

# Practical strategies for improving executive function skills in children

## Online Workshop

**June 16 & 17, 2022**

**10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)**

*1-day and 2-day registration available.*

**To register, please see:** [https://caot.ca/viewEvent.html?no\\_header=true&productId=11136](https://caot.ca/viewEvent.html?no_header=true&productId=11136)

What is executive functioning? Executive functioning is “an individual’s ability to organize thoughts and activities, prioritize tasks, manage time efficiently, and make decisions” (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002). To successfully execute, children need to be aware of task demands and set goals. Then they must access forethought and hindsight to think in an organized way and to sustain their focus on the relevant features of the task at hand. As children mature, they learn how to organize their time, space, materials and develop the reasoning skills to consider multiple possible solutions to problems, recognize the “gray” in situations, and manage both expected and unexpected changes in plans, routines, rules and novel situations. Children must fluidly shift between changing task demands and carry out multiple complex steps to achieve expected goals. The first day of this online workshop will provide you dozens of practical strategies and techniques that you can utilize immediately with children with executive functioning deficits in their daily activities, including academics, behaviours, homework, morning routines, projects, sensing time, transitions, chores and home tasks, and bedtime routines. The workshop will begin with a clear overview of executive function skills to determine the most effective interventions and to understand the development of the executive function skills and what is meant by the term “executive dysfunction”. The Get Ready \* Do\* Done Model will be utilized to teach children “to develop situational awareness, create forethought of an end result, and then integrate all the materials, time and actions to complete a future task” (Ward & Jacobsen, 2014, p. 74). Intervention strategies will be shared to teach children to develop a “memory for the future”, to devise plans to achieve their goal, to use self-talk, to self-initiate, to transition to the next task of higher priority and to control their impulses and emotions to successfully complete a task. The awareness skills shared will improve children’s ability to “read a room” then “stop, think and create” an appropriate action plan and infer possible outcomes. Practical time management strategies will be provided to teach children to see and sense the passage of time, accurately estimate how long tasks will take, change or maintain their pace, and carry out routines and tasks within allotted time frames. Finally, methods will be shared to improve children’s ability to cognitively shift and to be flexible in processing and accessing information.

The second day of this online workshop will provide you additional strategies and techniques, advanced intervention examples, and increased knowledge on the scope and sequence to implement executive function strategies. The 360 Thinking executive function model and program, which teaches children to plan by first visualizing the final product then working backwards to problem solve potential obstacles (Katz, 2016), will be explored in detail. Best practices will be discussed to get children motivated, focused, organized and performing closer to their true potential. Participants will learn where to start, what goals to set with their clients, and how to make and implement a Toolbox of Strategies for teaching executive function skills. Advanced strategies will be provided to teach children to channel their motivation and go from Intention to Action by creating and carrying out plans and to sustain forethought for task planning across hourly and extended time horizons. Systematic ways to develop children’s situational intelligence and self-regulation will be shared. The relationship between speed of processing and executive function will be explored to improve written expression, abstract thinking/problem solving and figurative language skills. Hands-on experiential

exercises, interactive case studies, and reproducible handouts will be utilized to equip you with practical strategies that you can implement immediately in your practice, in the classroom or in the home.

## Preliminary workshop agenda

### Day 1

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Executive function (EF) skills defined EF dysfunction Development of EF skills
11:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Break
11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Interventions to improve forethought and self-talk, task initiation, self-regulations, making timely transitions and following routines
1:30 - 2:00 p.m.	Lunch
2:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Strategies to increase time management of daily and hourly time and long-term projects Teaching planning skills: Get Ready - Do - Done model (Ward & Jacobsen, 2014) for classroom
3:30 - 3:45 p.m.	Break
3:45 - 5:00 p.m.	Teaching planning skills

### Day 2 (Optional)

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Information processing
11:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Break
11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Ready - Do - Done Model (Ward & Jacobsen, 2014)/Behaviour
1:30 - 2:00 p.m.	Lunch
2:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Processing speed and planning
3:30 - 3:45 p.m.	Break
3:45 - 5:00 p.m.	Working memory and forethought

## Learning objectives

### Day 1

By the end of day 1, you will be able to:

1. State the functional working definition of what is meant by the term “executive function skills” as it pertains to therapeutic interventions.
2. Define how situational awareness, self-talk, forethought and episodic memory are the foundational skills for successful task execution.
3. Integrate the theory and techniques of the 360 Thinking model to develop lesson plans to remediate executive function skills in the classroom and/or individual and group therapy.
4. Generate a framework of interventions and choose at least five ways to foster children’s ability to sense and manage the passage of time.
5. Describe four strategies to develop children’s capacity to read a room then shift and be a ‘mental time traveler’ to pre-experience the physical actions to complete a task in prospective time and space.
6. Breakdown the clinical interventions and techniques for teaching children how to plan for, initiate and complete complex assignments and long-term projects within allotted time frames using the Get Ready \* Do \* Done (Get Done) Model (Ward & Jacobsen, 2014).
7. Create a therapeutic alliance with parents to improve the effectiveness of clinical interventions with children with executive function-based challenges and articulate the relationship between how

individuals self-regulate and executive function symptomatology to educate clients, family members and school professionals.

## **Day 2 (Optional)**

By the end of day 2, you will be able to:

1. Differentiate and explain how situational awareness, self-talk, forethought and episodic memory are the foundational skills for successful task execution and state the functional relationship between executive function, working memory and speed of information processing as it pertains to therapeutic interventions.
2. Evaluate and select and implement five advanced applications to teach children how to (a) visualize simple, multi-step and complex tasks and assignments and then sequence and plan the requisite steps to fully complete work and (b) improve self-regulation and inhibition to meet behaviour expectations.
3. Implement specific strategies to develop representational co-thought gesture for forethought and task planning.
4. Select and implement specific strategies to improve situational awareness and self-regulation skills to improve children's ability to "stop and read a room" and transition to follow routines with a reasonable pace and requisite materials with less supervision and fewer prompts.
5. Develop and implement intervention strategies to improve children's capacity to visualize and sense the passage of hourly and daily time, calculate how long tasks will take, break down and complete tasks and long-term projects within allocated time frames and control for procrastination and time distractions.
6. Design and implement a block and box schema training to improve children's processing speed for following routines, making decisions, planning tasks, doing assignments, completing writing assignments and engaging in social language/conversation skills.
7. Implement specific strategies to improve working memory for stronger mind miming forethought skills so children can go from intention to action to initiate and complete tasks and process information with greater accuracy and efficiency.
8. Design and implement specific strategies to improve processing of figurative and abstract language to reduce anxiety and teach children how to tolerate novelty and develop flexible/gray scale thinking for problem solving.

## **Target audience**

Occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, teachers, parents, and other professionals who work or live with children with executive function challenges, including those affected by autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and other neurodiverse conditions. Individuals who face these challenges personally are also welcome to attend. Please note that, although many of the strategies are not age specific, the examples will relate to school-age children.

The first day of the workshop will discuss foundational knowledge and strategies; the second day of the workshop will discuss more advanced strategies. Registrants may select registration for Day 1 only or Day 1 & 2. If you have previously attended a workshop presented by Sarah Ward and wish to only register for Day 2, please contact [education@caot.ca](mailto:education@caot.ca).

*Please note: Each participant is responsible to ensure they apply the information within the context of their licensure, provincial/territorial legislations, institution regulations, scope of practice, etc.*

### **Areas of practice**

Autism, Caregiver/Family education, Developmental disability, Education, Pediatrics

### **Client age group**

Children (5-12 years old)

## Presenter

### **Sarah Ward, M.S., CCC-SLP**

Sarah Ward, M.S., CCC/SLP and Co-Director of Cognitive Connections, LLP has over 25 years of experience in diagnostic evaluations, treatment and case management of children, adolescents and adults with neurodiverse conditions (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), acquired brain injury, and learning disabilities (verbal, non-verbal, social-cognitive). Her particular interest is in the assessment and treatment of executive function deficits. She holds a faculty appointment at the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions. Sarah is an internationally recognized expert on executive function skills and regularly presents seminars and workshops on the programs and strategies she has developed with her Co-Director Kristen Jacobsen. Sarah has co-authored the 360 Thinking Executive program and co-developed the educational products the Academic Planner and Tracknets, as well as the Time Tracker Program and Get Ready \*Do\*Done instructional approach. She has presented to and consulted with over 1,600 public and private schools in the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia and Africa. Awards received include the Bette Ann Harris Distinguished Professional (2017), the Innovative Promising Practices Award by CHADD, The National Resource on ADHD (2015), the MGH Expertise in Clinical Practice Award, and the Faculty in Excellence Award from the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions (2002, 2011).

## Registration Fees

### **Early bird rates: Registration and payment completed by April 27, 2022**

	CAOT Members and associates	Non-member
Day 1 and 2	\$390	\$487.50
Day 1 only	\$195	\$243.75

### **Regular rates: Registration and payment completed between April 28, 2022 and June 1, 2022**

	CAOT Members and associates	Non-member
Day 1 and 2	\$440	\$537.50

	CAOT Members and associates	Non-member
Day 1 only	\$245	\$293.75

**Registration deadline:** June 1, 2022

*Please note that for the 2021-2022 workshops, CAOT has reduced the registration fee for all registrants instead of offering a group rate. When available, CAOT offers late registration for workshops at the regular rate plus a \$50 administration fee. We will only be able to accommodate if there is sufficient space.*

#### **Included in your registration fee:**

Two-day workshop, electronic copy of presentation slide handouts, opportunity to network and make connections with other occupational therapists interested in this topic, electronic certificate of attendance.

## Cancellation/refund policy

All cancellation/refund requests must be sent in writing to [education@caot.ca](mailto:education@caot.ca). All cancellation requests received prior to June 1, 2022 will be given a full refund minus a \$50.00 administrative fee. All cancellation/refund requests between June 2 and June 8, 2022 will be given a 50% refund. **No refunds will be given after June 8, 2022.** Substitutions and transfers requests received by June 8, 2022 are permitted and are subject to a \$50.00 administrative fee.

CAOT reserves the right to modify the workshop title, description, registration dates and information on the workshop webpage. CAOT will notify participants on or before May 6, 2022 if there is insufficient registration by that date and reserves the right to cancel a Workshop due to insufficient registration up until May 20, 2022. CAOT reserves the right to modify the offering, interrupt Workshops, change the timing of a Workshop, cancel a Workshop or change the technology for the Workshop due to the presenter no longer being able to present the Workshop, severe weather, power failure, building closures or other special circumstances that are beyond the control of CAOT by notifying participants as soon as possible. If the Workshop is cancelled by CAOT, registrants will receive a full refund of the registration fee. CAOT will not be responsible for other costs or expenses incurred by registrants as a result of any such changes.

## Additional Questions?

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) is committed to accessibility as expressed in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). We provide an electronic copy of the handouts approximately one week ahead of time in multiple slide layouts, auto-generated closed captioning through Zoom (breakout rooms excluded), as well as access to the recording for two weeks following the workshop. If you require additional special arrangements for accessibility, please contact [education@caot.ca](mailto:education@caot.ca) or 1-800-434-2268.

We invite you to [consult the Professional Development FAQ for an immediate response](#) to the most frequent questions we receive regarding Workshops. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [education@caot.ca](mailto:education@caot.ca) or 1-800-434-2268 should you have additional questions or concerns.

