



Executive Functioning

Executive Functioning (EF) is a group of high-level mental processes that help us regulate, control, and manage thoughts and actions. They are comprised of Organizing Functions and Regulation Functions. These skills tend to be difficult for people with ASD.

Organizing Functions

Examples of Difficulty for a Person with ASD

Planning

Assess your own needs, come up with options, making a sequenced plan.

- Double-booking an appointment.
- Difficulty accomplishing multi-step tasks, like cooking or laundry.
- Difficulty prioritizing.

Problem Solving

Can notice and overcome obstacles to a goal.

- Difficulty coming up with a plan "B" for a get-together with friends when the restaurant is closed or the gathering needs to be rescheduled.

Working Memory

Can hold information in mind while completing a task.

- Difficulty dialing a phone number as a person reads it aloud.
- Difficulty following multi-step directions when given verbally.

Shifting/Flexibility

Can change based on responses to the environment.

- Difficulty switching to a task that needs to be completed immediately.
- Difficulty getting to work because usual bus route is delayed/re-routed.

Attention

Can focus on a task, even when uninterested.

- Difficulty completing a task because of distractions or interruptions.
- Difficulty with being on time because of the inability to estimate how long it will take to get ready, given distractions.



Regulation Functions

Examples of Difficulty for a Person with ASD

Inhibition

Blocking an action or thought.

- Talking about a topic, even when asked to stop.

Self-monitoring

Adjusting actions if something goes wrong.

- Difficulty completing a task when in a different environment, such as remembering coping skills that are used effectively at home.
- Difficulty driving (awareness of speed, the location of the car to others, etc.).

Initiation

Getting started on a task.

- Procrastination of a non-preferred task, possibly caused by not knowing how to break down a project into steps or not knowing how to begin.



Looking for Additional Information About ASD?

This information guide was developed by the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (**ASERT**). For more information, please call ASERT at **877-231-4244** or **info@PAautism.org**.

ASERT is funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, PA Department of Human Services.