

Executive Functioning (EF) is a group of high-level mental processes that help us regulate, control and manage thoughts and actions. They are comprised of Organizing Functions and Regulation Functions. These skills tend to be difficult for people with ASD

Organizing Functions

Planning

Asses your own needs, come up with options, make a sequenced plan.

- Double-booking an appointment
- Difficulty accomplishing multi-step tasks, like cooking or laundry
- Difficulty prioritizing

Problem Solving

Can notice and overcome obstacles to a goal.

- Difficulty coming up with a plan “B” for a get-together with friends when the restaurant is closed or the gathering needs to be rescheduled

Working Memory

Can hold information in mind while completing a task.

- Difficulty dialing a phone number as a person reads it aloud
- Difficulty following multi-step directions when given verbally

Shifting/Flexibility

Can change based on responses to the environment.

- Difficulty switching to a task that needs to be completed immediately
- Difficulty getting to work because the usual bus route is delayed/re-routed

Attention

Can focus on a task, even when uninterested.

- Difficulty completing a task because of distractions or interruptions
- Difficulty with being on time because of the inability to estimate how long it will take to get ready, given distractions



Regulation Functions

Examples of Difficulty for a Person with ASD

Inhibition

Blocking an action or thought

- Talking about a topic, even when asked to stop



Self-Monitoring

Adjusting actions if something goes wrong

- Difficulty completing a task when in a different environment, such as remembering coping skills that are used effectively at home
- Difficulty driving (awareness of speed, the location of the car to others, etc.)



Initiation

Getting started on a task

- Procrastinating a non-preferred task, possibly caused by not knowing how to break down a project into steps or not knowing how to begin