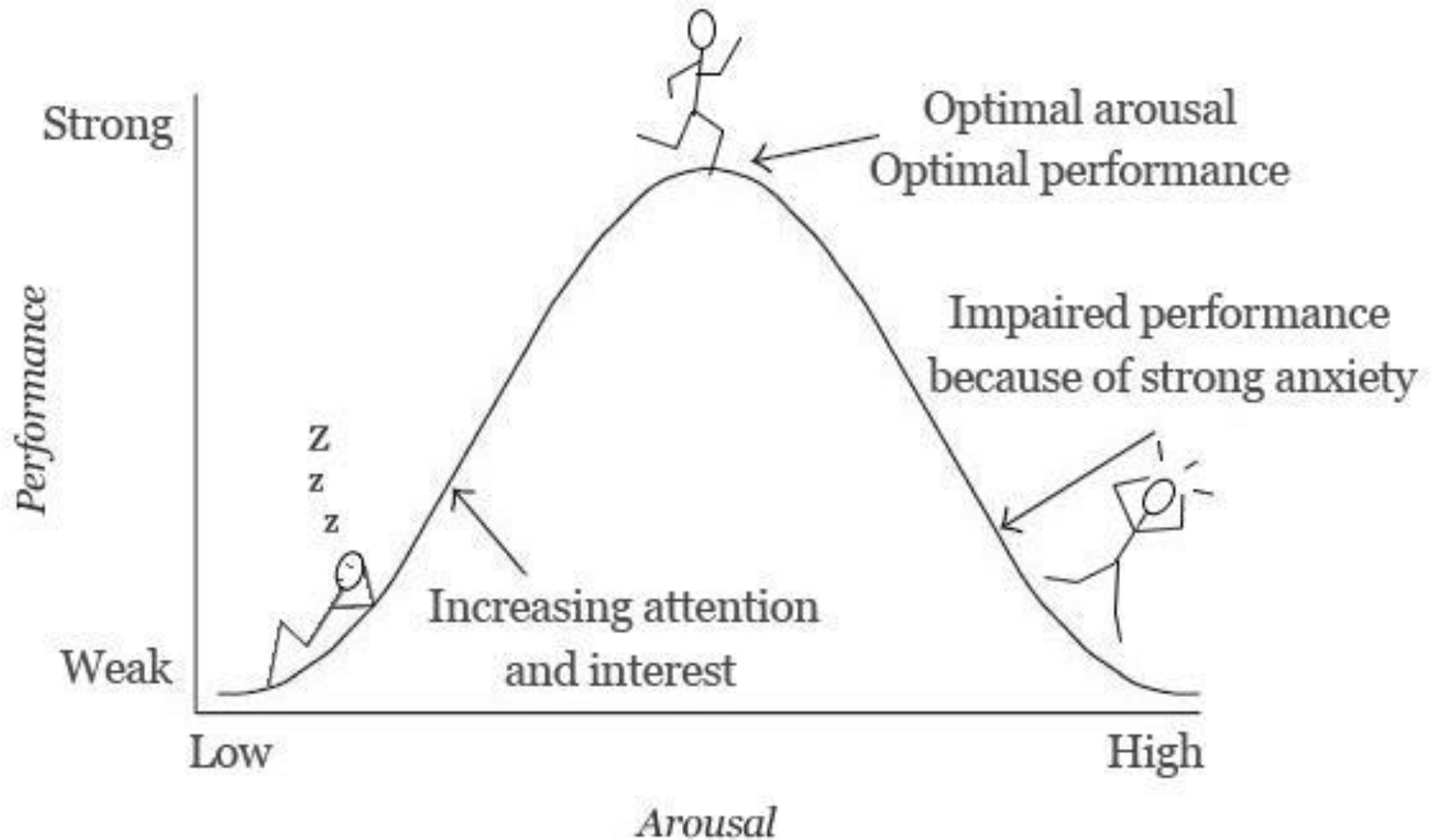
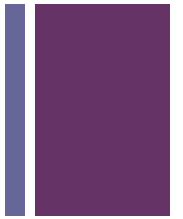






# The impact of anxiety on EF





# + How to help!

- Know your child's/teen's EF strengths and struggles
- Know YOUR OWN EF strengths and struggles
- *\*Smart but Scattered\** questionnaire
- “Meet them where they’re at”
- Focus on reward systems *at first, if needed* ☐ internalized
- PRIORITIZE!!!... and have (*as much*) patience (*as possible*)
- Engage them to self-monitor and problem solve
- Catch them being good!
- Praise the process, not the outcome – grit



# Plan, plan, plan!

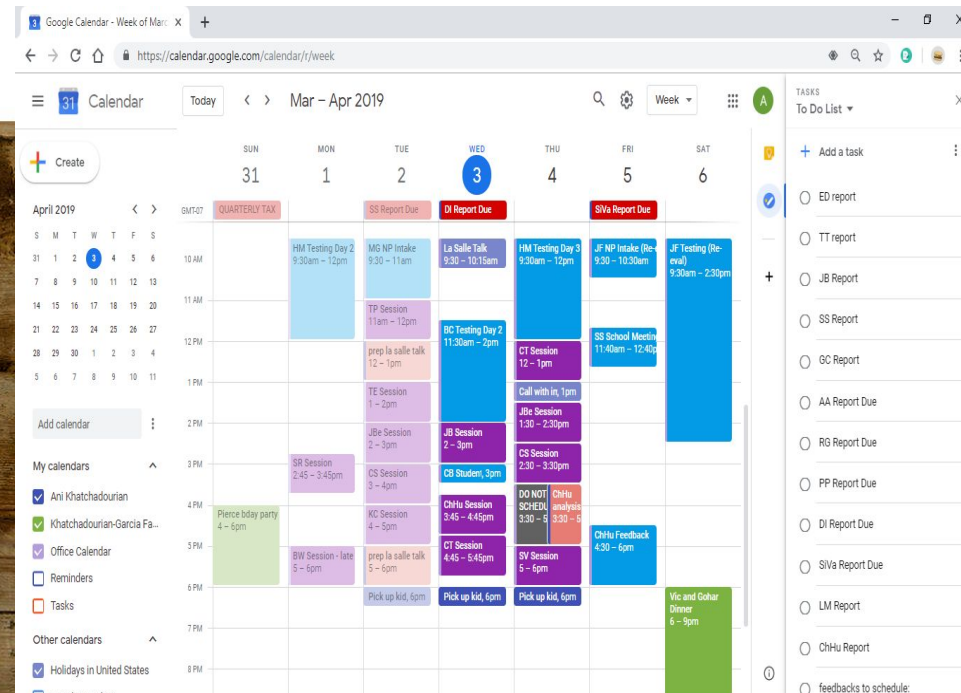
Use of a planner or calendar is CRUCIAL

Set a reminder/notification to check it daily

... “But it’s on Aries?!” ...

It’s not just about knowing what’s due!

## HOMEWORK GAME CHANGER





# Helping with time management

Weekly “planning session” with your teen

- Put in ALL events and activities
- Estimate how long nightly HW should take
- Long-term projects and tests
  - When is it due?
  - What are the steps?
  - How long will each step take?
  - When can I realistically work on this?
  - Schedule in planner or calendar around other assignments and activities
  - Re-schedule as needed!







- Consistent schedule/routine
- Create a proper working atmosphere
- Create daily to-do lists and set reminders
- Organize folders by “categories”



Designed to help you get stuff done

**Inbox**

- + Add a to-do...
- Pick up groceries
- Book flight to Seattle
- Reserve table at YoniYam for client lunch
- Buy Sophie's birthday present
- Register for half marathon

SHOW COMPLETED TO-DOS

**Book flight to Seattle**

- Due Today
- Reminder at 9:00 Today
- Repeat
- Get quote from travel agent
- Check flights online
- Add a subtask
- Upgrade to business with points
- Add a file

My Tasks

Kate Spencer

- Inbox 1
- Assigned to me 4
- Starred 1
- Today 2
- Groceries 9
- Travel 8
- Movies to watch 12
- Work 6
- Create list

The screenshot shows the 'Groceries' app interface. The app has a green header with the title 'Groceries' and an 'Edit' button. Below the header is a list of items: Milk (with a 'Buy' button), Coffee Beans, Cereal, Yogurt, and Blueberries. Each item has a checkbox on the left and a circular icon on the right. At the bottom, there is a green button labeled 'SHOW COMPLETED TO DO'S'.

[illegible]





# Staying focused

- Brain warm-up before studying
- Schedule breaks
- Use visual/external cues like Time Timer
- Minimize distractions (e.g., apps, Do Not Disturb, separate Google accounts, <https://meetcircle.com/>)
- Work on one task at a time
- Find the best time to work on challenging tasks





# Strategies to Manage Anxiety



Helpful tips for parents:

- Pay attention to your child's feelings.
- Stay calm when your child becomes anxious about a situation or event.
- Recognize and praise small accomplishments.
- Don't punish mistakes or lack of progress.
- Try to maintain a normal routine, but be flexible.
- Modify expectations during stressful periods.
- Plan for transitions (e.g., allow extra time in the morning if getting ready for school is difficult).



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME  
AND ATTENTION!

Q & A

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