

BVPAGE Meeting 11/15/18 PM

Board members: Jeannie, Heidi, Amy, Delora, Erin, Cecilia, Lisa

District attendees: Kristin Asquith

Attendance including board members: 235

Engaging Their Brains and Using Their Strengths: Executive Function Skills and Gifted Kids

Diane McLean, M.Ed, PCC

Presentation is included in the Meeting Archive on BVPAGE.org.

www.execskills.com – can find out more about her and the information from the meeting as well.

Motivation, Procrastination, Underachievement

- I. The Neurology of Stuck and Unstuck
 - A. Negative Neurological Cascades – Negative thoughts trigger cortisol which make us panic and think it's an emergency, shuts down parts of the brain needed for executive functions, we get stuck there
 - B. Positive Neurological Cascades – When we have positive thoughts, it triggers dopamine and our brain becomes activated in the prefrontal cortex where they can focus have no EF challenges
 - C. Executive Function issues are not a motivation problem. They are a neurological problem.

- II. How are Strengths Related to Executive Functions?
 - A. Types of Strengths: Performance (Skills, talents, abilities), Character Strengths (Personality Traits), Executive Function Strengths (strongest mental skills to get things done), Processing Modality Strengths (how do you best take in and process information)
 - a. viacharacter.org – helps identify strengths – this is a free quiz anyone can use. Set up an adult account. Adults and kids can take it under your account.
 - b. Smart But Scattered by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare
 - B. Boredom is not a behavioral problem, it's a neurological issue – they are craving stimulation
 - C. Executive Functions
 - a. Self Regulation
 - b. Mental Control
 - i. Time management is about perception of time. What does 15 minutes feel like? Help them see what it feels like
 - ii. Time organization is not time management
 - c. Teach them the language of Executive Function so they can explain what they are struggling at and can help point out when are succeeding at it as well
 - D. How it all fits together
 - a. Negative memories are stronger- they stand out more than positive

- b. If you use their strengths to work on executive function, you're stimulating the part of the brain that unsticks them and allows them to access more of the brain
- III. How Can We Enhance Executive Functions
 - a. Meet them where they are and use their strength to stimulate prefrontal cortex so we can access their brain and executive function
 - i. Self Regulation:
 - 1. When the brain calms down then you give the reward- dogs are great examples. Take a walk and see what distracts them. Make a plan, how can they avoid it
 - ii. Cooking
 - 1. Requires lots of executive function with a powerful reward at the end. You get to eat it!
 - iii. Arts and Crafts – great for tactile, kinesthetic, and visual learners
 - 1. Can use if for foresight and planning, organization of materials
 - iv. Play Games
 - 1. There are games to cover every function (Games list is included in the Meeting Archive on BVPAGE.org.)
 - 2. Adapt them to fit what you need
 - 3. Choose the pace they need – and whether they need it for calming down or waking up
 - v. Plan Backwards
 - 1. Start with the end in mind – what will it look like when it's done? That helps stimulate positive emotions "I can do this"
 - 2. Break down the steps and estimate time
 - 3. Prepare to take action
 - 4. SEE CHART for example on helping plan ahead (Get Ready. Do. Done PDF is included in the Meeting Archive on BVPAGE.org.)
- IV. Resources are included in the presentation and there is a Book List in the Meeting Archive on BVPAGE.org.

Questions:

Not all questions were answered in person. There will be additional information posted on the BVPAGE Meeting Archive for the questions that were asked on note cards.

Q. How do you encourage kids to accept help when they feel so overwhelmed?

- A. Step into their shoes and listen to them. Take the pressure off. Don't talk to them when they're stressed out. Wait until they are calm. "What is one small thing that stresses you out that we can work on? What would make it a little easier?" They have great ideas. We just need to listen. Don't feel like you have to tell them how to do it. Reflect the problem "I know you're stressed out.." and ask them how can we do this more creatively? What makes this hard for you? What can you do about it? Once you have a little success you can branch it out. Can you use this in a different area?

Q. For people who have executive functions, can they magically do things they aren't interested in?

A. Yes. Your strengths may be different from your kids/parents/peers. It can be hard to relate to that.

Q. What are some good games to work on executive function?

A. See attached PDF of game list – and which function goes well with it. Examples include, Don't break the Ice and Suspend. Have them recognize what skills they are using while they are playing it.

Q. How do we help kids break out of a teenager's panic mode?

A. Sometimes they hit bottom and they ask for help. They're in emergency mode. Sometimes they have to realize overextending themselves is not worth it and may have to learn that lesson the hard way.

Q. At what point do you let go and say you have to figure it out and deal with the consequences?

A. Figure out the line between what's being a family (families help each other out) and what's rescuing. Get the child's input. Structure it to where they can do it independently and then ask him to make it their own. Involve them in the transition of taking control for themselves.

Q. I'm so busy, when I can find the time to do my homework? (child asked a question and she coached her through it.)

A. You're already thinking ahead. How long does it take you do each page? Can you break it down? When do you think you might be able to do one page tomorrow? Do you have time at school? It doesn't help you think well if you think about it all at once, does it? If you time yourself you may even find it doesn't take as long as you think.