

Planning

Definition: The ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands. The planning aspect is the ability to anticipate future events, set goals, and develop a plan to carry out a task.

Basic approach:

- 1) Provide additional external structure
- 2) Create a 'cookbook' of steps for common/routine tasks
- 3) A coach (teacher, mentor, spouse, parent) can model planning

Provide external structures to help keep the individual on track

Use smart phones, personal data assistants to help plan activities and set reminders (cues)

Use a Gantt chart to plan out more complicated or coordinated tasks/projects. This involves breaking a large task down into smaller sub-tasks with a due date for each. These mini due dates become mini "last minutes". This approach works for people who only get moving when it is the "last minute". Having subtasks also help people who are anxious right up until the entire project is complete. Having a plan, and meeting the mini deadlines indicates that you are on track and success is very likely - reducing anxiety.

Use a 4 month calendar so a "big picture" view can be used to help plan large projects or manage many smaller ones.

Scan the internet or books for ideas on how to plan or manage tasks. Keep a binder of helpful hints and experiment to see which ones work for you.

Get a mentor with good planning skills to help with specific tasks or projects with the aim of learning a method or specific planning strategies.

Generate a goal for a particular task and monitor how well you do.

A well made plan that is printed up and posted or put on a smart phone will alleviate demands on working memory and other aspects of executive functioning.

Break plans down into a series of steps. Arrange them in a sequential order. Sometimes step 2 must be complete before step 3. (E.g. you can't install the ceiling fan before the ceiling is installed). Write out the steps in point form and include a check off box.

For writing tasks, the software package Inspiration uses visual strategies to provide links between ideas, then can output a linear sequential list that will guide the written essay. Drawing out ideas and links might help with other tasks as well (for visual learners).

Adapted from Ylvisaker and colleagues (1998).