

# Task Initiation and Completion

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Jim Russell Ph.D.

# Last week's talk

1. Understand procrastination causes and impacts.
2. How the four circuits of executive function relate to procrastination
3. Explore strategies to overcome procrastination.



# Today's Learning Objectives



Identify obstacles and develop strategies for task initiation.



Recognize and prevent procrastination in task management.



Apply evidence-based strategies for effective task management.

# Disclaimer

This is educational purposes only and not meant to be a diagnosis or therapeutic in nature.



# Key Learning Resources

Barkley, R. A. (2012). *Executive functions: What they are, how they work, and why they evolved*. Guilford Press.

Barrett, L. F. (2020). *Seven and a half lessons about the brain*. Houghton Mifflin.

Braaten, E., & Willoughby, B. (2014). *Bright kids who can't keep up: Help your child overcome slow processing speed and succeed in a fast-paced world*. Guilford Publications.

Brown, P. C., Roediger III, H. L., & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. Harvard University Press.

# Key Learning Resources (Cont.)

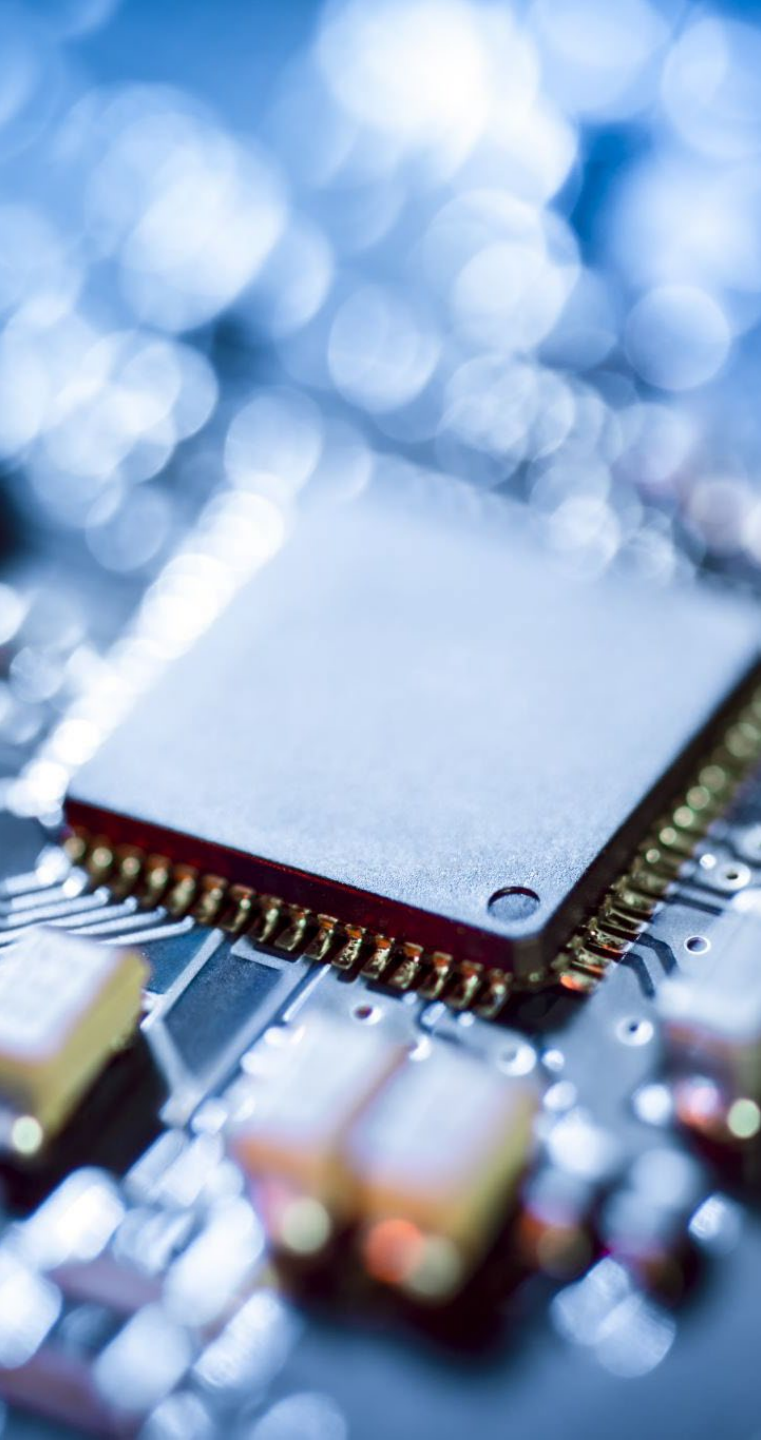
Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. Broadway Business.

Schwartz, T., & McCarthy, C. (2007). *Manage your energy, not your time*. *Harvard business review*, 85(10), 63.

Shaywitz, S. E., & Shaywitz, J. (2020). *Overcoming dyslexia: Completely revised and updated*. Hachette UK.

Silver, L. B. (2010). *The misunderstood child: Understanding and coping with your child's learning disabilities*. Harmony.

Various articles from ADDitude Magazine, ADHD Report, Understood.org, and Harvard's Center on the Developing Child.



# Review of Neurobiology of EF

Four circuits:

What

When

Why

Who



Working memory is like a bucket



# Executive functions involve things like:

organizing and planning,

shifting attention,

regulating emotions,

self-monitoring,

and holding information in mind for easy recall.

Executive function deficits are not only seen in individuals with ADHD. It also effects people who have:

Learning disabilities

Communication disorders

Mental health disorders

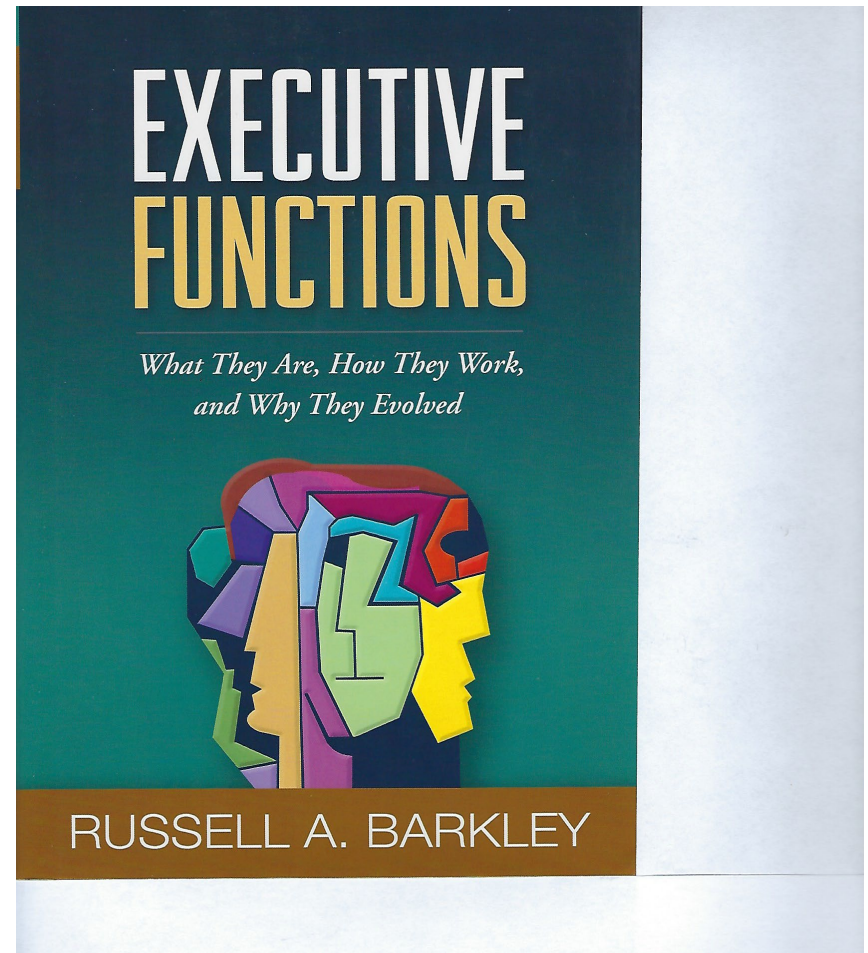


# Dr. Jim's description of EF

- Doing
- Doing a goal
- Doing something that is goal-directed
- Doing a goal-directed behavior

# Recommended reading

Barkley, R. A. (2012).  
Executive functions: What  
they are, how they work,  
and why they evolved.  
Guilford Press.



Dr. Jim's  
opinion

99.9% of those who have ADHD or ADD will also struggle with EF issues.

EF is likely its own entity.



Recommended  
reading: The  
ADHD REPORT  
from Guilford  
Press

# the **ADHD** **R E P O R T**

Russell A. Barkley & Associates

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## Considering the Family as a System When Assessing the Interpersonal Relations of Parents and Children with ADHD

Anne E. Dawson, M. S., Gina M. Sacchetti, M. A., Theresa E. Egan, M. A., and Brian T. Wymbs, Ph.D.

Children do not develop in a vacuum. Instead, as highlighted by Urie Bronfenbrenner in his seminal *biocological model*, their development is shaped by a variety of interacting proximal and distal biological and environmental factors, with family processes being fundamental to their growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). In rather intricate essays, Bronfenbrenner theorized that children develop their genetic potential through “proximal processes,” wherein a pattern of persistent and progressive bidirectional interactions between the child and their immediate context (e.g., family) serves to foster development and explain individual differences (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). He posited that, ultimately, the transformation of genotypes (genetic inheritance) into phenotypes (observable traits) is an active, bidirectional process, cultivated by family interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Consistent with Bronfenbrenner, family theorists have highlighted “spillover effects,” wherein the relational quality between co-parents “spills over” (in a positively correlated

fashion) to affect the relational quality between the parent and child (Erel & Burman, 1995). These ideas are consistent with the generally held notion that the parent influences child behavior, and the child influences parent behavior (Bell, 1968).

Despite the notion that the family as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts, few researchers have attempted to simultaneously examine the interactions of multiple family members with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). With this backdrop, we will

review the evidence that the family unit is an important consideration when encountering a child with ADHD. Specifically, we will focus on emerging research on how parent ADHD symptoms may interact with child ADHD symptoms to predict important family processes (e.g., parental communication or parenting practices). We will consider ways to improve ecological validity by reviewing a rather nascent statistical approach that can be applied to families, including parents and children with ADHD. We then provide an

### Contents

Considering the Family as a System When Assessing the Interpersonal Relations of Parents and Children with ADHD, 1 • Parents’ Experience of Raising a Child with Attention Deficit Disorder, 6 • Research Findings, 11

NOTICE TO NON-PROFESSIONALS The information contained in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for consultation with health care professionals.

“Meta-analytic and factor analytic studies consistently identify three primary EFs”

Working memory  
Set shifting  
Behavioral inhibition

# Executive Function Disorder

Cognitive

Behavioral

Emotional



# Dr. Jim's description of EF

- Executive Functioning Disorder include difficulties with:

Time management


Organization

Planning (ADHD----Follow through)

Problem solving

Self regulation

TOPPS




# Executive Functioning Disorder

- Time blindness (Now... Now...Now)
- Difficulty doing things to complete long-term goals
- Disorganized (setting schedules-- late)
- Trouble controlling emotions (Big feelings)
- Struggle with processing information (Getting stuff from the back to the front and front to the back)

**SEVEN  
MAJOR TYPES  
OF SELF-  
REGULATORS**

**1. Self-awareness:** Simply put, this is self-directed attention.

**2. Inhibition:** Also known as self-restraint.



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## SEVEN MAJOR TYPES OF SELF- REGULATORS (CONT.)

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3. **Non-Verbal Working Memory:** The ability to hold things in your mind. Essentially, visual imagery — how well you can picture things mentally.

4. **Verbal Working Memory:** Self-speech, or internal speech. Most people think of this as their “inner monologue.”



SEVEN MAJOR  
TYPES OF  
SELF-  
REGULATORS  
(CONT.)

**5. Emotional Self-Regulation:** The ability to take the previous four executive functions and use them to manipulate your own emotional state.

This means learning to use words, images, and your own self-awareness to process and alter how we feel about things.



SEVEN MAJOR  
TYPES OF  
SELF-  
REGULATORS  
(CONT.)

6. **Self-motivation:** How well you can motivate yourself to complete a task when there is no immediate external consequence.

SEVEN MAJOR  
TYPES OF  
SELF-  
REGULATORS  
(CONT.)

## 7. Planning and Problem Solving: Experts sometimes like to think of this as “self-play”

This concerns how we play with information in our minds to come up with new ways of doing something. By taking things apart and recombining them in different ways, we’re planning solutions to our problems.



## 9 Time-Saving Tips from Edward Hallowell, M.D.



1. Focus on what truly matters.



2. Minimize distractions.



3. Create a positive emotional environment wherever you go.





## 9 Time-Saving Tips from Edward Hallowell, M.D. (Cont.)

4. Don't waste time "screensucking."

5. Delegate anything you're not good at.

6. Slow down.



## 9 Time-Saving Tips from Edward Hallowell, M.D. (Cont.)



7. Think twice about multitasking.



8. Invest your time for maximum return.



9. Play.



# Time Management Workaround Strategies from Ari Tuckman


1. Externalize time.
2. Maximize motivation.
3. Eliminate distractions.
4. Don't catastrophize.
5. Identify feelings.



# Time Management Tools recommended by Ari Tuckman

1. RescueTime
2. Finish
3. 2Do
4. MIN TO GO





# Color- Coding Tips from Lexi Walters Wright

- Color-code the calendar.
- Use a different color for each subject. For example, red is math. If you use a shared digital calendar, you can also assign colors to different subjects. Check under “settings.”

Color-Coding  
Tips from  
Lexi Walters  
Wright  
(Cont.)

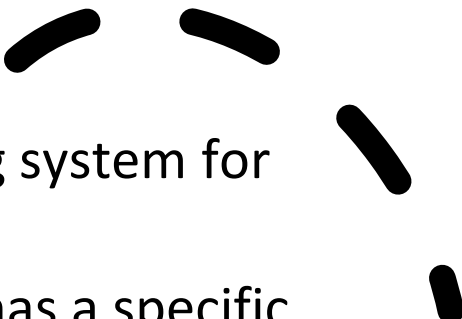
- Use different-colored supplies for each subject.
- Assign each class its own color. Blue for philology, red for math, and so on.
- You can also color-code digital folders on your computers.

## Color-Coding Tips from Lexi Walters Wright (Cont.)

- Try “home” and “school” colors for note-taking.
- In class, students take notes on what they learn from the professor. At home, they take notes on what they’re studying on their own. Taking at-home and at-school notes in different colors—whether by hand or on a computer—can help avoid confusion.



## Color-Coding Tips from Lexi Walters Wright (Cont.)

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- Use an underlining system for note-taking.
  - When each color has a specific purpose, you can scan a page and know where to look for what. For example, you mark all new terms or vocabulary words in yellow, the main topic in green, and each subtopic in pink.





## Color-Coding Tips from Lexi Walters Wright (Cont.)

- Color-code to-dos.
- Use different-colored sticky notes to help your child keep track of things like assignments or tasks.
- The color of the sticky note can show how urgent it is. For example, flag tasks that need to be done first with red stickies, next week's stuff green, and so on.



## Travis Bradberry's 12 Things Truly Confident People Do Differently

1. They get their happiness from within.
2. They don't pass judgment.
3. They don't say yes unless they really want to.





# 12 Things Truly Confident People Do Differently (Cont.)

4. They listen more than they speak.
5. They speak with certainty.
6. They seek out small victories.





## 12 Things Truly Confident People Do Differently (Cont.)



7. They exercise.



8. They don't seek attention.



9. They aren't afraid to be wrong.



## 12 Things Truly Confident People Do Differently (Cont.)



10. They stick their necks out.



11. They celebrate other people.



12. They aren't afraid to ask for help.

# Strategies for starting and managing tasks



Get social



Take five



Start wherever



The Romans were wrong...about outlining

# Get Social

1

Create or join  
a study group

2

Get an  
accountability  
partner

3

Get a body  
double



# Take Five



Get an egg timer



Set it for five minutes



Work until the bell goes off



# Start Wherever

If you don't know how to begin, that's fine. Start somewhere else. Start in the middle. Or at the conclusion.

For example, if you're writing a paper on Hamlet and you don't know what your thesis is, you could start in the middle by writing your analysis of a quote from a literary critic in a particular passage of required reading.





# The Romans were wrong...about outlining

Alternates to Roman Numeral outlining:

- List of questions
- Mind maps
- Models
- Collection of ingredients (chef approach)
- Gathering materials (engineer approach)

# Learning objectives for next week's talk on Emotional Regulation



Understand emotional regulation's importance for resilience.



Identify challenges, triggers, and consequences of dysregulation.



Develop strategies to improve emotional regulation, build resilience.

# Washington University's Services for Students



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