

Executive Functions (EF) Issues and Symptoms (Early School Graders)

Trouble Shifting Between Gears		
<u>At Home:</u> Child is concentrating on a project and gets up to answer the phone. After hanging up, she/he has lost interest in the project and leaves it unfinished.	<u>At School:</u> Student can solve a math problem one way. But has trouble when the teacher requires him/her to show work using another method.	<u>Issue:</u> Students with EF issues can struggle to switch gears and shift between tasks, especially when learning a new skill.
Can't Get Organised		
<u>At home:</u> Child repeatedly mixes up assignments. He/she doesn't bring home the books or handouts needed for the homework.	<u>At school:</u> Student's desk is full of crumpled papers and pencil stubs. Their schoolwork folder and pencil case on the desk are either empty or with items missing.	<u>Issue:</u> Many students with EF issues struggle to keep their things organised. They have a hard time even when given an organisational system to help with their work.
Get 'Stuck/Fixed' on an Idea		
<u>At home:</u> You explain that you're going out to dinner, but the child is insistent about getting pizza delivered because it's Tuesday and that's pizza night.	<u>At school:</u> Student argues with other kids about how to play a game. They're trying to make up new rules, or becomes annoyed when the teacher changes sitting arrangements.	<u>Issue:</u> Many students with EF issues feel frustrated or even panic when rules and routines are challenged or changed.
Misses the Point		
<u>At home:</u> Child seems to focus on the least important detail of what their parent has said.	<u>At school:</u> Student has trouble finding the right picture or the main theme in a story of pictures.	<u>Issue:</u> Students with EF issues can have a hard time figuring out when to look at the big picture and when to focus on details, and <i>which</i> details.

Executive Functions (EF) Issues and Symptoms (Middle School Graders)

Has a Hard Time Making Social Plans		
<u>At Home:</u> Child wants to invite kids over to hang out, but never gets around to scheduling a visit.	<u>At School:</u> Student seems reluctant to make after school plans. Instead he/she simply does whatever the other kids are doing.	<u>Issue:</u> Students with EF issues can have a difficult time with making social plan and setting priorities. They tend to lose track of objects and information such as invitation to a birthday party.
Avoids and Procrastinates		
<u>At home:</u> Child has a hard time getting started on a big assignment and often seems to focus on the less important details first.	<u>At school:</u> Student is still arranging material for a science lab when the other students are already halfway through the experiment.	<u>Issue:</u> Many students with EF issues often find it overwhelming to get started on something. This is because they have trouble breaking a task down into smaller steps.
Overreacts and Takes Things Personally		
<u>At home:</u> Child frequently gets upset about little things like running out of a favourite snack food. There may even be yelling and screaming, "We never have anything to eat in this house!"	<u>At school:</u> Student often feels singled out and says it's "not fair" that the teacher is making him/her take work home to finish it, even though the other students finished theirs in class.	<u>Issue:</u> Many students with EF issues struggle with emotional control. They can overreact to or have a tough time accepting constructive criticism.
Is Surprised by Failure		
<u>At home:</u> Child is crushed when they are turned down for a date to a school dance, even though their text messages and emails were not getting returned.	<u>At school:</u> Student is surprised by a bad grade on a science test he/she studied for even though they didn't understand much of the unit being taught.	<u>Issue:</u> Students with EF issues can have trouble keeping track of their progress and evaluating how well (or poorly) they're doing.

Executive Functions (EF) Issues and Symptoms (High School Graders)

Argues Ineffectively		
<u>At Home:</u> Child tries to convince parent to extend curfew, but can't give any good reasons why it should be extended.	<u>At School:</u> Student gets a bad grade on an essay for not using enough detail, repeating things or making odd comparisons.	<u>Issue:</u> Students with EF issues can have a difficulty organising thoughts to make a case, especially when they're feeling pressured.
Waits Until the Last Minute		
<u>At home:</u> Child hasn't filled out any job applications that have been sitting on the counter for a month.	<u>At school:</u> Student gets a bad grade on a book critique because he/she turned it in late or didn't finish the whole assignment.	<u>Issue:</u> Students with EF issues might struggle to make a plan to get something done and often have trouble figuring out where to start.
Out of Sync Socially		
<u>At home:</u> Child doesn't know when they have overstayed their welcome at a friend's house.	<u>At school:</u> Student has trouble working on group projects and says that other students won't work with him/her – and they might not even know why.	<u>Issue:</u> Many students with EF issues don't read other people's cues well and have trouble knowing when their behaviour is inappropriate.
Runs Out of Time		
<u>At home:</u> Child agrees ahead of time to pick up their sibling from school but is preoccupied with another task when it's time to do so.	<u>At school:</u> Student has trouble finishing even short-answer tests during the time allotted.	<u>Issue:</u> Students with EF issues may have difficulty gauging how much time is needed to get something done.