Executive Function

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If you understand your own profile and your child's, sometimes it is easier to help them.
For some it is "what's going on in your head" and for others it is outward behavior/impulsiveness

ELEVEN TRAITS – in the order they are FIRST exhibited

1. *Response Inhibition*: The capacity to think before you act (fully develops last).
2. *Working Memory*: ability to hold information in min while performing complex tasks (what's on the computer's desktop). Remember things directly related to them, but very little else.
3. *Emotional Control*: The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior. Helps manage negative AND positive emotions (the positive is what pushes them to keep trying)
4. *Sustained Attention*: The capacity to maintain attention to a task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom
5. *Task Initiation*: The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion.
6. *Planning/Prioritization*: the ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task (differentiate important from not important)
7. *Organization*: The ability to create and maintain systems for keeping track of information or materials.
8. *Time Management*: The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. Estimate time to include distraction and breaks.
9. *Flexibility*: The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setback, new information or mistakes. The is no "plan b."
10. *Goal*-directed Persistence: The capacity to have a goal, follow through to completion of the goal, and not be put off by or distracted by competing interests.
11. *Meta-cognition*: The ability to stand back and take a birds-eye-view of oneself in a situation including the ability to problem solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills. Many kids do not have a future-orientation until they are young adults.

Frontal Lobe

- is sensitive to trauma
- has two parts:
    - Thinking ahead – Intellectual part/rational decision making
    - Regulating emotions, weighing pros/cons

1. The more you practice, the more you build up your neurons – Malcolm Gladwell says 10 years (10,000 hours)
2. Frontal lobe lights up more for kids than adults. When kids have to make a decision, which is definitely bad in the adult view, they need to weigh pros/cons first, but if with other kids, emotions take over/trump intellect.
3. Girls seem to develop earlier in girls
4. Frontal lobe continues to develop until age 22

Working memory starts to fall off by age 37
When asked to weigh the pros/cons of risky decisions, they become most impulsive around age 18

Therefore, parents and teachers act as "frontal lobes" while kids are teenagers

Three ways to deal with it

1. Change the environment to reduce the impact of weak executive skills
2. Teach the youngster executive skills.
3. Use incentives to get youngsters to use skills that are hard for them.

Tips for working with teenagers

- Pick your battles
- Use natural or logical consequences
- Make access to privileges contingent on performance
- Be willing to negotiate (make deals!)
- Involve others when you can (tutors, teachers, guidance counselors, coaches)
- Build on verification – if you make a deal, you need to be able to verify they did their end and be able to witness follow-through (don't promise things you can't control or check up on)

Assume that the kids don't have the capability and build in supports, coaches, check-ins

Provide the minimum support necessary for the youngster to be successful and show how the supports will be faded.

- Look for a level of success that can be verified (grades on test, % hw handed in)

Kids with ADD lag about 30% behind typical peers with no diminished capacity (so an 18 year old is like a 14 year old)