

# Executive Functioning

## Hub Session

Helping people to be  
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# What we will cover

What executive functioning is

What people may struggle with

Challenges of executive functioning

Possible causes

Executive functioning and autism

Strategies

Discussion

# What is it?



Executive functioning is responsible for many skills such as:



Managing behaviours



Regulating emotions



Planning and prioritising



Organising thoughts



1)Working memory

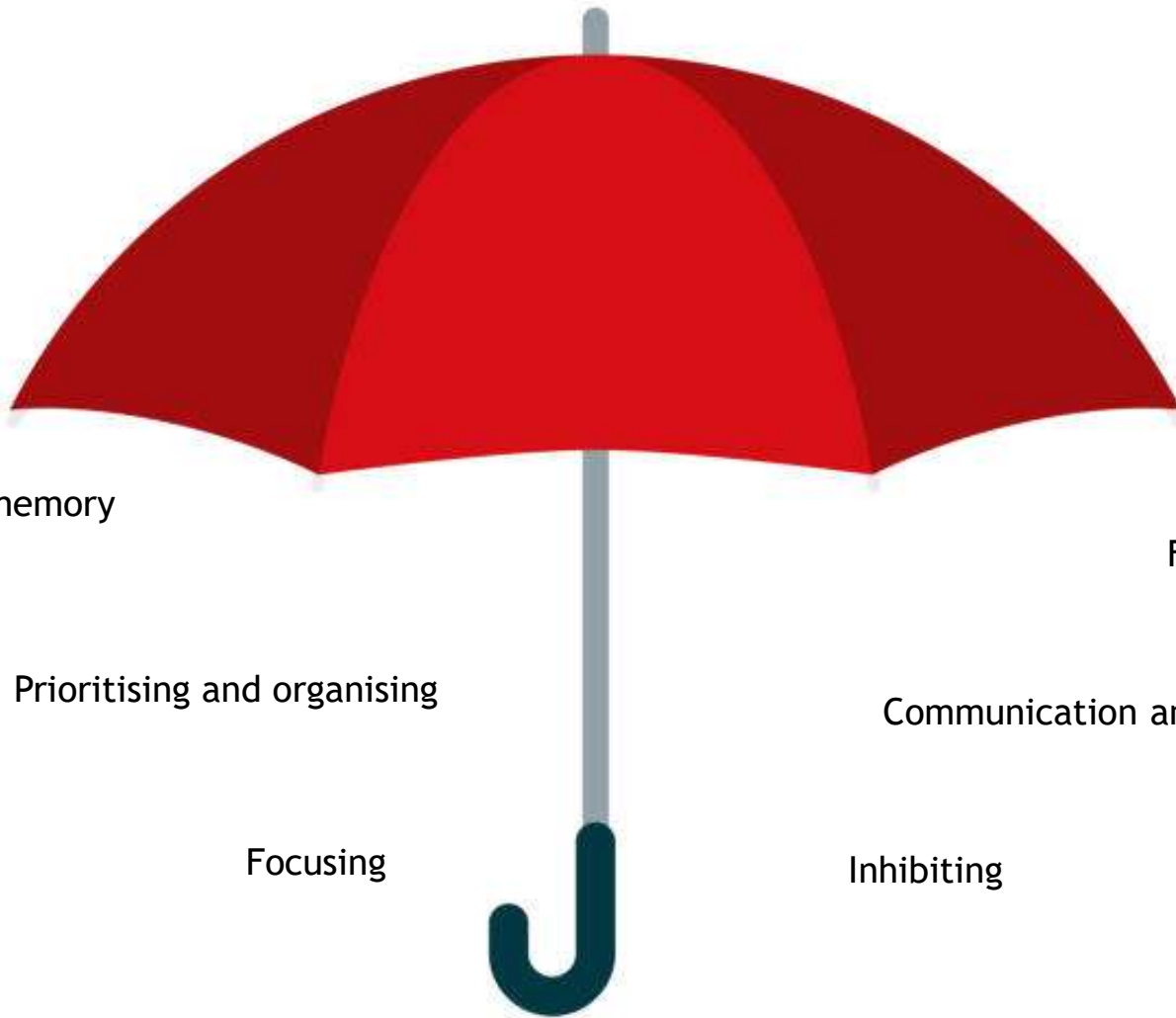


2)Cognitive  
Flexibility



3)Inhibitory Control

# 3 main areas of Executive Functioning



Working memory

Flexibility

Prioritising and organising

Communication and emotion

Focusing

Inhibiting

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# Working Memory

Working memory is one of the brains executive functions

It means we can hold information in the brain and link it to other information

Ability to remember specific short term memories in order to complete a daily task

## Difficulties

Following practical steps or instructions may be difficult

You may not remember information correctly or fully

# Cognitive Flexibility

- ▶ This is the ability to adapt our behaviour and thinking in response to the environment
- ▶ You can think about different things at the same time
- ▶ The ability to adapt thinking due to different situations

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# Inhibitory Control

Having control of our  
behaviour and thoughts

The ability to consider  
actions and responses  
before acting on them

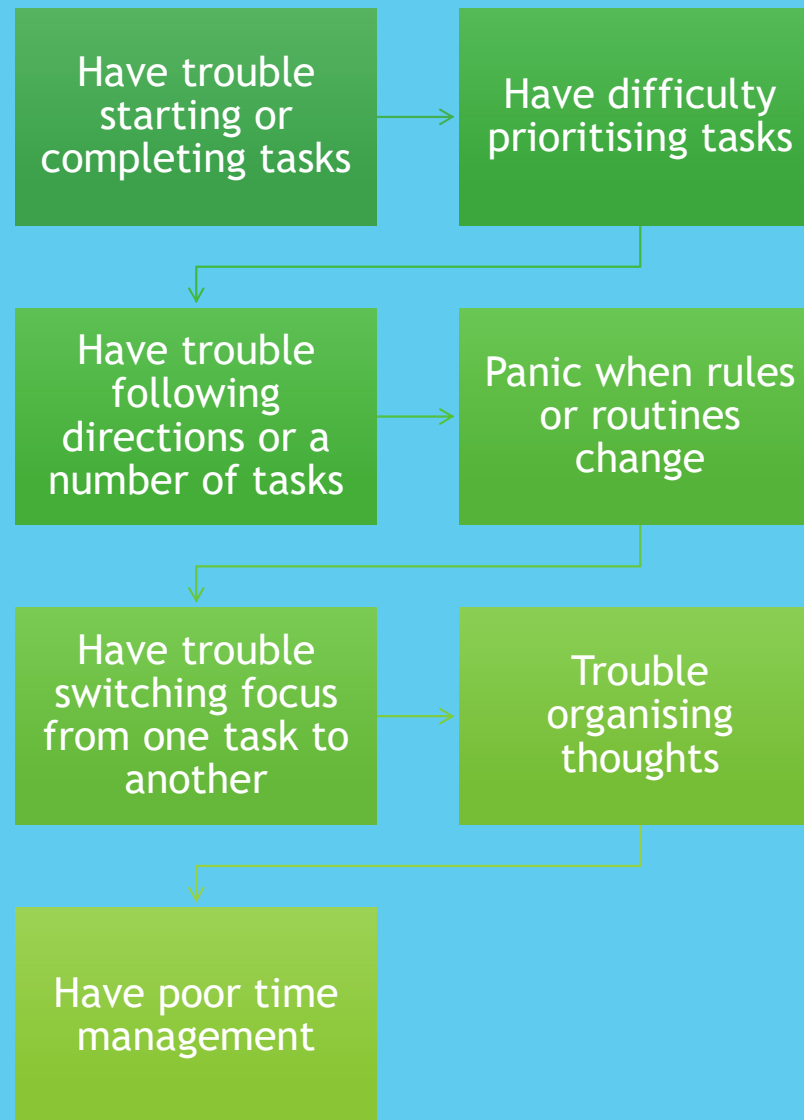
For example...

Inhibition is what makes it  
possible for us to stay quiet  
when you want to say  
something, but know that you  
shouldn't





People  
struggling  
with  
executive  
functioning  
may..



## Possible Causes

Genes and hereditary

Developmental disorders

ADHD

OCD

Neurological conditions

- ▶ Not everyone with ASD has difficulty with all aspects of executive functioning
- ▶ Many Autistic people have great memory for facts and detail but struggle to organise their thoughts and access the information to make it useful for them.
- ▶ It can be difficult to sustain focus and motivation when engaged in something that isn't interesting to you
- ▶ Autistic people can be good at following schedules and routines, but find it difficult to be flexible and change routines

## Executive Functioning and Autism

# Examples



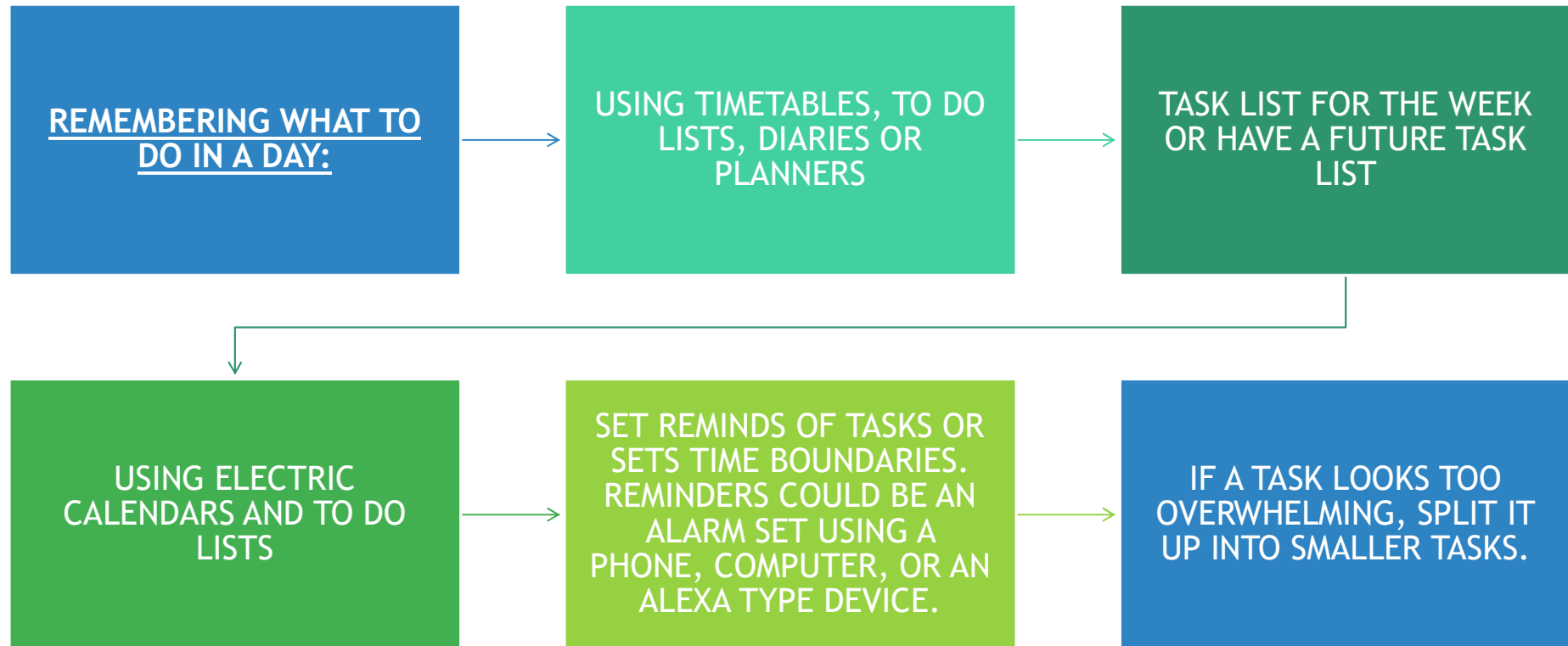
You may be able to identify that something needs to be problem solved, however have difficulty verbalising it



You may be great at remembering details for things of interest, however forget or struggle to identify steps involved in a practical task such as cooking



You may have difficulty prioritising and forming a plan to reach or goal or complete a task



# Executive Functioning Strategies

# Executive Functioning Strategies

## Organisation:

Facebook groups such as TOMM

The fly lady website can be helpful

Using family / friends and tackling one bit at a time and breaking the task down.

If you find it hard to part with belongings, you could donate to a charity

Having a specific place for belongings to prevent you from losing them, such as your bag or keys

Labelling draws so you remember what's in each drawer

# Executive Functioning Strategies

## Cooking

Using a slow cooker or a one pot

Watch a video and pause it at each step

Cooking using a boxed meal scheme eg hello fresh, gusto

Using timers or alarms as reminders when cooking,

Having a meal plan in place

Batch cooking

# Helpful Approaches

Use

Use colour coding to help organise

Build in

Build in extra time to manage change or transitions

Have

Have a set place for items

Write down

Write down dates in a diary or calender

Have

Have a checklist



# Pomodoro Technique



Decide what task to start



Set a timer for a certain amount of time eg- 25 minutes



Work on that task until the timer goes off



Have a short break before moving onto the next task



Repeat process with another task

# The 8 executive functioning skills

Impulse Control -  
Think before acting

Flexible thinking-  
try to plan and  
adjust to new things  
or the unexpected

Emotional Control-  
How is something  
making you feel

Self monitoring-  
Evaluate how you  
are doing

Working memory-  
Store information  
in your mind

Planning and  
prioritising- set a  
goal and write  
objectives on how  
you will meet it

Organisation- Keep  
track of dates,  
belongs and make  
notes

Task Initiation- Set a  
date and time and  
get started

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# Discussion..

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# References

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