



By Cynthia North, Certified ADHD Life Coach

Living life easier is good for all of us, ADHD-minded or not. You do not have to have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to use what is shared here in the ADHD uPLifted Series to improve your quality of life. Do you want to find ways to work with your brainpower? Then you are in the right place. The ADHD uPLifted Series is a monthly newsletter written by me to offer you tested ways to lift up your chin and find your strengths. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a different ability in mastering life. Whether you are diagnosed with ADHD or you think you have ADHD this is the place to find helpful tools, tips, strategies, and fast facts. I hope you find this information value-added.

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## 1. FAST FACT ADHD AND HABITS

The prefrontal cortex is home to

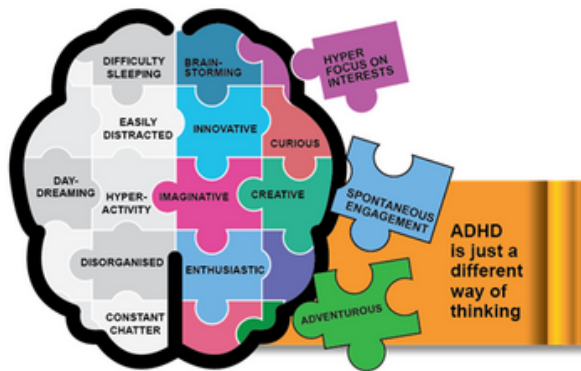
### *7 Executive Functions*

These include self-awareness, inhibition, nonverbal working memory (short-term memory related to sensory and spatial information), verbal working memory (short-term memory related to speech and language), emotional regulation, motivational regulation, and planning and problem-solving. ADHD often shows weaknesses in many or all of these areas. (Executive Function, 2020)

*"ADHD is a brain thing. Not wrong or right, better or worse than the next. It is a different way of thinking."*

*-C. North*

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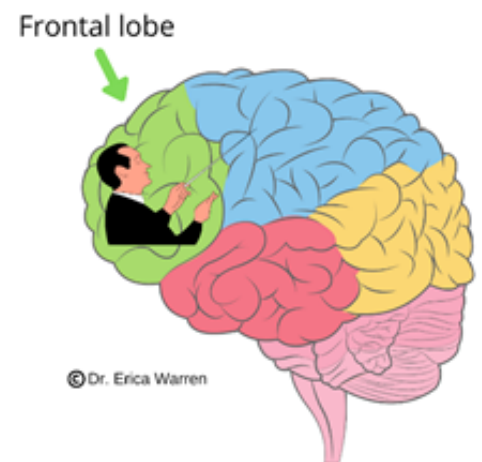


## Executive Functioning From Your ADHD Brain's Standpoint

By: Cynthia North, CALC

Executive function has become a hot topic in today's hectic way of living, but this term is not new. In the 1970s, Karl Pribram's research found executive functions in the brain's prefrontal cortex. Fast forward to the twenty-first century, and there have been many experts working to understand how the brain works. In today's world, people are juggling more and more with more significant distraction opportunities. This lifestyle makes it harder to keep all of the balls in the air. A paper by Harvard's Center for the Developing Child compared executive functioning to an air traffic control center at an airport.

An instructor during my coach training described executive functioning like the conductor of an orchestra. The conductor is responsible for getting the band to play at the right tempo and at the right time for the music to be pleasing to the ears. Imagine if the drums played out of sync with the brass section or the winds missed their solo. The output would be less than harmonic. Worse yet, imagine if the air traffic control center failed to remember to coordinate the planes coming in for a landing. The brain operates remarkably similarly. Not all experts agree on what executive functions are or how many exist. A quick google search for "executive function" results in 1.18 Billion hits. Yes, there are some differing opinions. In this series, I will dive into how executive functioning plays an integral part in your daily living and the opportunity for your brain's success. I will highlight two key experts, Thomas Brown and Russel Barkley, each with their take on executive function related to ADHD.

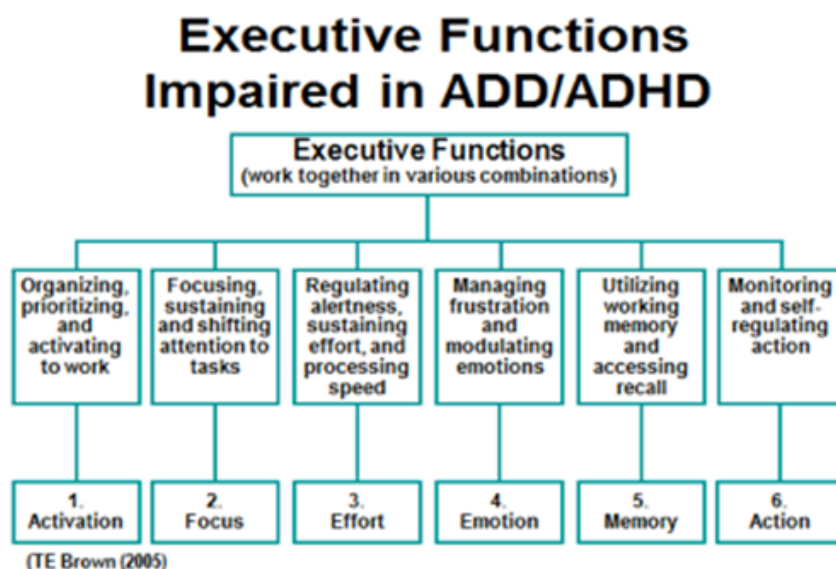


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<https://goodsensorylearning.com/>  
<https://learningspecialistmaterials.blogspot.com/>

What is happening when the brain does not meet the needed expectations of daily living? Maybe you have heard people throw out, "I must be having an ADD moment!" But could that even be true? Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurochemical brain difference often involving struggles in key areas of executive function. There are all sorts of sources on the internet debating whether ADHD is an executive functioning disorder or not. Currently, the DSM-V does not include Executive Dysfunction Disorder (EFD) as part of the ADHD diagnosis, but executive functioning deficits do occur with ADHD. (Executive Function, 2020)

Thomas Brown's Executive Functioning chart depicts six key areas of executive functions. These seven areas are key players in living a successful life. Brown's chart breaks these areas down into, **Activation, Focus, Effort, Emotion, Memory and Action.**



With ADHD, it is easy to notice how symptoms could weaken many of these six executive function areas, creating great struggles for children and adults. Experts believe an ADHD brain lags 3-5 years longer in developing executive functioning skills. (Brown, 2019) A young ADHD child's emotional response may not present as socially accepted and age-appropriate. As young ADHD adults, poor planning skills or impulsive choices do not align well in creating successful opportunities for adult life.

Executive functions are brain assets that develop over time up until about age twenty-five. In recent years educators have caught on to the importance of executive function skills in a child's future success. One of the amazing things about the human brain is its ability to reason choice. The prefrontal cortex is the area of the brain where humans can use prediction and reasoning. This is the area of the brain in charge of choosing, determining

right and wrong. Executive function relates to abilities to differentiate among conflicting thoughts, determine good and bad, better and best, same and different, future consequences of current activities, working toward a defined goal, prediction of outcomes, expectation based on actions, and social "control" (the ability to suppress urges that, if not suppressed, could lead to socially unacceptable outcomes). (SoP, 2021) This is often why ADHDer's struggle with impulsivity, social awkwardness, poor foreshadowing outcomes, and more. ADHD symptoms are expressed uniquely dependent on what areas of the brain are being affected and to what extent.



Russel Barkley explains seven executive functioning areas in the brain; self-awareness, inhibition, non-verbal working memory, verbal working memory, emotional self-regulation, self-motivation, and planning and problem-solving. No wonder people want to say they are having an ADHD moment. The brain's prefrontal cortex conducts a mass amount of information to process, manage and remember. But, that does not mean every time the brain forgets or misses something that it is ADHD. Getting an accurate ADHD diagnosis requires the individual to experience six or more symptoms for a minimum of six months in at least two environments. (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2013) That is "no ADHD moment." However, ADHDer's can quickly identify weaknesses in most, if not all, of these areas of executive functioning at some point.

To dive deeper, Barkley's **circuit model**: "what," "when," "why," and "who," breaks down executive function even further. (What Is Executive Function? 7 Deficits Tied to ADHD, 2015) Barkley's model illustrates holes within the ADHDer's brain tapestry.

The "**What**" circuit houses working memory. This is where what we think we do. Planning, goal setting, and futuristic thinking occur here. Deficits in this area make it hard to remember what you had in mind.

Think Deeper: What do you envision in the future? What happens next?



The "**When**" circuit is responsible for timing within the brain. This is related to time management as well as the ability to coordinate your movements.

Think Deeper: What role does time play in your everyday living?

The "**Why**" circuit is linked to emotions and is often considered the "hot" circuit. The "why" circuit is where our thinking controls our feelings. Where emotions and motivation tether together.

Think Deeper: How do emotions play a role in your choices?

The "**Who**" circuit is responsible for self-awareness of ourselves and others in our environment.

Think Deeper: What are you aware of that you do? Would others agree?

What matters most is that you come to a deeper **self-awareness** that these executive functions exist in you. With awareness, you can find solutions to help when you might be struggling to land your plane safely. Working executive functioning skills are key to obtaining **success and ease** in daily living. Often ADHDer's will find struggles with:

- Impulse Control
- Hyperactivity in the body and mind
- Planning and Goal Setting
- Time awareness
- Mental Flexibility



CREDIT: ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPHER SILAS NEAL

ADHD is unique to each diagnosed individual. It is not a brain fart or just having a moment of ADHD. ADHD is a lifestyle. Understanding the relationship between ADHD and executive function helps you form strategies and employ tools to help you manage your life with greater ease. Fortunately, applications and technologies are available to fit almost anyone's needs in this day and age. If your solution is not available today, it may be tomorrow. Strategies and tools fit individually to work with your mindset and needs. Scaling your strengths with tools in place for weaker areas helps move you forward. ADHD or not, your brain is ALWAYS in a molding state. You can sharpen strengths and create habits to assist weaknesses. The brain is a frontier of possibility. Executive function skills take you there.



# Executive Functioning Coach Tips and Tricks

By: Cynthia North, CALC

**Executive Functioning can be tricky with ADHD. Here are a few tips and tricks to sharpening your strengths and harness your weaker areas of EF.**

- Use a **calendar application** like google calendar effectively
- Put all **resources** in one place; physical folder, digital folder, or bookmark tab online.
- **Chunk** focused working time into short reasonable blocks; 5-10-20-30 minute blocks.
- Find it by using **folders** for loose papers or notebooks for specific tasks or subjects.
- Use **mental breaks** strategically. Plan a 5-15 minute break after each work session. Breaks are deliberate and intentional with a start and stop time.
- **Color code** all essential tasks to help your brain visually identify what is in front of you.
- Use **technology and applications** on your used devices to help you maintain healthy habits. Microsoft To Do creates to-do lists, reminders, and notes for any purpose and can be synced across accounts. This app can be color-coded and shared. When students need to remember medication, the MediSafe app can help. This app shows four screens for time zones in the day: morning, noon, evening, and night. When you select a medication, it puts an actual graphic of what that pill looks like into the appropriate zone.
- Reframe **deadlines**. Work towards a deadline as if it is the finish line to celebrating a win. When you meet your deadline you have WON!
- **Be present!** If your mind is wandering bring yourself back to what is in front of you. Each moment can have a takeaway nugget of knowledge or doing if you take it.
- **Prep** before a break. Before you take a break stop and choose what work you will return to when you come back. This part of planning ahead will help you achieve more.

(Stachel, 2015)

*"Executive function is a better predictor of academic success than IQ."*

*-John Medina*



### 3. **Google Keep**

*ADHD uPLifted App of the Month*

*3.7K Ratings 3.5 Ages 4+*

*Free Version*

Don't you hate it when you know you wrote it down but it's at home or at the office or now it's somewhere and you can't remember where? *Google Keep allows for the **recording of notes** in multiple formats such as audio, images, and text. Notes can also be shared. This allows for collaboration of items such as shopping lists.*

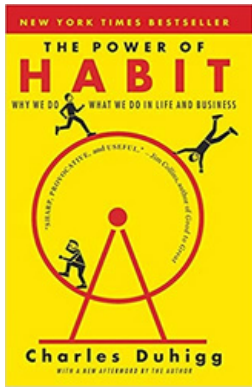
*Google Keep notes is available on all major platforms like **Android, iOS, Chrome**, and web version. Chrome app works identical to any natively installed app.*

*Google Keep Notes is one of the simplest and best free note-taking apps on mobile.*

I like that I can color-code sticky's, search and find and share what I want all from one place across all of my devices. Although not a perfect application it is handy for managing between home and the office, not-to-mention no more misplaced moments.

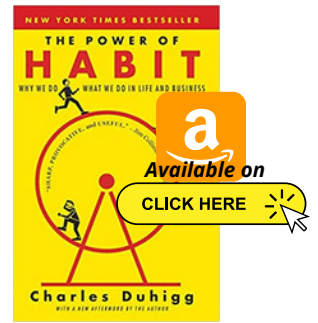
executive functioning is the part of the brain that manages the skills we need to complete tasks in our daily life

# 4. READERS *Corner*



## The Power Of Habit: Why We Do What We Do In Life and Business

Paperback – January 7, 2014.  
by Charles Duhigg (Author).  
4.6 out of 5 stars 17,095 ratings



*"My huge take-away came in understanding the process in the brain affecting habit formation which Duhigg explains to be a three step loop process. The cue is the trigger. This is where I am focusing right now." C. North*

In *The Power of Habit*, award-winning business reporter Charles Duhigg takes us to the thrilling edge of scientific discoveries that explain why habits exist and how they can be changed. Distilling vast amounts of information into engrossing narratives that take us from the boardrooms of Procter & Gamble to the sidelines of the NFL to the front lines of the civil rights movement, Duhigg presents a whole new understanding of human nature and its potential. At its core, *The Power of Habit* contains an exhilarating argument: The key to exercising regularly, losing weight, being more productive, and achieving success is understanding how habits work. As Duhigg shows, by harnessing this new science, we can transform our businesses, our communities, and our lives.

(The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business: Duhigg, Charles: 86014.06381322: Amazon.com: Books, 2021)

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## LISTENING TO NOW

### “Six Super Skills to Build Executive Functioning in Adults with ADHD”

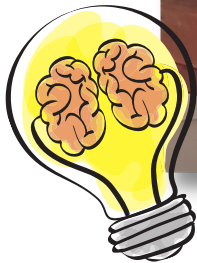
Lara Honos-Webb, Ph.D.  
June 15, 2021

Listening time: 59:28 minutes



Executive functioning is the ability to plan, to take action rather than procrastinate, to consider multiple possibilities when solving problems, and to stay focused. This webinar will review the latest research on improving executive functions by increasing attention, motivation, and positive moods in adults with ADHD. Dr. Lara Honos-Webb will discuss the emerging science of attention management and the six super skills that unlock stronger executive function:





## About Coach Cindy

Thank you for joining me. My name is Cynthia North. Most people call me Cindy. I am a Certified ADHD Life Coach devoted to partnering with clients to create self-success within ADHD. I work with all ages having a special interest in coaching parents and family units. I have an innate desire to empower others no matter what difficulties they face.

ADHD has touched me personally and professionally.

I know first-hand how ADHD symptoms and its' behavior can wreak havoc on family dynamics. I chose to become a trained ADHD Life Coach because I want others to discover the greatness within ADHD strengths while working with their executive functioning challenges. I am where I am today because of my two dynamic ADHD children. They both teach me and open my mind to more each day. Their needs were beyond a hug, discipline, structure, or praise. I sought professional help, ultimately finding a Life Coach.

Life experiences have made way for opportunity. I am on a journey to slay stigmas surrounding brain differences. Finding a Life Coach to empower my child led me to become a trained ADHD Life Coach myself so I can serve others past their ADHD stigmas. Choosing to strengthen your inner-self is where Empower Me starts. The work is an inside job where your "me" begins. Connecting your heart and brain with a Coach creates empowerment opportunities.

EmpowerM3 - is where the 3 connect.



*There is a more extraordinary tomorrow when the discovery starts today.*

**Resources**

- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011). Building the brain's "Air Traffic Control" System: How Early Experiences Shape the Development of Executive Function: Working Paper No. 11. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)
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- "Six Super Skills to Build Executive Functioning in Adults with ADHD" [Video Replay & Podcast #359]. (2021, May 11). ADDitude. <https://www.additudemag.com/webinar/executive-function-disorder-adhd-adults-podcast-359/>

*Notes:*

