

# What is Executive Functioning?

Executive functions are a set of cognitive processes that are needed for control or change of one's behavior and for achieving one's goals. For example, executive functions let you organize a trip, a research project or a paper for school. Deficits in executive functioning may result from disease or trauma to the brain, primarily the frontal regions. There are five situations in which executive functions may need to kick in or take over for our routine responses:

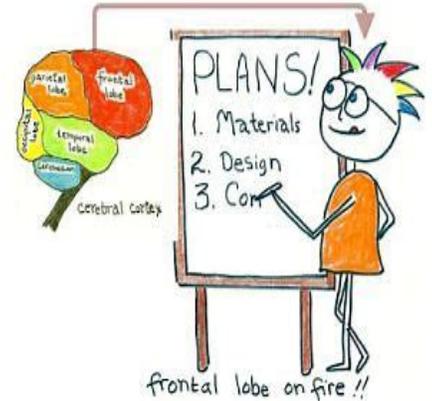
1. Planning or decision making
2. Error correction or trouble shooting
3. Reacting to responses that are not well-rehearsed
4. Overcoming strong habitual responses or resisting temptations
5. Responding to dangerous or technically difficult situations



## Key Executive Functions

Damage to the executive system often leads to difficulty in the following areas:

- **Awareness** – insight of strengths and weaknesses
- **Planning** – ability to anticipate and prioritize events
- **Goal Setting** – ability to set short- and long-term goals
- **Self-Initiation** – beginning activities without procrastinating
- **Self-Monitoring** – independently assessing one's own behavior
- **Self-Inhibiting** – thinking before reacting; controlling impulses
- **Ability to change** – ability to transition between tasks easily
- **Strategic Behavior** – creating useful strategies for functional use
- **Working Memory** – ability to hold information in one's mind to complete a task



Some common symptoms of executive functioning disorders are:

- Inability to multitask or balance tasks
- Inability to keep track of personal items like keys and cell phones
- Difficulty listening or paying attention
- Problems with starting, organizing, planning and completing tasks
- Difficulty managing steps in a multi-step process and simplifying the process
- Difficulty controlling one's emotions or impulses
- Difficulty in solving problems
- Difficulty managing time

## Overcoming Executive Function Disorders

- Recognize deficits to help with self-regulation
- Create strategies to improve planning and organization
- Regulate emotions to help with problem solving
- Consult a Speech-Language Pathologist and Occupational Therapist here at Galaxy for specified evaluation and treatment