

Information and Action Steps Taught In Executive Function Crash Course

**Please see the glossaries if you want more information on terms in bold.*

1. Shifting The Way We Use Language To Build Executive Function Skills



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Page 1 of 2

Overview



- Language is the core of building **executive function skills**.
- Because of their lagging executive function skills, kids with ADHD have difficulty using their **internal dialogue** (“**Brain Voice**”) to problem solve, make a plan, activate coping skills, etc.
- Kids with ADHD also have underdeveloped **non-verbal working memory/ future thinking skills**. This is the ability to picture yourself doing something in the future.

Action Steps



- The goal is to move kids from prompt dependence to independence.
- Model your internal dialogue as you problem-solve, consider different scenarios, and make predictions.
- Use **declarative and visual language** to help develop non-verbal working memory, internal dialogue (“Brain Voice”), independence, situational awareness, and encourage internal dialogue to solve problems.

Notes



1. Shifting The Way We Use Language To Build Executive Function Skills



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Page 2 of 2

Overview



Action Steps



Examples of visual language:

- *"Picture what your bag should look like before you leave for school. Do you have everything you need?"*
- *"Look at what the other people waiting in line are doing. Can you match your voice volume and body to what they are doing?"*

Examples of declarative language:

- *[If forgetting water bottle] "I wonder if you'll get thirsty in school today."*
- *[If you want them to bring an umbrella] "I saw it's supposed to rain today, and you're going to be outside for a while."*

Check out the Declarative Language Handbook by Linda Murphy, CCC-SLP, and watch the discussion with Linda at the ADHD Dude YouTube channel. Type in "Linda Murphy ADHD Dude."

Notes



2. Moving Your Child From Prompt Dependence To Independence



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Page 1 of 4

Overview



- Prompt dependence means giving your child specific directions on completing each task step.

Example of prompt dependence during the morning routine:

- "You need to get dressed; start by putting on your shirt."
- "Don't forget to brush your teeth; go into the bathroom."
- "Now, get a washcloth and wash your face."

Action Steps



- **Frontload** by explaining that you will increase expectations because you know they can become more independent.
- Use **language of accountability** and discuss what they would like to earn for completing the task within the allotted time frame. This is their **incentive** to stay on task and finish the task.
- Work with your child to create a **visual timeline** that includes photos of your child completing each task step. Involving your child gives them ownership in the process.
- This activates their **non-verbal working memory** and helps them picture themselves completing the task. It should also include a picture of their reward and how they should look when completing the task.

Notes



2. Moving Your Child From Prompt Dependence To Independence



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Page 2 of 4

Overview



Action Steps



- Provide **scaffolding and gradual release of responsibility** to teach new skills.
- Use the **clock strategy** and **declarative language** to create independence and help them stay on track.

Example of declarative language:

- [Getting distracted during morning routine] "It is 7:45. I'm wondering if you'll have time for YouTube before school; I know that's important to you."

- Make sure to give **purposeful recognition and praise** (see Scaffolding Better Behavior to learn more about purposeful recognition and praise) when the task is complete, and ensure they get their incentive within their **time horizon**.

Notes



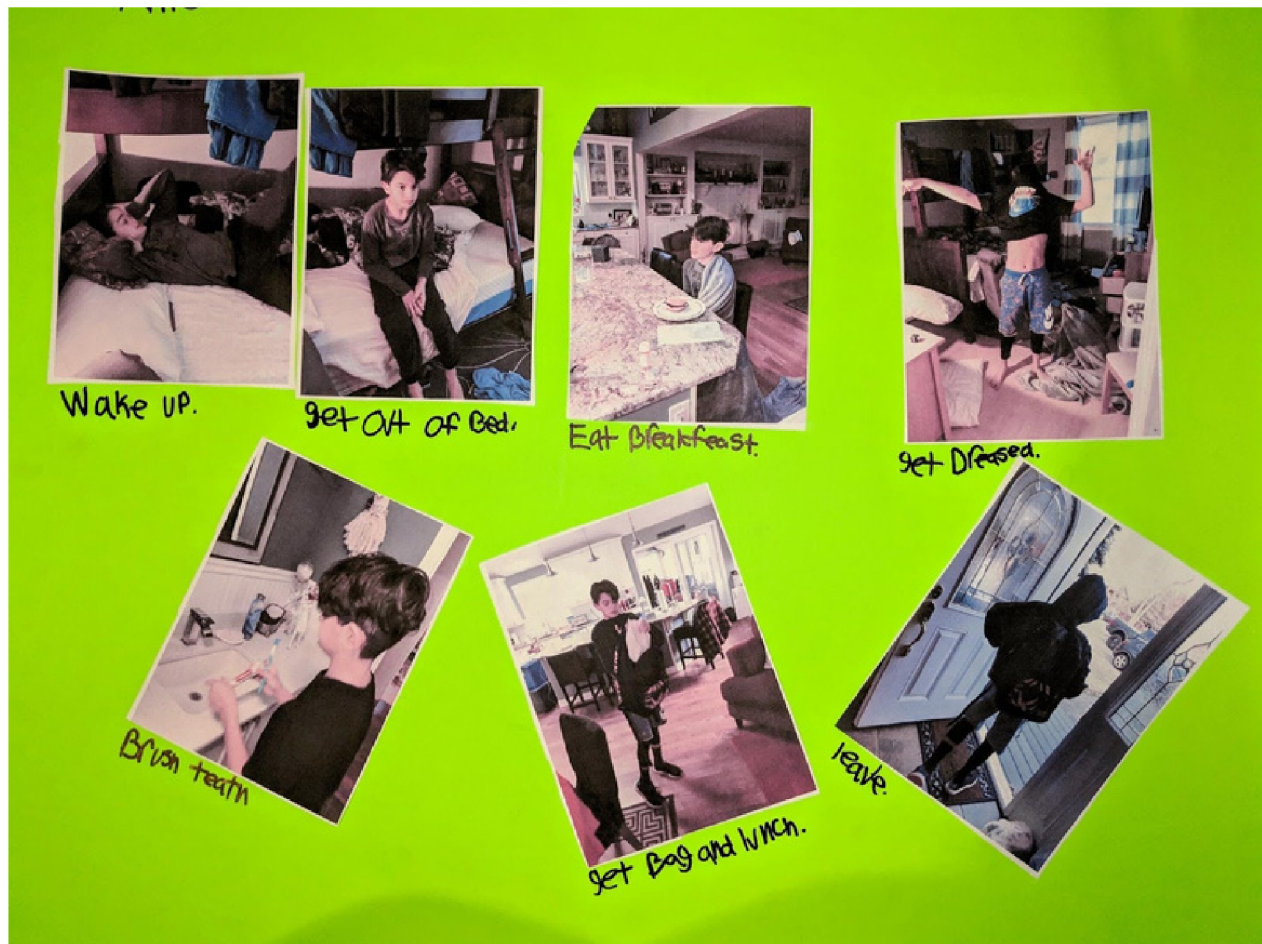
2. Moving Your Child From Prompt Dependence To Independence



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Page 3 of 4

Visual Timeline Graphic



Notes



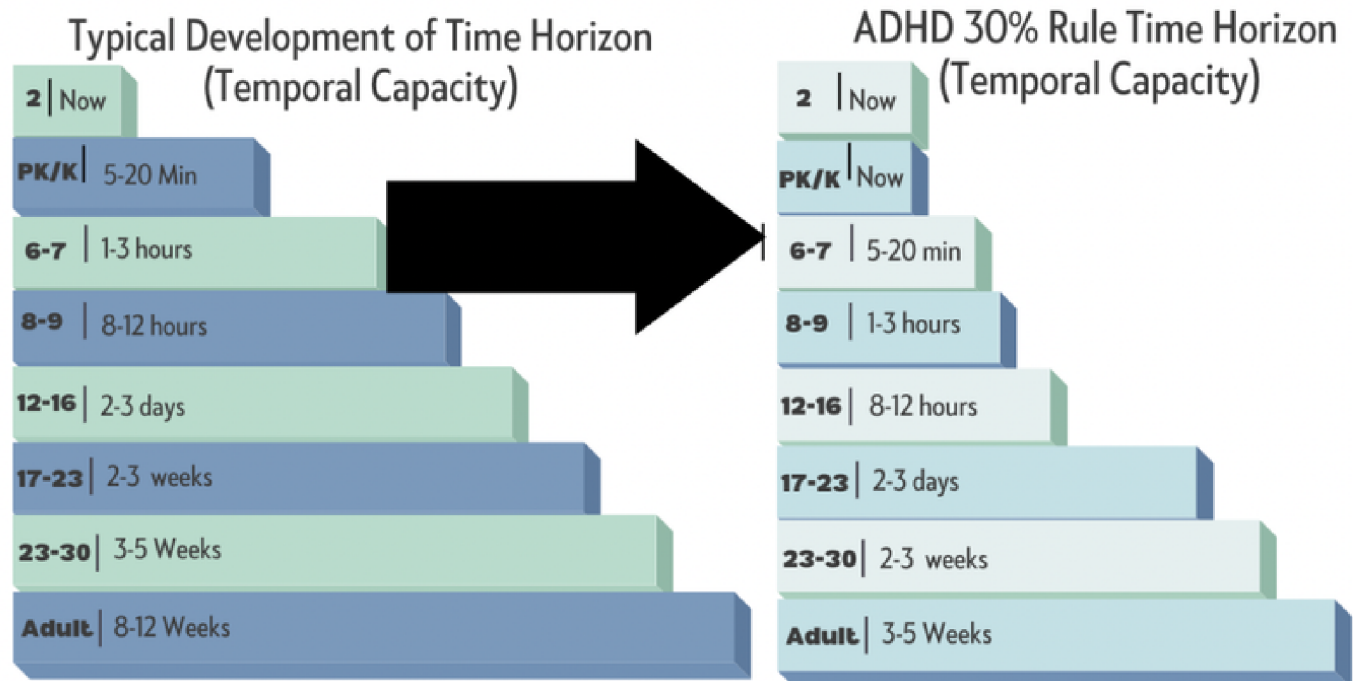
2. Moving Your Child From Prompt Dependence To Independence



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Page 4 of 4

Time Horizon Graphic



Adapted from Kristen Jacobsen, M.S., CCC/SLP & Sarah Ward, M.S., CCC/SLP June 2017

Notes



3. Teach your child how to feel time and transition from preferred to non-preferred tasks



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Page 1 of 2

Overview



- Many kids with ADHD experience **time blindness**. This means they need help conceptualizing how long things will take (especially non-preferred tasks) and may lose track of time if they are hyper-focused on something.
- Watching the minute hand move on an analog **clock** is the best way to help kids “feel time.” Digital clocks, phones, kitchen timers, and the “red countdown timer” are ineffective in teaching kids to conceptualize time.

Action Steps



- Start with a non-ticking analog clock with a glass face and dry-erase markers.
*See the link in the resources section of the membership site for recommended supplies.
- **Frontload** with your child and explain that you will start using the clock to help them stay on track with homework, chores, showers, reading, etc., so they will have more free time.
- For chores, homework, and non-preferred tasks, have your child color in the clock for the length of time they think the task will take.
- Debrief after they complete the task. Discuss if they correctly estimated how long it would take and if they used their time efficiently.

Notes



3. Teach your child how to feel time and transition from preferred to non-preferred tasks



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Page 2 of 2

Overview



Digital



Present Only
Static Representation of Time

Analog



Present Time with Past and
Future Visible and Moving

(Graphic from Sarah Ward & Kristen Jacobsen of Cognitive Connections, LLC)

- The goal is to increase independence by teaching kids to self-monitor their time on tasks and increase awareness of time passing.

Action Steps



- For preferred tasks, color the last five minutes a different color. This is their **future plan time**, so they can start picturing themselves ending the task. Future plan time visually shows the upcoming transition. See Using the Clock Tutorial section for more information.



Notes



5. How to Help a Child Who Has Difficulty Persevering Through Non-Preferred Tasks (An Overview)



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Page 1 of 2

Overview



- Kids with ADHD have difficulty persevering through non-preferred tasks due to difficulty prioritizing, weak **non-verbal working memory** and **time blindness**.

Action Steps



- **Frontload** with your child and explain they will start becoming more independent in completing tasks. Work with your child to choose an incentive to earn after completing the task.

*I typically do not recommend using video games as a reward for this.

- Use **visual language** to help them imagine the completed task and how they will feel when it's done.
- Set expectations using **language of accountability** and remind them that they will have more free time if they complete the task efficiently.
- Use **declarative language** (section 1), **visual timeline** (section 2), and **clock strategy** (sections 3 & 4) to create independence and help them stay on track.

Notes



5. How to Help a Child Who Has Difficulty Persevering Through Non-Preferred Tasks (An Overview)



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Page 2 of 2

Overview



Action Steps



- Give a clear timeframe in which the task needs to be completed. Make sure to give **purposeful recognition and praise** when the task is complete, and they get their reward within their **time horizon**.

Notes



6. Strategy to Help Your Child Clean Their Room Independently



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- Your child may have difficulty cleaning because challenges with **non-verbal working memory/future thinking skills** make it hard for them to visualize what their clean room should look like. **Time blindness** can make them think cleaning will take a long time, and they may not know where to start.

Action Steps



- Take a picture of their clean room and **break the space into color-coded zones**.
- Then, use visual language to help your child tackle each zone.

Example of visual language:

- "Make the yellow zone look how it is supposed to look."



Notes



7. Help Your Child Get Through Homework

Action Steps



- Start with the homework they find hardest or least interesting so they can complete it before their “brain gets tired.”

Here is an example done with a high school student:

Nick Homework Order and Reward

English

One episode of Robot Chicken

Social Studies

Science

5-minute non-screen break

Math

Entrepreneurship

60 minutes of game if before 9:00. If after 9 then one show on DVR

If I finish homework without getting distracted this is the end goal



Notes



7. Help Your Child Get Through Homework

Action Steps



- They can earn a small reward after each section and a larger reward after completing their homework.
- You can **incentivize** them to earn a better reward if they stay on task and complete the work within a given timeframe.

Notes

