

School Success for a Child with ADHD

MARYBETH RIGALI-OILER, PH.D.

CLINICAL CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHOLOGIST

Health  District

**CHILD, ADOLESCENT, AND YOUNG
ADULT CONNECTIONS (CAYAC)**

Topics – Part 3

1. Learn about the impact of COVID on learning and the presentation of ADHD in youth
2. Identify how to **partner with your child's school** to ensure they are getting the support they need.
3. Gain knowledge on the ways you can **support your child to overcome their academic difficulties** (e.g., homework and classroom strategies).
4. Learn strategies for supporting **working memory deficits**.

A young boy with short brown hair is wearing a light-colored surgical face mask and a dark blue polo shirt. He has a backpack on and is giving a thumbs-up gesture with his right hand. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage. A red vertical bar is visible in the top right corner of the image.

Learning in Context

Taking Into Context... COVID

- ▶ ADHD is a neurobiological condition and...
- ▶ Environmental factors can contribute to symptoms of ADHD (either mimicking ADHD or exacerbating true ADHD)
- ▶ Nationwide, test scores have dropped with COVID
- ▶ The mental health and academic achievement impact of COVID is just **now** becoming apparent
 - ▶ 2022 performance in math and reading dropped by the largest margin in 30 years (3rd graders)
 - ▶ ESPECIALLY for those who were the most vulnerable
 - ▶ The achievement gap has widened

Intersection of Mental Health

- ▶ U.S. Surgeon General issued advisory on youth mental health crisis in 2021
 - ▶ Further exacerbated by the pandemic
 - ▶ ***“The future of our country depends on how we support and invest in the next generation.”***
- ▶ 37% high school students had poor mental health during the pandemic
- ▶ 44% reported they persistently felt sad or hopeless during the past year
- ▶ More than half (55%) reported they experienced emotional abuse at home, 11% reported physical abuse

What does this have to do with ADHD?

- ▶ Individuals with ADHD are more at risk for mental health comorbidities, including anxiety and depression
- ▶ Remote learning was not ideal for children with ADHD
- ▶ Anxiety and depression can lead to inattention, fidgeting, forgetfulness or “brain fog,” distractibility, and lack of motivation
 - ▶ These are also symptoms of ADHD, therefore it can be exacerbated by social emotional or situational stressors
- ▶ We need to look at the **whole child**, not just their ADHD

COVID, ADHD, and Schools

- ▶ Schools are overwhelmed and are trying to address many issues created or exacerbated by COVID
- ▶ Schools have to evaluate how a child is doing within this context.
 - ▶ It is possible that a child is behind in reading because the foundational years of schooling were interrupted
 - ▶ OR a child is behind in reading because they have an underlying condition such as ADHD or a learning disorder
 - ▶ OR both
 - ▶ (Low attendance can be a disqualifying factor...)



Academics

Does ADHD cause my child to fall behind academically?

- ▶ Many studies show that ADHD is associated with poor grades, grade retention, and academic and occupational under-attainment
- ▶ Proactive interventions: manipulating antecedent events (e.g., modifying instruction) to prevent challenging behaviors from occurring



Does ADHD cause my child to fall behind academically?

- ▶ Cognitive functioning (IQ) is NOT found to be lower for children with ADHD
- ▶ Don't assume the child is the problem – remember we have to adjust the environment to **FIT** the child
- ▶ **This requires changes at home**

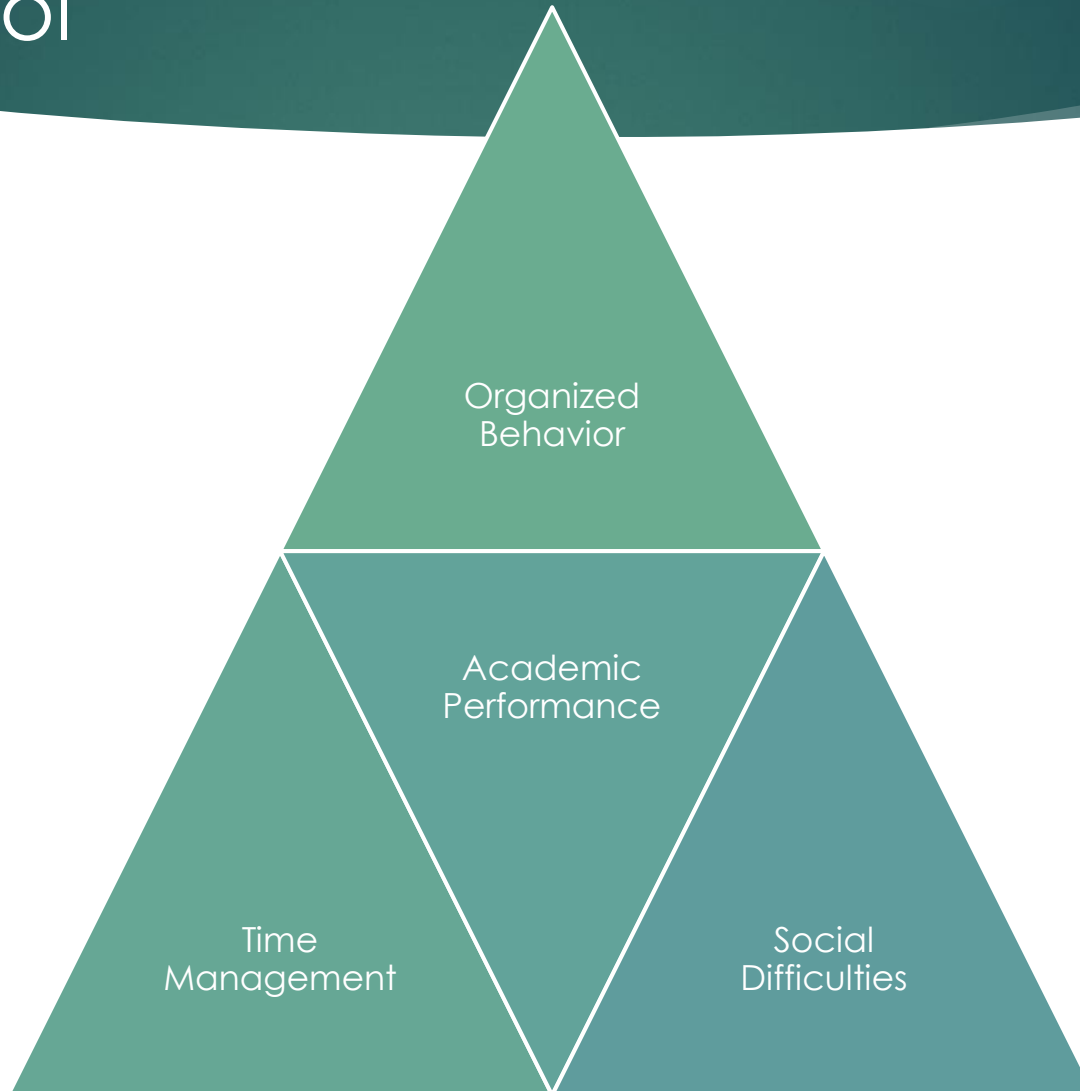
Reminder from Session 1: Executive Functioning

- ▶ Important cluster of skills that are utilized in goal oriented behaviors
 - ▶ Attention Management
 - ▶ Information Management
 - ▶ Action Management
 - ▶ Task Management
 - ▶ Emotion Management
 - ▶ Effort Management

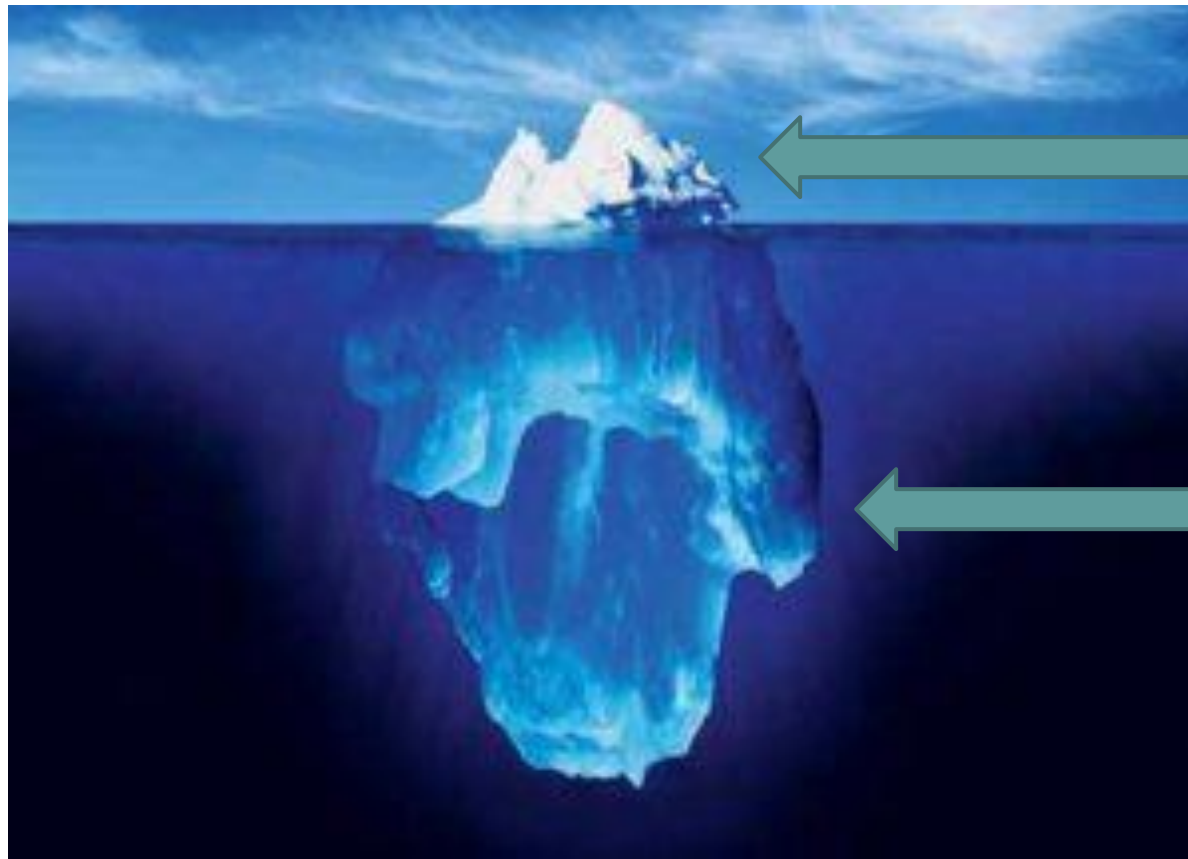
Executive Functioning Difficulties in School

- ▶ Learning in school taps into executive functioning because...
 - ▶ Learning new concepts requires attention and information management
 - ▶ Goal oriented performance requires action and task management
 - ▶ Delayed responses in learning require emotion and effort management
 - ▶ Multiple step tasks are part of learning
- ▶ As children transition to middle school, assignments require more complex EF, yet children with ADHD lag in EF skills behind neurotypical peers

Common Areas of Difficulty in School



Be Curious

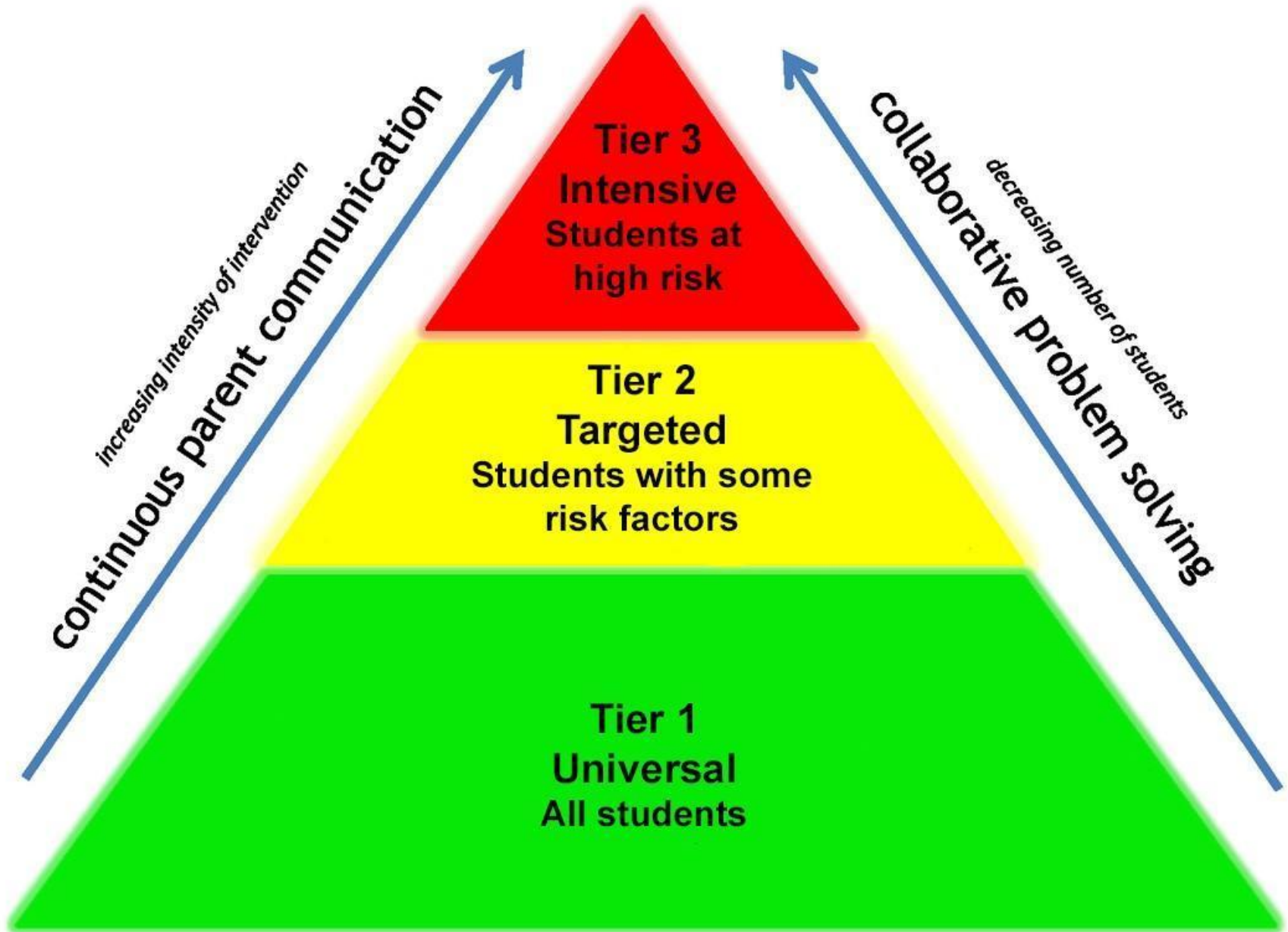


Academic
Difficulties

Underlying
executive
functioning
difficulties
and ADHD

School Interventions

- ▶ MTSS – Multi-Tiered System of Supports
 - ▶ Continuous evaluation of student performance and needs to determine appropriate supports to assist a child in being able to take advantage of the educational process



504 and IEPs

- ▶ 504 – Educational plan to support a child being able to learn in general education if they are impacted by a disability (broadly defined)
- ▶ IEP – Individualized Education Programs
 - ▶ Based on Federal IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
 - ▶ Must have one of 13 IDEA categories of disability (very small % of PSD students)

Start the Process

- ▶ Speak with your child's teacher and the school counselor
- ▶ "I would like to discuss how Charlie is doing in school and the MTSS process"
- ▶ See this as a collaborative process so you can have consistency at home
- ▶ Process should be on-going with frequent communication and check-ins

Begin Planning Before Problems Arise – Be Proactive

- ▶ Anticipate and plan for problems to arise (transitions, settling in to the classroom)
 - ▶ What are areas your child struggles with?
 - ▶ How can you set them up for success?
 - ▶ How can you help your child prepare?
 - ▶ Routine chart, discussion about the daily schedule, routine chart that illustrates any changes in routine

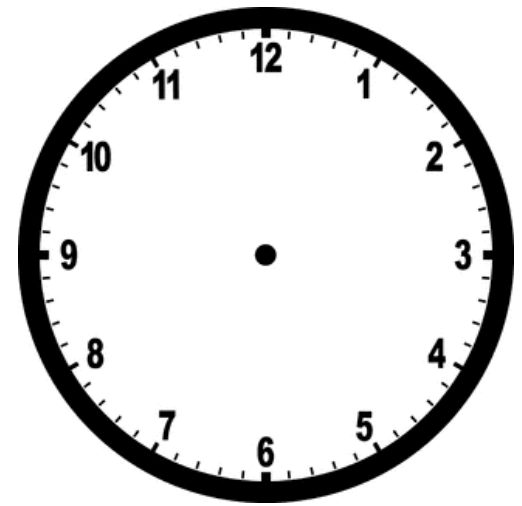
Specific Classroom Strategies Handout

- ▶ Preferential seating
- ▶ Resource time (organizing, planning, tracking assignments)
- ▶ Regular breaks in the day
 - ▶ 10 minutes off then break (drink of water, walk around the room, etc.)
- ▶ Direct instruction on organizational skills
 - ▶ Short-term is a check-out system with a planner
 - ▶ Long-term is focused on building independence
- ▶ Check-in/out at the end of the day

- ▶ **The goal is to provide just enough supports to allow your child to learn compensatory strategies AND access learning**

Time is (NOT) on my Mind

- ▶ Kids with ADHD don't have the internal clock to help track time
- ▶ Shorten delays between an event happening, behavior needed, and outcome
 - ▶ Break large assignments/tasks up
 - ▶ If a task requires more than a few minutes, use a timer





Cognitive Flexibility

Cognitive Flexibility – Executive Functioning

- ▶ Cognitive Flexibility – The ability to think and problem-solve in a flexible, dynamic manner
 - ▶ Adapt to changes
 - ▶ Flexibility generate a variety of ways to view a situation or solve a problem
- ▶ Academic tasks are meant to be challenging
- ▶ Frustration tolerance leads to feelings of overwhelm and eventually giving up for many individuals with ADHD

Teach the Skills for Expanding Cognitive Flexibility

- ▶ Teach problem solving methods:
 - ▶ How to walk into a different situation
 - ▶ Self-Talk (name it!)
 - ▶ Model how to problem solve when encountering a road block on a problem
 - ▶ Talk through the problem
 - ▶ Start at the beginning
 - ▶ Focus on what you know about the situation
- ▶ These are strategies that some children/teens may utilize implicitly, but these strategies need to be explicitly taught

Teaching About the Brain

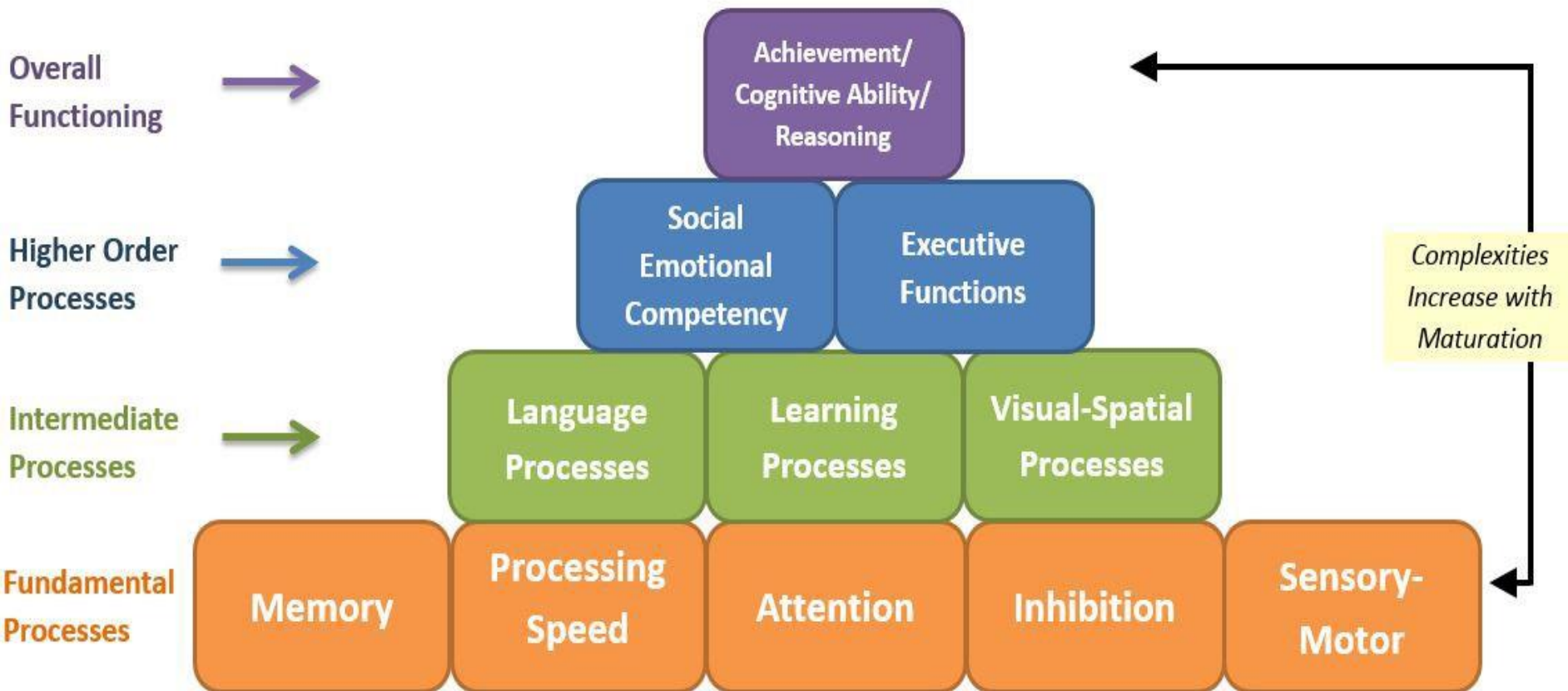
- ▶ Knowledge is power
- ▶ Intense emotions can interfere with thinking
- ▶ Get back to the “thinking brain”

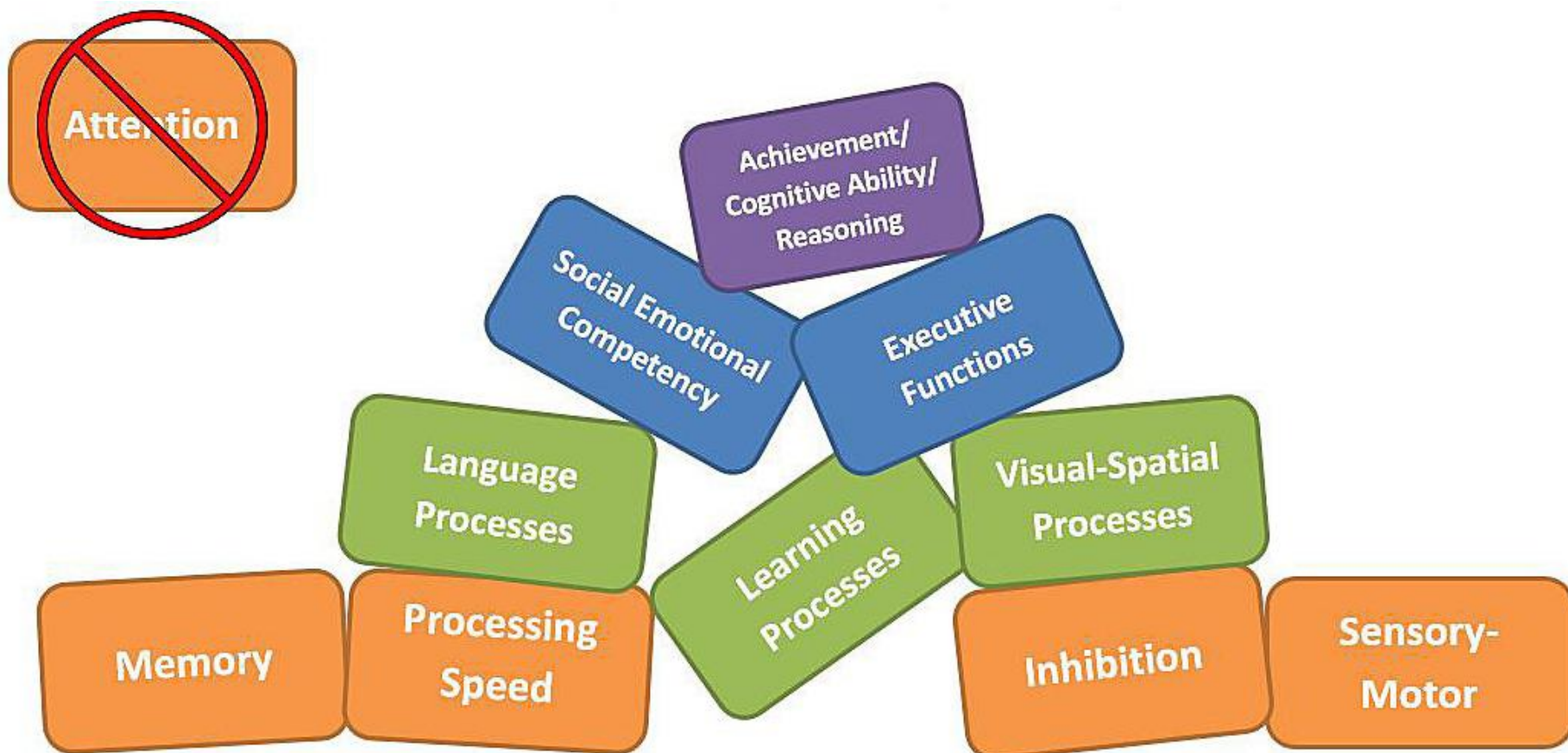




(Home)Working With Working Memory

Building Blocks of Brain Development





CO Brain Injury Steering Committee: Adapted from Miller, 2007;
Reitan and Wolfson, 2004; Hale and Fiorello, 2004

Lend Your Child Your Scratch Pad: Working Memory

- ▶ Shorten instructions and chunk information
- ▶ Engage all the senses
 - ▶ Visual, audio, tactile
- ▶ Create templates as part of routines
- ▶ Externalize the scratch pad



Concrete Supports

- ▶ Make this a collaborative process as much as you can
- ▶ Checklist on the door out the house
 - ▶ Water bottle, lunch, clothes for sports, etc.
 - ▶ Homework
- ▶ Checklist in the backpack (make sure things are actually brought home!)
 - ▶ This can be a reminder alarm on the phone
 - ▶ List taped or safety pin inside backpack
- ▶ Checklist on the other side – what to do at home
 - ▶ Shoes off
 - ▶ Lunchbox at the sink
 - ▶ Routine schedule (snack, homework hour, free play/ practice)

Externalize It

- ▶ Externalize Important Information
 - ▶ Externalize important information with cards, charts, and rehearsal “when – then” plans for next time
- ▶ Externalize Problem-Solving
 - ▶ Make the abstract concrete (ex: use dried beans, marbles for math problems, write out note cards for word problems or for planning a paper outline)
- ▶ Transition Planning
 - ▶ Explain the rules, the reward, the negative consequences, and give frequent feedback. Always review collaboratively.

Write it Down

- ▶ If it isn't written it didn't happen
- ▶ Homework charts
 - ▶ When is it due?
 - ▶ How long will it take?
 - ▶ What do I need to accomplish it?
 - ▶ Deadlines



Daily Assignment Record (DAR): The Organized Child

Subject	What is it?	What do I need to take home?	What do I need to take to class tomorrow?	Test/ Long-term Assignment	Due Date
Reading	Read 40 min/night	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Book• Reading Log	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Book• Reading Log	Book Report	12/17
Math	Worksheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worksheet• Calculator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worksheet• Calculator	Test – Unit 8	12/19

Homework – Set a Routine



Problem Solving Routines – Homework Version (1/2)

▶ **Routine: Consistent schedule**

- ▶ (e.g. snack and relax for the first 30 minutes and then homework at a specific location at home)
- ▶ Keep this the same. Every. Day.
- ▶ This helps with task initiation

▶ **Goal setting:** *What do I need to accomplish?*

▶ **Self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses:** *How easy or difficult is this task or goal? – What type of help do I need?*

Problem Solving Routines – Homework Version (2/2)

- ▶ **Organization and planning:** *What materials do we need? How long will it take? What types of **breaks** should we plan? What type of **rewards** should we plan?*
- ▶ **Flexibility and strategy use:** *When or if a problem arises, what other ways should I think about reaching the goal? Should I ask for assistance?*
- ▶ **Monitoring:** *How did I do?*
- ▶ **Summarizing:** *What worked and what didn't work? What was easy and what was difficult, and what will I do next time?*

A photograph of a man and a young boy sitting in folding chairs on a grassy bank, fishing in a lake. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of sunset, with long shadows and a soft glow on the water. The man, wearing a red jacket, is smiling and looking towards the boy. The boy, wearing a blue vest, is focused on his fishing rod. In the background, a white tent is partially visible among the trees.

Homework Initiation

- ▶ Task initiation is more difficult for a brain with ADHD
 - ▶ In addition to
 - ▶ Structure
 - ▶ Routine
 - ▶ Schedules
 - ▶ Start the task with your child
 - ▶ Use rewards
- ▶ Don't fall in the trap of worrying about over-functioning
 - ▶ Teach the skills

Rushing to beat the clock?

- ▶ Not just about task initiation time (schedule, routine)
- ▶ “Homework hour”





Last
but
not
least...



Give yourself and your kid grace

- ▶ Having ADHD brings unique challenges
- ▶ Having a child with ADHD does too!
- ▶ Remember your whole child, all the strengths and gifts they have and leverage those!

Additional Resources

- ▶ Strategies for improving working memory (handout)
- ▶ Accommodations to consider at school/home (handout)
- ▶ How to talk to your child about ADHD (handout)
- ▶ Resources listed at the end of each of the slide notes
 - ▶ **Podcasts/webinars**
 - ▶ www.CHADD.org
 - ▶ www.adhdlectures.com
 - ▶ How to ADHD – YouTube channel

Questions?





THANK YOU!

CHILD ADOLESCENT YOUNG ADULT
CONNECTIONS (CAYAC)

970. 221. 3308

Resources

- ▶ *Smart but Scattered* by Peg Dawson & Richard Guare
- ▶ *Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning* by Joyce Cooper-Kahn & Laurie Dietzel
- ▶ *The Organized Child* by Richard Gallagher, Elana Spira, & Jennifer Rosenblatt
- ▶ *The Family ADHD Solution: A Scientific Approach to Maximizing Your Child's Attention and Minimizing Parental Stress* by Mark Bertin
- ▶ *Mindful Parenting for ADHD: A Guide to Cultivating Calm, Reducing Stress, and Helping Children Thrive* by Mark Bertin and Ari Tuckman
- ▶ *The Kazdin Method for Parenting the Defiant Child* by Alan Kazdin
- ▶ *Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behavior, 2nd Edition* by Russell Barkley & Christine Benton
- ▶ *Your Defiant Teen: 10 Steps to Resolve Conflict and Rebuild Your Relationship* by Russell Barkley, Arthur Robin, & Christine Benton
- ▶ www.CHADD.org
- ▶ www.adhdlectures.com