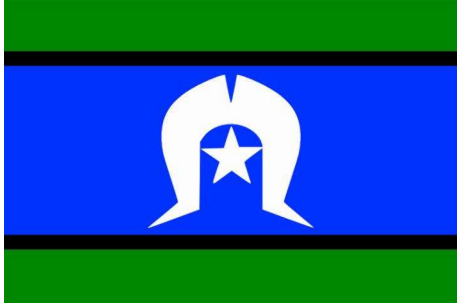


# Executive Functioning



pp positive partnerships  
Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

# Acknowledgement of Country



All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this presentation may contain images or voices of deceased persons.





## Webinars




- A recording of the webinar will be sent out in the week following
- To chat, please make sure your messages are going to 'Everyone' and not just the presenters

## Something about you...


- Who are you?
- What is the age/s of the young people you support?



## Learning intentions



To explore executive functioning skills and the implications for home and school



Consider practical strategies to support the development of executive functioning skills

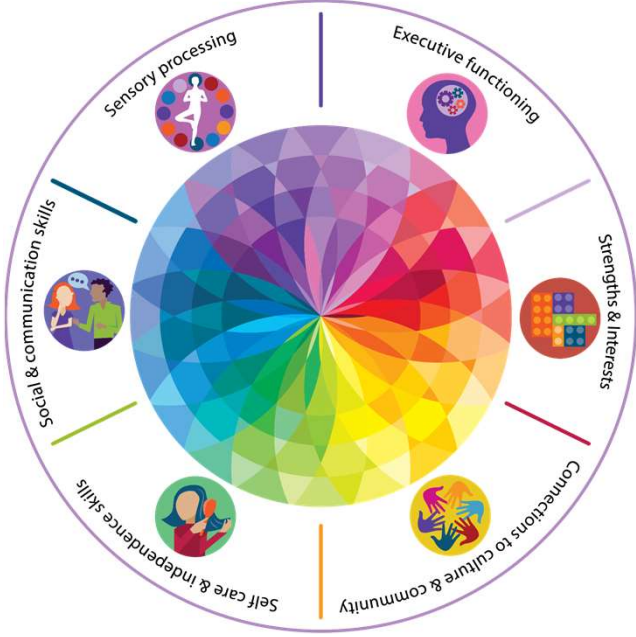
## The Diversity Wheel

The **outside** of the circle indicates the individual may need less support in that area.

The **middle** of the circle indicates the individual may need more support in that area.

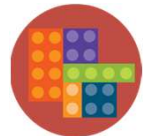
Strengths and support needs when:

- they are at their most independent
- they need the most support



Diversity wheel is adapted from Rebecca Burgess' <https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/>

**Benefits of student voice**



**Strengths and interests**



**Everyday executive functioning skills**



**Executive functioning and you**









## Executive Functions



Planning



Organisation



Time management



Working memory



Meta-cognition  
Thinking about our own thinking



Response inhibition & emotional control



Flexibility



Attention & ability to shift focus



Task initiation



Persistence

## Planning

- Planning how to complete a task
- understanding what finished looks like



## Organisation

- organising thoughts
- equipment
- time
- work space



## Time management

Understanding and knowing how to complete an activity in a given timeframe



## Working memory

Remembering information whilst working on other tasks.





**Meta-cognition**

Thinking about one's thinking



**Emotional regulation**

Managing emotions



## Cognitive flexibility

Being able to change plans and adapt to a new situation

## Attention

Paying attention to a task, even if we are bored, tired, or it is not our interest area





## Task initiation

- The ability to start a task
- Waiting until the last minute to start

## Persistence

The ability to keep going to finish a task and re-visiting the task if necessary



students on the autism spectrum

## Activities identified as challenging

- planning for assignments
- working as part of a group
- handwriting and being neat
- coping with change
- coping with bullying or teasing
- staying calm when the classroom is very noisy
- the speed at which handwriting needs to be completed
- copying information from the board
- doing homework
- staying calm when other kids annoyed them

Saggers et al, 2015

## Let's look at the skill of task initiation

**Does the person know when to begin and how to begin?**

**Does the person have an understanding of beginning a task in a timely manner?**

**Is the person able to initiate a subsequent task, especially when they are slow to begin the first?**



**Is the person dependent on others to initiate or begin a task or activity?**

**Does the person appear unmotivated or non-compliant?**

**Does the person wait until the last minute to start a task and then become overwhelmed?**



**Executive functioning in action**









**Executive functioning in action**



# Executive functions and learning preferences








## Executive Functioning Tool

| Executive functioning skills e.g.  | Observations & examples.<br>What can you see or hear the child doing?<br> | What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?<br> | What strategies and adjustments may support the child<br> |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Planning and organising</b><br>  |  |   |  |
| <b>Memory</b><br>                   |  |   |  |
| <b>Noticing and remembering</b><br> |  |   |  |



## Executive Functioning Tool

| Executive functioning skills e.g.   | Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?   | What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Planning and organising</b>   | Josh forgot his backpack  | He did not have the clothes he needed for sport and became stressed  |
| <b>Memory</b>                    | Josh had trouble starting a task because he was not able to remember what the teacher had said             | He became frustrated and overwhelmed as he could not start the required task  |
| <b>Noticing and remembering</b>  | Talks too loud in the hall and misses the instructions to leave  | He becomes isolated from his peers and unsure of what to do next and has trouble regulating his emotions  |



## Strategies to support executive functioning

- being able to use technology to support their educational needs in a variety of ways (e.g. to type or help with school work)
- getting copies of things teachers wrote on the board
- receiving rewards for jobs well done
- being able to take a break and having time away from others
- using special interests to do projects
- a quiet space to do assessment
- 1:1 help from an adult
- being reminded of pending changes
- help with organising themselves

Saggers et al, 2015



**Executive Functioning**  
Strategies to support diverse learners







**Strategies**



**Strategies**



## Executive Functioning Tool

| Executive functioning skills e.g.   | Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?   | What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?  | What strategies and adjustments may support the child   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Planning and organising</b>   | Josh forgot his backpack  | He did not have the clothes he needed for sport and became stressed  | Have a checklist showing what Josh needs to have with him before he leaves home  |
| <b>Memory</b>                    | Josh had trouble starting a task because he was not able to remember what the teacher had said             | He became frustrated and overwhelmed as he could not start the required task   | Have the teacher repeat the instructions to Josh and allow processing time  |
| <b>Noticing and remembering</b>  | Talks too loud in the hall and misses the instructions to leave  | He becomes isolated from his peers and unsure of what to do next and has trouble regulating his emotions   | Have visual reminders displayed regarding level of noise expectations   |

## Some other resources

I CAN NETWORK

I AM WHY WE MATTER SCHOOLS ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GET INVOLVED CONTACT DONATE

**AUTISTIC-LED SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONS**

I CAN Network is Australia's largest provider of Autistic-led group mentoring programs, training and consultancy. We have a 50% difference: half of our staff are Autistic. Our school and online mentoring programs empower 8-22 year-old young people with an I CAN attitude.

**"I CAN CELEBRATES DIVERSE THINKING AND PROVIDES THE SKILLS FOR AUTISTIC STUDENTS TO HAVE A VOICE"**

Kyla - Deputy Principal, Coburg North Primary School



### Executive Functioning

Executive functions are a set of cognitive skills that are used for both planning and carrying out tasks, and organising and regulating behaviour over time.

### EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING & ANXIETY: INSIGHTS & TIPS FOR ADULTS WHO SUPPORT AUTISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE



Here are some important insights, tips & resources from Autistic/Neurodivergent members of our team who know what it's like to manage executive functioning challenges.

**EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING ISN'T JUST PLANNING, ORGANISING AND TIME MANAGEMENT.** It also includes prioritisation, problem solving & flexible thinking, working memory, self awareness & self regulation, task initiation to task completion, attention and self advocacy. Many of us Autistic/Neurodivergent people find these things quite difficult.

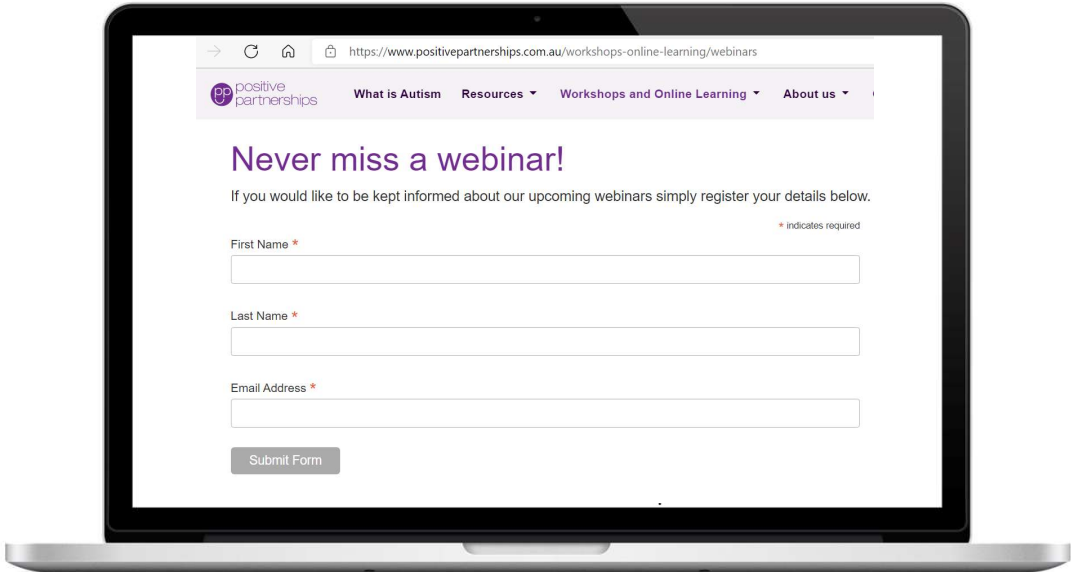
# Resources



[positivepartnerships.com.au](https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au)

-  [LinkedIn positive partnerships](#)
-  [Instagram @positivepartnerships](#)
-  [Twitter @PosPartnerships](#)
-  [pinterest.com.au/PositivePartnershipsAustralia/](https://pinterest.com.au/PositivePartnershipsAustralia/)
-  [facebook.com/PositivePartnershipsAU](https://facebook.com/PositivePartnershipsAU)

# Upcoming webinars



https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/workshops-online-learning/webinars

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