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*"Usually Messy and Always Late": Understanding Executive Functioning and Organizational Skills Challenges for Students with ADHD*

*Lisa Ahern, Ph.D.  
Licensed Clinical and School Psychologist  
The Center for Emotional Health –  
Cherry Hill & Princeton*

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## Overview

- What is ADHD?
- What is Executive Functioning?
- The ADHD Experience
- Research-Based Treatments for ADHD
  - Parent Training
  - Organizational Skills Training
- Strategies for Daily Routines
- Strategies for School
  - Daily Report Card
- Strategies for Homework
- Strategies for Adults
- Resources

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## What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiologically-based disorder that results in developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity

"Deficit" is not a deficit in attention but a deficit in the ability to *regulate* attention

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### ADHD: DSM-V Criteria

#### Inattention

Six or more of the following manifested often:

- Inattention to details/ makes careless mistakes
- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Seems not to listen
- Fails to finish tasks
- Difficulty organizing
- Avoids tasks requiring sustained attention
- Loses things
- Easily distracted
- Forgetful

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### ADHD: DSM-IV Criteria

#### Impulsivity/Hyperactivity

Six or more of the following manifested often:

<b>Impulsivity</b>	<b>Hyperactivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blurts out answer before question is finished</li><li>• Difficulty awaiting turn</li><li>• Interrupts or intrudes on others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fidgets</li><li>• Unable to stay seated</li><li>• Inappropriate running/climbing (restlessness)</li><li>• Difficulty in engaging in leisure activities quietly</li><li>• "On the go"</li><li>• Talks excessively</li></ul>

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### ADHD DSM-V Criteria

Symptoms of inattention or impulsivity/hyperactivity

- Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present before age 12 years.
- Several symptoms are present in two or more settings (such as at home, school or work; with friends or relatives; in other activities).
- There is clear evidence that the symptoms interfere with, or reduce the quality of, social, school, or work functioning.
- The symptoms are not better explained by another mental disorder (such as a mood disorder, anxiety disorder, dissociative disorder, or a personality disorder). The symptoms do not happen only during the course of schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder.

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A presentation slide with a light blue background and green hills at the bottom. The title is "Is ADHD different from ADD?". Below the title are three bullet points, each with a checkmark: "Predominantly Inattentive Type (ADD)", "Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive Type", and "Combined Type".

Is ADHD different from ADD?

- ✓ Predominantly Inattentive Type (ADD)
- ✓ Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive Type
- ✓ Combined Type

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A presentation slide with a light blue background and green hills at the bottom. The title is "What about Executive Functioning Disorder?". Below the title are two bullet points: "- EFD is not a DSM-V recognized disorder separate from ADD/ADHD" and "- Used to describe problems often associated with ADHD but may also occur for people who do not meet full criteria or for those with other disorders."

What about Executive Functioning Disorder?

- EFD is not a DSM-V recognized disorder separate from ADD/ADHD
- Used to describe problems often associated with ADHD but may also occur for people who do not meet full criteria or for those with other disorders.

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A presentation slide with a light blue background and green hills at the bottom. The title is "Executive Functioning\* – Frontal Lobe". Below the title is a list of ten bullet points describing executive functions: Response Inhibition, Working Memory, Emotional Control, Flexibility, Sustained Attention, Task Initiation, Planning/Prioritization, Organization, Goal-directed persistence, and Meta-cognition. A small note at the bottom right credits Dr. Peg Dawson.

Executive Functioning\* – Frontal Lobe

- Response Inhibition – "wait and stop"
- \*Working Memory – hold information in mind and work on it
- Emotional Control – manage emotions in order to complete tasks
- Flexibility – ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, mistakes
- \*Sustained Attention – maintain attention despite distractibility, fatigue, or boredom
- \*Task Initiation – get started in timely fashion
- \*Planning/Prioritization – create a roadmap to complete task
- \*Organization – create and maintain systems to keep track of things
- Goal-directed persistence – have a goal and work toward it
- Meta-cognition – stand back and take a "birds-eye" view of oneself in a situation – self-evaluation ("How am I doing?" "How did I do?")

\* Credit Dr. Peg Dawson "Smart but Scattered!"

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### The Gifts of ADHD

According to some of my teen/young adult patients:

- **Creativity and Divergent thinking** – “Outside the Box”  
“I’m usually the one who thinks of the crazy idea that just might work!”
- **Energy!!!** (H/I or Combined Type) “I have to keep busy so I do a lot of activities – exercise helps me focus”
- **Willing to take risks** – “I’ll try anything at least once – that’s how I develop a lot of my ‘weird’ interests, but I think it makes me a more interesting person”
- **Passion** – “My ability to overfocus – It sometimes gets in the way, but when I use it to my advantage I can make a ton of progress and even go beyond if I’m really interested in it”

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### My biggest ADHD hurdles...

- **Organization:**
  - “I can’t find anything. Even stuff that I’m holding in my hand. I spend a lot of time looking for things. It makes me late a lot.”
- **Self-monitoring/Memory:**
  - “I don’t realize if I’m talking too much or too loud unless somebody tells me”
  - “I get distracted easily. I’ll go to my room to get something and start reading a book or looking at my phone and when I go back downstairs I won’t remember what I went in there to get in the first place.”
- **Planning ahead:**
  - “I’m a major procrastinator. I feel like I do my best work under pressure but it backfires when something goes wrong. Honestly, it’s probably not my best work either but at least it got done.”

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### My biggest ADHD Hurdles

- **Listening/Focus:**
  - “My parents will be talking to me about something and I zone out. Then they’re mad at me for not listening and think I don’t care.”
  - “My ex-girlfriend said I never listened to her and that’s why she broke up with me.”
  - “In class I just can’t focus for more than a couple minutes – I look out the window and I’m like ‘Squirrel!’ or I’m thinking about lunch. And then the origin of the word lunch. And then why people don’t drink Hawaiian Punch anymore. Cuz you know, punch rhymes with lunch. What was your question again?”

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### My biggest ADHD Hurdles

- **Impulsivity:**
  - "I don't always think before I do stuff or say stuff. I get myself in trouble because of that. Especially if I get angry, I'll say the worst stuff. Sometimes I hate myself because of it."
  - "I get seriously mad in traffic and waiting in lines. I'm that jerk huffing behind people to hurry up."

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### Research-Based Treatments for ADHD

- **Stimulant Medications and some non-stimulants (less effective)**
- **Behavioral Treatments**
  - ☞ Clinical Behavior Therapy/Parent Training
  - ☞ Direct Contingency Management (Rewards/Consequences)
  - ☞ Group Social Skills Training (Super Flex) – hard to generalize
  - ☞ Organizational Skills Training (Executive Function "coaching" - promising)

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### BEHAVIORAL PARENT TRAINING

- **Core Components**
  - Praise, Attending, and Rewards
  - Ignoring/Differential Attention
  - Effective Instructions
  - Establishing Rules
  - Token Economy Systems
  - Nonphysical Punishments (e.g., privilege removal)
- **Recommended Components**
  - Stress Management for parents – treating parents' ADHD helps kids
  - Home-school report cards

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### Parent Training Primer: ABCs of Behavior

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Rushing Disorganization	Forgets Homework at home	Remove video game privileges
Use of homework checklist Use one homework folder	Turns in homework (positive or "Go" behavior)	Praise Extra video game time

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### Parent Training Primer: Differential Attention

	Good Child Behavior	Bad Child Behavior
More Parent Attention	*Catch Them Being Good* ↑	*Criticism Trap* ↑
Less Parent Attention	*Let Sleeping Dogs Lie* ↓	*Planned Ignoring* ↓

\*Adapted From Helping the Non-Compliant Child (Rex & Forehand, 2005)

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### Organizational Skills Training

- OTMP Study – Duke/NYU (grades 3-5)
- OST – Teach skills directly to child with positive reinforcement of skill practice
- PATHKO – Use of behavioral techniques to reward outcomes (Daily Report Card – Home Token Economy System)
- Both improve over waitlist control, with more improvement with OST

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### OST and "The Glitches"\*

- "The Mastermind" – Frontal Lobe – in charge of keeping things running smoothly – controls the "Glitches"
- The "Glitches"
  - "Go Ahead Lose It" Glitch – Says "Just put that anywhere, you'll find it later"
  - "Go Ahead Forget it" Glitch – Says "You don't need to write that down, you'll remember."
  - "Go Ahead Don't Plan" Glitch – is always on vacation and relaxing
  - "Time Bandit" – steals your free time by distracting you

\*Gallagher, Abikoff, & Spira 2014

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### Organizational Strategies

- Organizing Materials:
  - Use of Accordion File with "To Do" and "To Turn In" sections, Rubrics, Planner/Calendar



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### Organizational Strategies

- Organizing Materials:
  - Backpack Checklist/Locker Checklist (Training, Practice, Reinforcement)



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Binder</li><li>- Planner</li><li>- Math Book</li><li>- Lunch Box</li><li>- Flute</li><li>- Spanish Workbook</li></ul>
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### Organizational Strategies

- Organizing Materials:
  - Rubber Bracelets (Smart But Scattered) and other Physical Reminders





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### OST Strategies

- Time Management:
  - Estimating Time

Activity	Estimated Time	Actual Time	Over, Correct, Under?	Why?
Shower	5 minutes	15 minutes	Under	Needed towel, forgot to rinse shampoo
Math Homework	15 minutes	25 minutes	Under	Distracted by Phone
Get ready for soccer	15 minutes	15 minutes	Correct	Laid out uniform night before

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### OST Strategies

- Time Management
  - Time Planning Conference (OST Strategy)
    - "What are you going to do and When are you going to do it?"
    - List tasks - Prioritize! A = due tomorrow or else! B = want to do today but not until As are done... C = On radar but can put off until later
    - Think of materials needed
    - Estimate time task will take
    - Fit into schedule - what else is on your calendar today? This week?

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### OST Strategies

- Time Management – Weekly Schedule

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
3 – 4pm	Art Club						
4 – 5pm	Homework	Homework	Tutoring	Homework	Homework		
5 – 6pm			Homework				
6 – 7pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner		
7 – 8pm	Soccer		Soccer				
8 – 9pm	Bed	Bed	Bed	Bed	Bed		

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### OST Strategies

- Planning
- GLAD Planning Strategy (from TOPS group)
  - Goal: Write 3-page book report with characters, plot, & analysis
  - List the Steps:
    - Read 50 pages (x3) – 2 hours each
    - Write intro and characters – 1 hour
    - Write plot, analysis, and conclusion – 1 hour
    - Edit/Revise/Submit – 30 minutes
  - Arrange the Steps: estimate time, when fit in schedule
  - Do you think it will work?

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### Strategies for daily routines

- Labeled Praise – increase self-monitoring: "I like the way you put all your clothes in the hamper," "Thank you for closing the door behind you." "You're being very responsible with packing up your homework."
- Reflective Questioning – What should you do now/next? What are the steps? (white boards)
- Time Estimation: How long will this take? What time is it now? When should you be done?
- Post a family calendar and daily schedule, post checklists of routines

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*Strategies for daily routines*

- Break tasks like cleaning room or getting ready in the morning into smaller steps and check in with praise
- Using attending/sports-casting strategy ("You're getting your jacket out of the closet and putting it on, you're putting your books in your bag and zipping it up" "you're carrying your dish to the trash, and scraping it, and carrying it to the sink")
- Use of Listening Strategies (be in the room; get eye contact; have child repeat back directions and say what to do next; use "go" commands; keep instructions short (reduce verbal))

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*Suggestions for helping Children with ADHD at School*

- Daily Report Card (with at-home positive reinforcement)
- Accommodations such as: preferential seating, testing in a separate room, extra time on test and assignments, reduced homework, advance notice of deadlines, "grace" period
- Differential Attention/Specific praise from Teachers
- Reflective Questioning – What should you do now? What are the steps?
- Time Estimation: How long will this take? What time is it now? When should you be done?

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*Suggestions for helping Children with ADHD at School*

- Written Reminders/Advance Organizers – have students help create
- Break assignments into steps and smaller pieces
- Use of Listening Strategies (get eye contact; have child repeat back directions)

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### Daily Report Card

Behaviors*	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Papers in folder	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Assignments written in planner	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Checks backpack	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Time Planning Conference with teacher	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No

2 / 4 Yes = 30 min video game time      \*Behaviors with one reminder  
 3 / 4 Yes = 60 min video game time  
 4 / 4 Yes = 90 min video game time      15 / 20 per week = weekend reward

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### Daily Report Card – Trouble Shooting

- If Yes, Praise! If no, matter of fact response "I know you'll work on this for tomorrow"
- Behavioral expectations appropriate? More reminders?
- Criteria – too easy? Too hard?
- Logistics – not able to follow through? Forget to bring home?
- Rewards – immediate, consistent, powerful/motivating
- Fade as child master's behavior – combine two behaviors then drop off – reinforce intermittently (every other day? Flip a coin?) – move to weekly report

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### Suggestions for Homework Time

- ▶ Create a protected homework time and space
- ▶ Create and post homework rules (i.e., no TV, You Tube, social media, or texting during homework, one 10 minute break for snack, music on headphones ok)
- ▶ Break homework into smaller sections and use a timer – estimate time, check actual time
- ▶ Provide rewards/privileges for completing homework behaviors such as getting started on time, finishing on time, and packing up the backpack – may use a chart/homework checklist
- ▶ Ask teacher to sign child's planner each day and reward child for bringing it home

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### Suggestions for Adults

- Use a technological nag – Google Calendar, iPhone calendar and reminder apps (e.g., “Siri, remind me to feed the dog at 7pm tonight”), watchminder.com
- Make a note when you think of something that needs to be done (notes app, small notepad)
- When stuck, stop and plan – if still stuck just do something/anything
- Use Self-Questioning techniques – “What did I bring in with me?” “Do I have everything I need?” “What should I do next?” “Do I have enough time?”
- Use ABC priority strategies – A must be done today/ASAP, B is important but do after As are done, Cs can wait until another day/week

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### Suggestions for Adults

- Plan in detail – Use the 5 Ws:
  - What needs to be done?
  - Why is it important (prioritize)?
  - How will I do it – what are the steps – anything that needs to be done first?
  - When will I do it?
  - What things will I need?
  - Who do I need to involved/talk to?
  - Where do I need to go?

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### Suggestions for Adults

- Simplify:
  - All keys on one keychain, with back up copies
  - All pants have pockets
  - One purse/wallet for cards/money/phone/keys that can be transferred from bag to bag
- Enlist a friend to help/work in parallel (“What are you going to do, When are you going to do it?” – Accountability)
- “Forest” app – plant a tree!
- *Driven to Distraction and Delivered From Distraction* by Hallowell & Ratey
- *Out of the Fog: Treatment Options and Coping Strategies for Adult Attention Deficit Disorder* by Kevin Murphy

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### Resources

- ▶ *Taking Charge of ADHD* by Russell Barkley, PhD
- ▶ You Tube – Russell Barkley "Essential Ideas for Parents"
- ▶ *Smart but Scattered* by Peg Dawson, PhD (& for teens)
- ▶ *The Everything Parents Guide to Executive Functioning Disorder* by Rebecca Bransetter, PhD
- ▶ *Organizational Skills Training for Children with ADHD* by Gallagher, Abikoff, & Spira (Amazon)
- ▶ Additudemagazine.org
- ▶ Understood.org
- ▶ [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)

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### TOPS: Teen Organization, Planning, and Study Skills

- Group Intervention originally developed by Dr. Ahern and colleague Dr. Kristin Berthume while at Duke ADHD Program
- 4 to 6 Middle School or High School students
- 1 parent meeting, 8 student sessions, HW in between
- Tickets for participation, raffle \$5 gift card each week
- Review organization, time management, planning, study skills, note-taking, and self-advocacy (CBT)
- The Center for Emotional Health – Cherry Hill

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**Dr. Lisa Ahern, PhD**  
Director of Psychoeducational Services  
The Center for Emotional Health  
Cherry Hill & Princeton, NJ

- NC State – PhD in School Psychology
- NCSU Psychoeducational Clinic
- Wake County Public Schools (NC)
- Duke University ADHD Program – Director of Learning Disorders Clinic
- CHOP Center for Management of ADHD
- Mount Laurel Public Schools (NJ)
- Adjunct Professor – PCOM School Psychology Program
- Licensed Psychologist
- Certified School Psychologist

[Ahern@thecenterforemotionalhealth.com](mailto:Ahern@thecenterforemotionalhealth.com)

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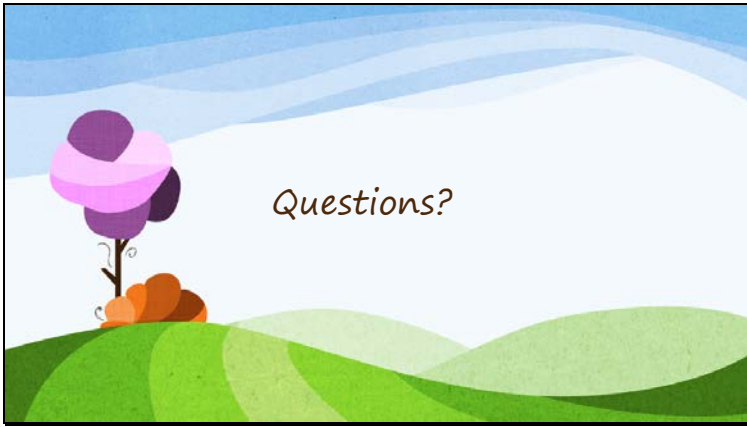
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