

Executive Functioning

Executive functioning refers to the ability to problem solve and self-monitor future, goal-directed behavior (Tsatsanis, 2004). It relies on the ability to use language to prepare for upcoming events (first…then) and to reflect on past experience and behavior.

One must also take in the perspective of others to plan, prepare, execute and negotiate in both familiar and new settings. My students who have difficulty with cognitive flexibility tend to use the same rules and strategies even when they were unsuccessful in previous situations. I call it “Being Stuck.” Did it help the first time? How about the 2nd or 3rd time? How about now?

When we think about social situations and how to problem solve them, we need to get out of “being stuck.” I have found that providing my students with written rules helps them make unpredictable situations more concrete. In this way, they come out of “being stuck.” Here is an example.

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RULE: I NEED TO TRY TO PROBLEM SOLVE SOCIAL SITUATIONS, SO I CAN MAKE CHANGES FOR SUCCESS.

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PROBLEM: I MISS THE CLUES TO FIGURE OUT THE PROBLEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT SAID DIRECTLY.

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NOTE: INFERENCES (NOT SAID OR STATED DIRECTLY) ARE USED IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS AND IN BOOKS. I GET CLUES AND FIGURE WHAT IS GOING ON FROM THE CLUES.

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SOLUTION: I CAN DISCUSS THE SOCIAL SITUATION WITH MY PARENTS AND FIGURE OUT WHY IT WENT WRONG. WHAT WERE THE CLUES? I CAN LISTEN AND LOOK FOR THE SAME CLUES IN THE NEXT SOCIAL SITUATION AND UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CLUES MEAN.

For more information on Social Skills see my articles under Ask Sue and my DVD Diamond Social Skills.