



Executive Functioning

Turning Support Into Skill-Building

A Caregiver Resource by 2villages: A simple way to understand your child's struggles and know what to do next.



www.2villages.life



THE REFRAME

This is not about fixing behavior.

This is about understanding what's underneath it.

Executive functioning is the brain's management system.

It shapes how children:

- start tasks
- stay organized
- regulate emotions
- manage time
- stay focused
- adapt to change

***Skills can be supported.
Skills can be strengthened.
Skills can be taught.***

When these skills are still developing, everyday moments can feel harder than they should.

What looks like:

- avoidance
- resistance
- emotional outbursts
- forgetfulness

Is often a child navigating a **skill gap**, not a behavior problem.



SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

Executive functioning is not behavior.

It is the invisible system operating underneath behavior.

When we treat it as behavior, we respond with correction.
When we recognize it as a skill, we respond with support.

Instead of asking:
“Why won’t they?”

We begin asking:
“What is making this hard?”

This shift changes everything.



IMPORTANT REMINDER

Children have different needs, abilities, and profiles.

There are no one-size-fits-all solutions.

Executive functioning support requires:

- observation
- flexibility
- experimentation
- problem-solving with your child

Be solution-driven, not behavior-driven.

THE SKILLS

Executive functioning refers to the **brain-based skills** required to execute or perform tasks.



Working Memory

ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks

Being Organized

ability to keep track of information or materials

Managing Time

capacity to allocate time and meeting deadlines

Being Self Aware

ability to take a bird's eye view of yourself in a situation and self evaluate

Planning

ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or complete a task

Starting Tasks

ability to begin projects in a timely fashion

Emotions Control

ability to manage emotions to achieve goals or complete tasks

Self Control

capacity to think before acting

Staying Focused

capacity to keep paying attention in spite of distractibility, fatigue or boredom.

Mental Flexibility

ability to revise plans in face of obstacles or new information



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Executive Functioning shows up in everyday moments:

- Getting started on homework
- Following multi-step directions
- Handling transitions
- Managing frustration
- Keeping track of belongings
- Staying focused long enough to finish

If these moments feel harder than expected, executive functioning may be part of the picture.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



***If you've been
feeling
overwhelmed,
start here...***

You do not need to work on everything.

1. Complete the support profile
2. Identify your top 3 areas
3. Start with one skill
4. Try one tool at a time

Small shifts create meaningful change.



SUPPORT PROFILE

This tool helps you identify patterns in your child's daily functioning.

It is not a diagnosis.

It is a way to:

- understand where support is needed
- reduce guesswork
- focus your efforts

Higher scores highlight areas where support may have the greatest impact.

Executive Functioning Support Profile

About This Tool

Executive functioning (EF) refers to a set of brain-based skills that help children manage everyday life. These skills influence how children get started, stay organized, regulate emotions, stay focused, manage time, and persist through challenges.

This tool is designed to help caregivers identify patterns and areas where executive functioning support may be helpful.

Important Note

This tool is not a diagnostic or clinical instrument.

Results do not indicate the presence of a disorder, delay, or medical condition. Executive functioning skills naturally vary across children and are influenced by development, stress, environment, and support. This profile is intended to guide reflection and inform supportive strategies.

Instructions

Consider your child's typical behavior across daily life, including routines, transitions, schoolwork, chores, self-care, play, and social situations. Answer based on patterns rather than isolated good or difficult days.

Response Scale

N: Never → Rarely / almost never observed

S: Sometimes → Happens occasionally

O: Often → Happens frequently / consistent pattern

How To Score

Assign numeric values:

N: Never = 0, S: Sometimes = 1, O: Often = 2

For each category, add your score.

After scoring all skills, identify your top 3 highest totals.

Highest Totals = skills creating the most daily friction.

What Your Scores Mean

Higher totals indicate areas where your child may benefit from additional executive functioning support. These are not labels or deficits. They simply highlight where targeted scaffolding may have the greatest impact.

Executive functioning skills naturally fluctuate and develop over time.

Supporting these identified skills first often improves multiple daily challenges at once.

Start small. Build gradually.



Starting Tasks

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. struggle to get started on tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. stare, delay, or freeze before beginning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. require repeated reminders to start	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. avoid starting through distraction or negotiation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. appear stuck at starting task at an agreed upon time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. take a long time to move from instruction to action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. feel overwhelmed when facing effortful tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. need someone nearby to successfully begin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Working Memory

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. forget instructions quickly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. lose track of multi-step directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. forget what they were doing mid-task	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. need steps repeated frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. struggle to hold information long enough to act on it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. forget materials needed for tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. abandon tasks due to forgetting steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. appear confused after receiving instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Emotions Control

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. escalate quickly when upset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. struggle to recover after frustration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. become overwhelmed easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. shut down under stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. struggle to play in a group without becoming overly excited	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. react with big emotions to small problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. struggle with transitions due to emotional distress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. struggle to anticipate outcome and prepare for disappointment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Self Control

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. act before thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. interrupt or blurt out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. struggle to follow classroom rules (e.g. raising hand)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. grab others' properties without asking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. react physically when upset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. struggle to wait their turn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. have difficulty stopping actions once started	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. struggle to act appropriately in dangerous situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Mental Flexibility

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. struggle with unexpected changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. become distressed when plans shift	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. insist on routines being exact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. struggle to adapt to alternatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. have difficulty shifting between activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. struggle at recovering from minor disappointments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. has trouble adjusting when a peer is behaving inflexibly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. become stuck in one way of thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Being Organized

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. struggle to organize tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. skip steps in activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. struggle to plan ahead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. lose materials frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. have difficulty breaking tasks into steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. struggle to prepare for activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. not have specific places for belongings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. struggle to put items in proper locations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Staying Focused

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. become distracted easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. struggle to sit through a meal of normal duration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. struggle to stay engaged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. bounce between activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. seems bored during family commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. struggle in noisy environments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. require frequent redirection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. struggle to focus through an age appropriate presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Being Self Aware

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. rush through tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. repeat mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. struggle to check work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. appear unaware of personal space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. struggle to evaluate performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. struggle to adjust behavior when needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. appear unaware of impact on others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. struggle to notice when something isn't working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Managing Time

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. underestimate how long tasks take	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p style="text-align: center;">N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. struggle with time limits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. become distressed during transitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. struggle to complete daily routines within reasonable time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. appear surprised when time runs out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. struggle to pace activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. require reminders about time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. struggle to speed up to finish task within timelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Sticking To Goals

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. give up quickly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p style="text-align: center;">N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. struggle with frustration tolerance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. avoid effortful tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. struggle to come back to task if interrupted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. struggle to sustain effort to complete project or task	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. resist practicing without reminders to improve a skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. require encouragement to continue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. become overwhelmed by prolonged effort	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Planning

How often does your child...	N	S	O	Total Score
1. struggle to figure out where to begin when facing a task	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p style="text-align: center;">N = 0, S = 1, O = 2</p>
2. appear overwhelmed when tasks involve multiple steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. start tasks without a clear plan or strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. skip steps or complete tasks out of order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. have difficulty breaking larger tasks into smaller parts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. struggle to anticipate what materials or information are needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. struggle to complete simple art projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. rely heavily on adult guidance to structure tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Top 3 Areas (highest 3 scores)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Starting Tasks | <input type="checkbox"/> Staying Focused |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working Memory | <input type="checkbox"/> Being Self Aware |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotions Control | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing Time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Control | <input type="checkbox"/> Sticking To Goals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being Organized | |



NOW WHAT?



Look at your top 3 highest scores.

These are not weaknesses.
They are starting points.
This is where change begins.

You don't need to fix everything.

Focus on:

- one skill
- one moment of the day
- one small change

This is how progress builds.

TOOLS INTRO



Turning Support Into Skill-Building

The tools on the next pages are designed to:

- reduce overwhelm
- increase independence
- build skills over time

You don't need to use them all.

Choose what fits your child and your day.

If a tool doesn't work, it's not failure- it's information.

Starting Tasks

(Initiation)



Common struggle: Staring, avoiding, freezing.

Tools:

- Use First-Then boards (“First homework, then Lego”)
- Set a 5-minute launch timer (focus only on starting)
- Sit nearby as a body double
- Provide a visual start cue (first step checklist/picture)
- Use countdown prompts (“Starting in 3...2...1...”)
- Identify the first step together

Working Memory

(Holding information in mind)



Common struggle: Forgetting steps or instructions.

Tools:

- Create visual checklists
- Write steps down (dry erase boards, sticky notes)
- Break tasks into smaller chunks (1-2 steps at a time)
- Build routine anchors (same order every day)
- Practice repeat-back strategies (“Tell me what’s first.”)
- Rehearse with trial runs before challenging situations

Emotions Control

(Managing big feelings)



Common struggle: Meltdowns, shutdowns, overwhelm.

Tools:

- Designate a Positive regulation space
- Teach coping strategies (breathing, grounding, movement)
- Use feelings charts or scales
- Provide sensory supports (fidgets, weighted items, movement)
- Build predictable routines
- Prepare by previewing expectations
- Lead with co-regulation first

Self Control

(Impulse control / thinking before acting)



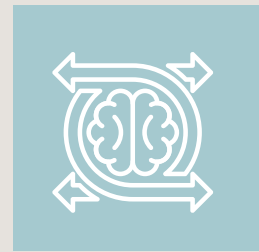
Common struggle: Grabbing, interrupting, reacting.

Tools:

- Teach STOP strategies (Stop, Think, Observe, Proceed)
- Use hand signals or quiet reminders
- Practice waiting games (Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light)
- Create physical boundaries (tape lines, space markers)
- Offer replacement actions (“Hands in pockets,” “Squeeze ball.”)

Mental Flexibility

(Handling change / shifting gears)



Common struggle: Rigidity, difficulty with transitions.

Tools:

- Use visual schedules
- Preview transitions ahead of time
- Offer limited choices within structure
- Practice Plan B thinking
- Use transition objects
- Create Social Stories for predictable challenges
- Identify coping strategies in advance

Being Organized

(Managing tasks and materials)



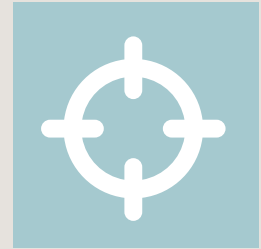
Common struggle: Messy spaces, lost items, incomplete work.

Tools:

- Involve your child in planning systems
- Establish consistent organization systems
- Use color-coded bins, folders, and labels
- Create daily visual routines
- Break tasks into mini-steps
- Use pictures of the desired outcome
- Build end-of-day reset routines

Staying Focused

(Staying focused / resisting distraction)



Common struggle: Starting tasks but drifting quickly.

Tools:

- Use focus timers (short work bursts)
- Provide a visual focus target
- Capture distractions in a parking lot
- Adjust the environment (reduce noise/clutter)
- Incorporate movement or sensory supports
- Introduce focus supports (Focus Shield / defined workspace)

Being Self Aware

(Noticing & adjusting performance)



Common struggle: Rushing, repeating mistakes, limited awareness.

Tools:

- Build check-your-work routines
- Use before/after reflection prompts
- Model self-talk strategies
- Provide visual success criteria / rubrics
- Use video or photo feedback when helpful

Managing Time

(Understanding & Managing Time)



Common struggle: Underestimating duration, abrupt transitions.

Tools:

- Use calendars and visual schedules
- Introduce visual timers / countdown clocks
- Map time expectations (“This takes about 10 minutes.”)
- Anchor routines to predictable cues (songs/playlists)
- Provide structured transition warnings
- Track elapsed time together

Sticking to Goals

(Sticking with hard things)



Common struggle: Giving up quickly, frustration intolerance

Tools:

- Break tasks into success-sized pieces
- Track visible progress
- Use effort-focused encouragement
- Normalize productive struggle
- Schedule regulation breaks

Planning

(Organizing steps before starting)



Common struggle: Feeling overwhelmed, not knowing where to begin, skipping tasks

Tools:

- Break tasks into mini-steps
- Create visual checklists
- Identify the first step together
- Use backward planning (start with end goal → work backwards)
- Use planning templates (“What do we need?” “What comes first?”)
- Rehearse plans before challenging situations
- Externalize planning (write/draw instead of verbal only)



CLOSING REFLECTION

Executive functioning struggles are not a sign that something is wrong.

They are a sign that something is developing.

Growth happens in environments shaped by:

- patience
- structure
- support
- connection

Not perfection.

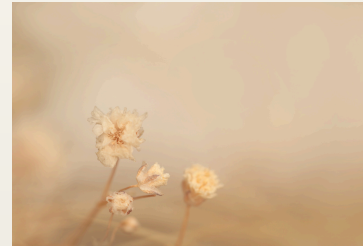
You don't have to do this alone.

Explore more tools and support at www.2villages.life

A Note for Caregivers

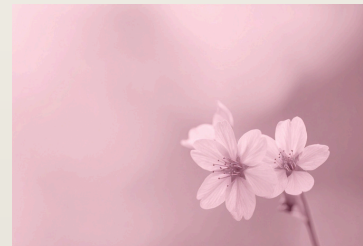
Support Before Independence

Support is not dependency.
Support is how independence is
built.



Your Regulation Matters

Children borrow our nervous systems long
before they can manage their own.
Our state becomes their learning environment.



Capacity Is Key

When executive functioning feels hard for a
child, the load often shifts to the caregiver.
Caregiver capacity is not separate from child
development. Strengthening your own
regulation and recovery is a developmental
strategy, not a luxury.

