

Signs of Executive Function Issues by Age

By: Successful Solutions Training in Child Development



Preschool

Has major trouble adjusting to changes and transitions.

Has difficulties following directions.

Has trouble mastering simple tasks and routines.

Gets frustrated easily and lashes out at others.

Throws tantrums over minor inconveniences.

Is sometimes aggressive and unable to express feelings and emotions.

Will provide answers and information that doesn't apply to current situations or themes.

School-Age

Has trouble focusing on important information.

May panic when routines are changed.

Cannot focus on more than one thing at a time.

Can solve a problem one way but gets overwhelmed when asked to solve using a different method or strategy.

Sticks with a plan even when it is very unsuccessful.

Unable to prioritize tasks.

Cannot locate school or homework.

**Gets upset frequently
about small things.**

**Has a hard time breaking large
tasks or projects into steps.**

**Hesitates to make plans and
instead follows along with a
leader.**

**Takes a very long time to set up
materials or supplies for a task.**

**Wants to make social plans but
never initiates them.**

**Takes an unusually long
time to complete tasks.**

Middle School

Are impulsive and take many risks.

Has trouble completing tasks in allotted time.

Tries to make claims but cannot back them up with evidence or logic.

Small tasks seem daunting and take a great deal of effort to begin.

Easily loses track of time.

Has trouble working with partners or groups and doesn't take responsibility for their role.

High School

References

Children & Adolescents With Weaknesses in Executive Functioning. Manhattan Psychology Group PC. Retrieved from <https://manhattanpsychologygroup.com/executive-functioning-problems-children>

Zelazo, P (2005). Executive Function Part Three: The development of executive function across the lifespan. Kids Health Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/News/Series/ExecutiveFunction/Pages/Executive-Function-Part-Three-The-development-of-executive-function-across-the-lifespan.aspx>

Executive Function & Self-Regulation Watch the Overview Video. Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University. Retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>