

# Understanding Executive Functioning

The hidden work behind daily life.

Executive functioning refers to the behind-the-scenes work the brain does to begin, remember, organize, shift, regulate, and return.

These skills are not a measure of intelligence or character. They are part of the invisible infrastructure of daily life.

As you read, notice what feels familiar. There are no right or wrong answers — this is a field map for understanding where support may be needed.

## HOW TO USE

Read each skill. Mark the box where the pattern feels familiar. Carry what you notice to the field notes on page three.

SKILL	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS	HOW IT MIGHT SHOW UP IN DAILY LIFE	RESPONSE / NOTES
01 <b>Response Inhibition</b>	The pause before acting — thinking before you speak or move, and resisting the pull of the immediate.	<i>Sending the message before rereading it. Reaching for the phone mid-task.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
02 <b>Working Memory</b>	Holding information in mind while you use it — keeping the thread while life interrupts.	<i>Walking into a room and forgetting why. Losing the second half of an instruction.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
03 <b>Emotional Control</b>	Letting feelings inform action rather than flood it — and returning to baseline after a spike.	<i>A small frustration coloring the whole afternoon. Sharpness arriving faster than expected.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
04 <b>Task Initiation</b>	Beginning without undue delay — crossing the gap between intention and the first step.	<i>Knowing what to do and circling it for an hour. The task that waited until it could not.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
05 <b>Sustained Attention</b>	Staying with a task through dullness, fatigue, or distraction.	<i>Drifting three sentences in. Finishing the easy parts, leaving the long one open.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____



# The twelve skills, continued

SKILLS 06 — 12

SKILL	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS	HOW IT MIGHT SHOW UP IN DAILY LIFE	RESPONSE / NOTES
06 <b>Planning &amp; Prioritizing</b>	Mapping the steps toward a goal, and deciding what truly comes first.	<i>Everything feels equally urgent. The task with no obvious first move stays untouched.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
07 <b>Organization</b>	Building and keeping systems for objects, space, and information.	<i>Keys that live nowhere. A surface that fills faster than it clears.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
08 <b>Time Management</b>	Sensing how long things take, and moving within the time you actually have.	<i>Five more minutes that becomes forty. Late despite leaving early in your mind.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
09 <b>Flexibility</b>	Adjusting when plans, conditions, or expectations change.	<i>A canceled plan unsettling the day. Difficulty shifting from one mode to the next.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
10 <b>Metacognition</b>	Stepping back to watch your own thinking — noticing what works and adjusting.	<i>Repeating an approach that is not landing. Surprise at how a morning actually went.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
11 <b>Goal-Directed Persistence</b>	Holding a goal and staying with it past the first resistance.	<i>Bright starts that fade. The project that is mostly done and quietly waiting.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____
12 <b>Stress Tolerance</b>	Working through pressure, uncertainty, and change without being overwhelmed.	<i>A full inbox tipping into shutdown. Capacity narrowing when several things land at once.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILIAR _____ _____



REFLECTION

# Prompts for Return

Answer slowly, in your own words. These notes are for you — a way to see where a little support might change the shape of a day.

- 01 Which two or three skills feel most challenging right now?
- 02 Are there situations, rooms, routines, or transitions where these challenges show up more?
- 03 Are there any skills that surprised you?
- 04 What is one cue, object, tray, lamp, or prompt that could reduce the hidden load?
- 05 What is one small support you could place where the pattern happens?

A NOTE ON NOTICING

Noticing these patterns is not about finding more things wrong with you.

It is about building self-understanding, so you can work with your brain, your body, and your environment – not against them.



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