

# Confident, Capable Kids

*How to Master Executive Function  
Challenges With Confidence, Not Conflict*



*A Science-Backed Guide to Helping  
Your Child Master Executive Function*





## What is Executive Function (Really)?

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If reminders, rewards, and color-coded charts aren't helping your child get organized, follow through, or manage frustration, **you're not alone.**

Executive function challenges are **part of normal development--** but the way you respond can either build your child's confidence or leave you both feeling stuck.

What is it? Executive function is how the brain manages planning, organization, time, emotions, and problem-solving. **It's the behind-the-scenes work that helps your child get started, stay focused, manage frustration, and recover when things go wrong.**

In this guide, I'll help you understand what executive function really is, why popular strategies often miss the mark, and how to use 30+ years of research to **guide your child toward independence.**

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## Why Some Popular Approaches Fall Short

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Parents are often told to use sticker charts, take away privileges, or just “be more consistent”--but these strategies were designed for managing behavior, not building executive function. **Executive function grows from real experiences**--where kids practice solving problems, managing emotions, and learning from their mistakes--with coaching from a trusted adult.

Psychology research has been studying how executive function develops for over 30 years, and the evidence is clear: lasting skills come from helping kids think and work through their choices, not just responding to rewards or punishments. **It's not about more rules--it's about better tools.**

### The Missing Piece: Emotional Regulation

You can't build executive function without helping your child manage feelings like frustration, self-doubt, and overwhelm. Executive function isn't just about time management--it's about **building the emotional muscle to recover when things don't go as planned.** This is where strengths-based coaching comes in: when kids know what they're good at, they're more willing to try hard things.

### Why Strengths Matter

Decades of developmental psychology show that kids are more likely to persevere when they see themselves as capable. That's why an approach that helps families **uncover what kids can do---**and uses that as a foundation to build skills in areas where they struggle works best.



**Confidence isn't built by avoiding challenges;  
it's built by learning how to navigate them, with support.**

# What Actually Works (Backed by Research and Real Life)

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- Coaching kids to plan, problem-solve, and think ahead-not just follow directions
- Helping parents shift from constant reminding to guiding with curiosity and confidence
- Teaching emotional regulation alongside organization--because stress shuts down executive function
- Building habits based on your child's strengths, not just their struggles
- Translating brain science into tools that fit real life-at home, at school, and everywhere in between.

## Let's Build These Skills Together

You don't need to become your child's full-time executive function manager--you just need the right guidance to coach them well. With my science-backed, strengths-based approach, we'll create a plan that fits your child, your family, and your real life.



*Every learner deserves to feel capable, and every parent deserves to feel confident in how they guide their child.*



## The How-to: Master Executive Function Challenges With Confidence, Not Conflict

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### ✓ Boost Motivation & Follow-Through

**The Shift:** Focus less on effort, more on actionable steps.

- Ask: “What’s one small step you could take right now?”
- Use ‘when-then’ planning
- Celebrate micro-wins

**Example:** Maria’s teen used sticky notes to plan and organize a project—her choice, in her order. It worked.

### ✓ Build Executive Function & Time Management

**The Science:** EF = planning, task-switching, focus, and follow-through.

- Break tasks into small “time sprint” steps and complete one before taking a break
- Pair desired habits with routines (time anchors) for built-in habit stacking
- Use visual calendars or checklists already built into school portal instead of relying on memory

**Example:** Start each work session with a portal check and calendar update.

*You don’t need to be a brain scientist to help your learner build real-life skills without nagging, pressure, or punishment.*



## Struggles aren't about laziness. They're real-life opportunities that build your learner's Positive Edge.

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### ✓ Build Emotional Strength + Self-Awareness

**The Work:** Help your child respond to stress instead of reacting—and start noticing what truly energizes them. Use EF skills in real life, not just for school.

- “Name it to tame it”: Label emotions to reduce overwhelm
- Use reset tools: deep breaths, movement, grounding
- Spot and name your child's strengths

**Example:** When Josh forgot his homework, his mom stayed calm and problem-solved with him. No meltdown—and more trust.

### ✓ Try Smarter, Not Harder—with Flexible Strategies

**The Myth:** Trying harder? Try adopting the experimental mindset instead.

- Use the POS-EDGE® model (strengths + structure + emotion regulation)
- Co-create flexible, doable routines
- Ask: “What could you try differently next time?”

**Example:** Emma went from overwhelmed to consistent when she experimented with her best time to complete tasks.

**Executive Function, Simplified? It's your child's internal CEO for planning, focusing, and managing emotions.**

# Let's Optimize Your Future

## Identify Your Cognitive Advantages

Your learner's sustained focus, innovative problem-solving, and ability to see what others miss aren't compensations—they're competitive strengths worth leveraging strategically.

## Design Personalized Systems

We'll create frameworks that work with their natural processing style, not against it. This means optimizing the environment, building sustainable workflows, and creating accountability that actually supports their success for the long term.

## Develop Executive Presence

They'll learn to self-advocate and articulate their value, co-design optimal working conditions, and position their unique thinking style as the strategic asset it is.



### I'm Sherri Fisher

Through my private coaching practice, acclaimed books like *The Effort Myth*, and dynamic speaking engagements, I've guided thousands to success. I bridge neuropsychology and positive psychology with specialized coaching and consulting, translating science into tangible, real-world outcomes for individuals and organizations.

[GET STARTED HERE](#)

## What do parents say about me?

"The changes my daughter experienced were miraculous to us. As a direct result of working with Sherri, she found a different school, applied to it, and not only is enjoying completely rebuilt self-esteem, she has done so well with her new, excellent self-awareness, organizational, and study skills that she is an honors student! This is a huge improvement over last year's dismal experiences with writing and testing, which were just two areas of major struggle. I cannot recommend Sherri enough!"

~Grade 11 Parent