

Session 1 Parent Summary: Orientation and Introduction

Session Overview

- ◆ Group orientation
- ◆ Overview of executive functioning (EF) and ADHD
- ◆ Impact of parent EF skills
- ◆ Responding when problems arise
- ◆ Parent-Child Problem-Solving (PCPS)

Key Information

- ◆ The purpose of this group is to provide parents and caregivers with information about how EF impacts their child and tools to support them. It is intended for educational purposes only.
- ◆ Confidentiality is critical:
 - ◆ Do not share personally identifying information about other group members
 - ◆ Legal limitations to confidentiality (e.g., duty to report abuse)
- ◆ “Executive functioning” refers to a group of neurological processes that allow us to engage in goal-directed behaviour (e.g., being able to consciously choose how we want to act, feel and behave in order to have the outcome we want).
- ◆ EF **processes** are related to the structure of the brain, pathways and chemical messengers, and networks that connect different parts of the brain.
- ◆ Parts of the brain involved include:
 - ◆ Frontal lobe (self-regulation, attention, working memory, self-monitoring, inhibition, planning, logic, etc.)
 - ◆ Limbic system (emotions, motivation, reactivity, fight or flight)
 - ◆ Parietal lobe (attention)
 - ◆ Brain stem (arousal, alertness)
- ◆ EF **skills** are evidence that those neurological processes are working well.
- ◆ Problems with EF skills are related to underlying neurological issues, which are **seen** as behaviours or actions (or lack of action). They are often hereditary.
- ◆ Symptoms of ADHD can be linked to one or more areas of executive functioning.
- ◆ Long term goals of supporting EF skills include helping your child develop:
 - ◆ Stronger EF skills and strategies
 - ◆ Strong self-advocacy skills
 - ◆ A strong support network

- ◆ Parent EF profile impacts parenting and support of child with EF deficits. Having a similar or different area of difficulty has pros and cons that depend on the people involved, the situation, and other factors.
 - ✦ Having similar problems may increase empathy and/or make it harder to support skill development.
 - ✦ Having an area of strength that your child does not have may help you support them better in that area, but may make it harder for you to understand their difficulties.
 - ✦ See Session 1 Handout: Parent EF Implications
- ◆ When a young person is not meeting important expectations, we will need to:
 - ✦ Provide **support** when problems arise
 - ✦ **Collaborate** to solve problems with your young person
- ◆ When problems arise, parents often engage in one or more types of responses (see Session 1 Handout: Types of Responses to Problems).
- ◆ When creating a framework for solving problems as a family, you need to apply basic problem-solving steps to each family member involved, taking into account maturity, type of relationship between the people involved, and the nature of the problem (e.g., reoccurring, situational, etc.).
- ◆ Parent-Child Problem-Solving (PCPS) is an approach to solving problems with your child. See Session 1 Handout and Worksheet: Parent-Child Problem-Solving.
 - ✦ Other forms of family problem-solving follow the same steps, but you will need to adapt the conversation to take into account the nature of the problem and the nature of the relationships between the problem-solvers.

Homework Checklist

- Use the Session 1 Worksheet: Parent-Child Problem Solving to work through a problem with your child this week. Choose a problem that is relatively simple/straightforward, and if possible, one that would have a meaningful impact on your day-to-day life, once solved.
- Session 1 Worksheet: Problem Response Styles.

Session 1 Handout: Parent EF Profile Implications

Your executive functioning profile can impact your parenting in many ways. There are benefits and drawbacks associated with having the same areas of difficulty as your child, or different areas of difficulty. This might vary depending on the situation, the age of your child, the nature of the difficulties, and so forth. Below, you will find some examples of the ways in which your specific areas of weaknesses or strengths could potentially impact your parenting or your relationship with your child, for better or worse.

EF AREA	IMPLICATIONS
WEAK INHIBITION	You may be great at being spontaneous and playful with your kids
	You may be at your best in a crisis and able to think well on your feet
	You may react to situations before considering important information, such as your child's cues, contextual cues, early warning signs, shared information, and/or make unhelpful and inaccurate assumptions about your child's difficulties or behavior
	You may have difficulty slowing down to consider a problem thoughtfully, or feel impatient about the amount of time it takes to solve problems
	You may talk too much/dominate conversations
	You may jump in or take over for your child too quickly
	You may skip to trying to solve problems before fully understand the issues
	You may not take enough time to validate your child's experience before moving on
STRONG INHIBITION	You may be able to develop thoughtful hypotheses about your child's behaviour
	You may be good at pausing to consider important information (e.g., your child's cues, contextual cues, early warning signs, your child's perspective), <i>before</i> responding, allowing you to respond thoughtfully when your child is struggling
	You may be good at making sure you have enough information before trying to come up with possible solutions
	You may be good at making sure everyone has a chance to share their ideas
	You may provide your child adequate time to come up with their own insights and possible solutions to problems that arise
	You may be able to patiently validate child before trying to move on from a situation
	You may struggle to appreciate that your child cannot control their actions/words
	You may find it difficult to embrace your child's spontaneity and jump into unplanned adventures with them
WEAK EMOTION REGULATION	You may have a particularly intense emotional bond with your child
	You may be a very empathetic parent, and/or have a deep appreciation of your child's intense emotions
	You may be very good at validating your child's experiences when you are calm
	You may be able to experience intense, positive emotions towards your child, and share many intensely joyful experiences with them
	You may be a fierce advocate for your child
	You may struggle to stay calm in the face of stress (your own or your child's), and/or your child's emotions or stress behaviours may trigger your own intense reactions
	You may overreact to minor problems, making it harder for your young person to come to you with their problems

EF AREA	IMPLICATIONS
	<p>Your child may worry about sharing their emotions or perspective, because they don't trust that you will be able to stay calm and supportive</p> <p>Your young person may feel like they are to blame for your reactions or overall stress</p> <p>You may avoid problems until they are more serious or difficult to solve</p> <p>It may be difficult for you to listen if your child tries to tell you that something you are doing is unhelpful or hurtful to them</p> <p>You may struggle to follow-through when you feel drained or stressed, an/or you may be more prone to feeling defeated or angry when solutions do not work</p>
STRONG EMOTION REGULATION	<p>You may be good at staying calm in the face of stress (your own or your child's)</p> <p>You may be good at moderating your emotions when young person is experiencing their own intense emotions or engaging in stress behaviours</p> <p>You may be good at keeping small problems in perspective</p> <p>You may be good at responding to setbacks without feeling too discouraged</p> <p>You may find yourself trying to mediate conflicts among intense family members</p> <p>You may underestimate child's distress, or be more likely to dismiss it as "overdramatic"</p> <p>You may downplay child's intense reactions, or struggle to validate their intense emotions</p> <p>Your child may worry about sharing their emotions or perspective, because they don't trust that you will be able to empathize</p> <p>It may be difficult for you to appreciate why your attempts to use logic to address your child's emotions are experienced as unhelpful or stressful by your child</p>
WEAK MOTIVATION	<p>You may be laid-back about certain things (e.g., competition, achievement)</p> <p>You may be very motivated when your child is really struggling, but may lose motivation when a crisis passes</p> <p>You may have developed strategies for yourself that will help motivate your child</p> <p>You may struggle with follow-through</p> <p>You may give up more easily when things aren't going well</p> <p>You may be inconsistent in your support</p> <p>It may be difficult to approach problems in a way that is better in the long run, particularly when there are easier, short-term fixes available</p> <p>You may procrastinate in addressing problems once you are aware of them, making them more difficult or complicated to address</p> <p>You may get distracted by short-term goals and neglect long-term goals</p> <p>It may be hard to motivate both you and your young person</p>
STRONG MOTIVATION	<p>You might be very good at trying new parenting strategies, and have excellent follow-through</p> <p>You may be persistent when trying to help your child work to overcome challenges or meet longer-term goals.</p> <p>You may be good at addressing your child's problems as soon as you notice them</p> <p>You may be an excellent advocate for your child, and excellent at finding the resources they need to be successful</p> <p>You may feel frustrated at your child's lack of persistence</p>

EF AREA	IMPLICATIONS
	<p>You may assume that your child could complete tasks or meet goals if they would just “try harder” or “not give up” so easily</p> <p>You may find it more difficult to develop effective strategies to help your child overcome significant problems with motivation</p> <p>Your motivation to help your child may be experienced as controlling or over-bearing by your child</p>
WEAK ATTENTION	<p>You may be good at coming up with creative solutions to problems your child experiences</p> <p>You may have a natural curiosity that helps you develop a thorough understanding of your child (e.g., their experiences, needs, strengths, etc.)</p> <p>You might be very good at making connections between your child’s strengths/needs and the difficulties they experience</p> <p>You might get distracted by unimportant details or unrelated concerns when discussing problems</p> <p>It may be hard to block out distractors in order to give your child your full attention</p> <p>You may be distracted by your own thoughts (rebuttals, solutions, ideas, etc.) when listening to your child</p> <p>You may struggle to support your child while also attending to your own responsibilities (e.g., helping with homework while cooking dinner)</p> <p>You may overlook important details when working with your young person to solve a problem</p> <p>You may not notice when your child is off task or not paying attention</p> <p>You may miss important early warning signs, non-verbal cues, etc., making it more difficult to effectively co-regulate</p>
STRONG ATTENTION	<p>You may be very good at helping keep your child on task or on topic</p> <p>You may be good at focusing on your child’s concerns without getting distracted by your own thoughts, ideas or concerns</p> <p>You may be good at giving your child your undivided attention</p> <p>You may be good at helping your child catch oversight errors or missed information</p> <p>You may notice subtle non-verbal cues, allowing you to notice early warning signs of hunger, stress, etc.</p> <p>You may have difficulty anticipating what will be distracting to your child</p> <p>Your awareness of your child’s non-verbal cues (e.g., noticing every sigh, eye-roll or sign of frustration) may contribute to your frustration, at times</p>
WEAK WORKING MEMORY	<p>You may avoid trying to do other things while also helping your child, because you have had to learn to avoid the “multi-tasking” trap</p> <p>You may have developed excellent strategies (e.g., using sticky notes, creating effective study aids, etc.) that you are able to model for your child</p> <p>You may have strong, non-linear thinking skills</p> <p>You may feel overwhelmed when trying to consider your needs and those of your young person (e.g., your schedule and theirs)</p> <p>You may lose track of main point/priorities (e.g., main goals, priorities, etc.)</p> <p>You may struggle to prioritize which problems to work on</p> <p>You may have difficulty considering more than one solution to a problem</p> <p>You may find it hard to predict and address potential barriers to success, problems that might arise, etc.</p>

EF AREA	IMPLICATIONS
	<p>You might struggle to help your young person make decisions</p> <p>You might find it hard to sort through your child’s concerns to identify the most important information</p> <p>It may be difficult for you to help your child with particularly complex tasks, projects or problems</p>
STRONG WORKING MEMORY	<p>You may be very good at helping your child complete complex, multi-step tasks</p> <p>You be able to consider both your needs/concerns and those of your child, simultaneously</p> <p>You may be good at considering more than one way of solving a problem or approaching a task</p> <p>You might be good at prioritizing tasks</p> <p>You might be good at summarizing your child’s thoughts/concerns</p> <p>You may be good at seeing common ground when you and your child have differing perspectives</p> <p>You have difficulty recognizing when you are giving your child too much information or too many directions at once</p> <p>You may not recognize when your child many need visual aids or reminders</p>
WEAK SHIFTING	<p>You might be very tenacious when advocating for your child’s needs</p> <p>You may have excellent research skills that allow you to become very knowledgeable about anything that affects your child</p> <p>You may be very good at focusing your energy on your child when they need it most</p> <p>You may have difficulty shifting your attention from your own thoughts/concerns to really appreciate and focus on those of your child</p> <p>You may have ideas/expectations that you struggle to let go of when your young person brings different ideas to the table</p> <p>You may find it difficult to stick to a plan when you are invested in other activities</p> <p>You may get stuck on minor details, and lose sight of the big picture</p> <p>You may struggle to let go of frustration, hurt, anger, etc., in order to be able to support your young person or engage in problem-solving</p> <p>You may find it difficult to let go of old ideas about your child and their challenges</p> <p>You might find if difficult to try new strategies, routines, or solutions to a problem</p> <p>You may get into “power struggles” with your child, rather than collaborating</p>
STRONG SHIFTING	<p>You may very good at putting your own thoughts/concerns aside, in order to fully appreciate and focus on those of your child.</p> <p>You may be good at adapting to your child’s needs and level of development</p> <p>You may be good at moving on after frustration or disappointment</p> <p>You may be good at letting go of your own assumptions, when you child shares their perspective/experience of a situation</p> <p>You may be good at adapting plans and expectations, when needed</p> <p>You may be good at coming up with different ways to address a problem when the first approach is not successful</p> <p>You may be good at not engaging in power struggles with your child</p> <p>You may feel frustrated if you are unable to help your child when they get stuck</p>

EF AREA	IMPLICATIONS
	You may find it frustrating if your child finds your flexibility and spontaneity stressful
WEAK PLANNING	You may be flexible, spontaneous, and very good at improvising in the moment
	You may be good at “being in the now” and/or being responsive to what is needed in the moment
	You may have difficulty helping your child learn to plan ahead (projects, goals, etc.)
	You might have difficulty breaking your child’s tasks into smaller steps
	You may struggle to help your young person with time management
	You may struggle to schedule appointments, meetings, etc., pertaining to your child
	You may often feel unprepared or struggle to anticipate what your child needs in different situations
	You may struggle to predict which solutions are most likely to be successful
	You may have difficulty connecting your child to outside supports (e.g., finding appropriate supports, contacting resources, planning appointments)
STRONG PLANNING	You might be very good at anticipating your child’s needs and well prepared for situations affecting your child
	You may be good at breaking tasks down into manageable pieces for your child
	You may be able to help your child with time management, and prevent them from falling behind on school assignments
	You may be good at anticipating potential flaws in a plan or solution
	You may have excellent networking skills that help you connect your child to important supports and resources
	You may feel frustrated when your child does not follow your plans
	You may not feel comfortable being spontaneous
	You may have difficulty allowing your child to learn to develop their own plans, particularly if you feel your plans are more efficient or more likely to be successful
WEAK ORGANIZATION	You may have developed the ability to function in a disorganized environment
	You may have developed creative organizational systems to help compensate for your difficulties, and/or be able to show your child how to develop their own systems
	Your home may be disorganized, and/or it may be difficult for you to help your child create organizational systems
	You may have difficulty presenting information so that it makes sense to your child
	You may have difficulty helping your child prioritize
	You may struggle to develop organize steps into a logical sequence for your young person to follow
	You may have difficulty helping your child make sure they have everything they need
	You may find it hard to help your child keep track of tasks, responsibilities, assignments
	You may lose important documents/paperwork regarding your child and/or have difficulty organizing it in order to share it with others (e.g., teachers, doctors)
STRONG ORGANIZATION	Your home may be well-organized, and/or at helping your child develop organizational systems
	You may be good at presenting information so that your child understands it
	You may be good at prioritizing concerns, so your child doesn’t feel overwhelmed

EF AREA	IMPLICATIONS
	<p>You may be good at keeping track of important documents, useful tools/strategies, etc.</p> <p>You may be good at making sure your child is well-prepared for various situations</p> <p>You may be good at scheduling appointments, meetings, etc., pertaining to your child</p> <p>It may be hard to let your child organize things in a way that makes sense to <i>them</i></p> <p>You may be so organized that your child doesn't have as many opportunities to practice their organizational skills</p>
WEAK SELF-MONITORING	<p>You may be good at being silly with your kids without worrying about how you look</p> <p>You may be very authentic and/or open with your child about your own EF difficulties</p> <p>You may struggle to meet your own needs, reducing your ability to support your child</p> <p>You may have difficulty helping your child get things done on time</p> <p>You may have difficulty realizing when you are contributing to your child's stress, and/or adapting your non-verbal responses to coregulate your child</p> <p>You may not realize when you've misunderstood your child, or misjudged a situation</p> <p>You may struggle to recognize when to change course and/or reach out for help</p> <p>You may not recognize when to increase or decrease EF supports</p> <p>You may have difficulty monitoring your child's progress, or recognizing small gains</p>
STRONG SELF-MONITORING	<p>You may be very good at recognizing your own early warning signs (e.g., fatigue, hunger, stress) and addressing your needs so that you can be there for your child</p> <p>You may be very good at helping your child follow schedules and routines</p> <p>You may be good at recognizing the impact you are having on your child, and/or adapting your non-verbal cues to help co-regulate your child</p> <p>You may be able to recognize when you need to adapt your plans in order to accommodate your child's needs</p> <p>You may be quick to recognize when you've misjudged your child or a situation</p> <p>You may be good at recognizing when your child needs outside support</p> <p>You may intuitively know how much support your child needs at any given time</p> <p>You may assume your child is able to recognize their own early warning signs</p> <p>You may have difficulty recognizing when your child is unaware of the impact they are having on others</p>

Session 1 Handout: Problem Response Types

When problems arise, there are many ways we can respond as parents. We may tend to respond in one or more ways, depending on the situation, and how we are feeling in the moment. Below is a list some common types of responses we might have when problems arise, and some examples of things we might say to our children when we are using them.

1. Criticize

- ◇ What were you thinking?
- ◇ You should have...
- ◇ You never...

2. Lecture

- ◇ If you don't start...
- ◇ Well, now you know that when you...
- ◇ If you would just...

3. Advise

- ◇ Well, I think you need to...
- ◇ You better...
- ◇ You should...

4. Take Over

- ◇ Here's what we're going to do...
- ◇ Well, then I will have to talk to your teacher tomorrow...
- ◇ This is how you need to do it, watch...

5. Stand Back/Avoid

- ◇ "Aw, that's too bad. So, what would you like for dinner tonight?"
- ◇ Well, I'm sure you'll figure it out ...
- ◇ Why don't you tell me about what went well, instead of dwelling on the negative?

6. Support

- ◇ I'm sorry to hear that - what happened?
- ◇ That must have felt really frustrating...
- ◇ I'm glad you're feeling a bit better. Do you have any ideas about how you want to handle this?

Session 1 Handout: Parent-Child Problem Solving

These 10 steps help guide parents through the process of solving problems *with* their children, collaboratively. While it may be slow and awkward at first, with practice, it can become second nature and will help your child develop critical skills.

1. **Plan** your approach
 - What have you observed that is problematic?
 - When does it occur?
 - Why is it a problem? What are your concerns?
 - Which concerns will you bring to your child (i.e., which concerns need to be addressed now)?
 - How will you word your observation and concerns when speaking to your young person?
 - What are some of your hypotheses, in case your child doesn't know why they are having difficulty (be open to being wrong)?
 - Who needs to be involved in problem-solving?
 2. **Approach** your child about the problem you have observed
 3. **Gather information** about their perspective and concerns
 4. **Share** your concerns
 5. **Brainstorm** *mutual* solutions that address everyone's needs/concerns
 6. **Evaluate** the most realistic solutions
 7. **Choose** a *viable* solution that works for everyone
 8. **Schedule** a follow up time
 9. **Follow-up**
 10. **Repeat** as required, until problem is solved
- ✓ **Use the Parent-Child Problem-Solving Worksheet to walk you through the process, and to provide helpful tips for each step.**

Session 1 Worksheet: Parent-Child Problem-Solving

1. Plan your approach

What problem have you observed?

TIPS

- If the problem occurs in more than one situation/context, focus on one
- Be concrete (facts, observations)
- Avoid assumptions and judgements (e.g., they don't care, aren't trying)

What are your concerns (i.e., why is it a problem)?

TIPS

- How is the problem impacting them? The family?
- What matters most to you about this problem (e.g., if something gets done, how or when something gets done, short- and long-term outcomes, quality of work, etc.)

Which concerns will you bring to your child?

TIPS

- Bring only those that are most important to you at this time
- Use **positive** language and/or **non-judgemental** wording

If your child cannot or does not share their concerns with you, what hypotheses could you check out with them?

TIPS

- Consider possible contributing factors (e.g., context, demands, stressors)
- Consider their EF profile

Who needs to be included in the conversation?

TIPS

- Who is strongly impacted?
- Who is most involved?

8. Schedule follow-up discussion

Day: _____
Time: _____

TIPS!

- Choose a time that is agreeable to everyone
- Approximately one week (longer, if plan will be implemented less frequently; shorter if potential consequences of the solution not working are serious)

9. Follow-up! If problem is not resolved, tweak the solution or try a different solution

What worked?

What didn't work?

Tweaks or new solution:

TIPS!

- Most solutions will require tweaking to be successful
- Each attempt can be used to gather valuable information (e.g., new concerns identified, obstacles, etc.)
- Since everyone agreed to the solution attempted, no one is to blame if it didn't work - work together to find obstacles, etc.
- Work together to troubleshoot obstacles

10.Repeat as required

Follow up day: _____
Follow up time: _____

TIPS!

- Schedule a follow-up time to evaluate new plan/tweaks
- Repeat steps until durable solution is found

Session 1 Worksheet: Problem Response Types

Be mindful of types of responses you have when problems arise this week. Use this worksheet to reflect on how you responded to 1-2 problems.

SITUATION 1

Describe the problem that occurred

What type of response did you have?

Why do you think you responded that way?

How did your child react to that response type?

How did your type of response impact the problem?

How did you feel about the situation afterwards?

How did your child feel about the situation afterwards?

SITUATION 2

Describe the problem that occurred

What type of response did you have?

Why do you think you responded that way?

How did your child react to that response type?

How did your type of response impact the problem?

How did you feel about the situation afterwards?

How did your child feel about the situation afterwards?

FINAL REFLECTION

Describe any insights you have gained from being mindful of your response style?
