

UNDERSTANDING EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

A Guide for Parents and Teachers

Like adults, children too engage in activities, from studying for exams to making new friends, to achieve their goals. Behind the scenes, executive functions (EFs) keep everything on track, like the brain's personal assistant, helping children stay motivated and focused on their goals by managing attention, thoughts, feelings, and actions. Whether they're learning new concepts, navigating social situations, or problem-solving, EFs play a crucial role in every aspect of their development. These powerhouse functions rely on the pre-frontal cortex (PFC), which matures throughout childhood and adolescence. By around age 25, the PFC is fully developed, allowing EFs to work at their full potential.

A helpful way to understand EFs is with the word '**STOP**', in which each letter represents a vital EF skill:

- **S is for Stop!**

Impulse control is like the superpower of self-regulation. It helps children think before they act, like resisting the urge to smash a vase when they're angry.

- **T is for Think!**

Problem-solving is all about flexibility and adaptability. When things don't go as planned, children need to find alternative solutions, as adults do when navigating unexpected challenges at work.

- **O is for Organise!**

Organising time and space is crucial for efficiency. Children need to keep track of their routine, tasks and belongings, and be aware of their environment, just as adults must manage their schedules and workspace to stay productive.

- **P is for Perform!**

Working memory is like a mental notepad that helps children stay focused on tasks. From following multi-step instructions to tackling complex problems, working memory is essential for completing tasks accurately.



Executive Functions in Children with ADHD

Children with ADHD have unique and dynamic executive functions, shaped by their distinctive brain development and neurochemical makeup. Their pre-frontal cortex develops on its own timeline, and they have a natural variation in dopamine levels, which can lead to diverse approaches to self-regulation, working memory, organization, and planning. These differences may manifest as a strong ability to think creatively, moments of deep focus, and a tendency to act on spontaneous insights.

By understanding and celebrating these neurodivergent traits, we can provide the right support to help these children harness their strengths and flourish in their own unique ways.



Sethu Centre For Child Development and Family Guidance

5/84, Dhonvaddo, Saligao, Goa 403 511

+91-77200 13749

www.sethu.in

[f](#) Sethu Centre for Child Development & Family Guidance

[i](#) sethu.goa

[in](#) Sethu

