SOLA

A SOFT LANDING SPACE

Executive Function

It's not laziness



UNDERSTAND ● SUPPORT ● CONNECT ● BUILD

Understand

Executive Function isn’t one skill.

It’s a network of skills that work together.

Executive function is the collection of mental skills that helps us translate intention into action. These skills allow us to plan, organize, begin, remember, shift attention, regulate emotions, and follow through.

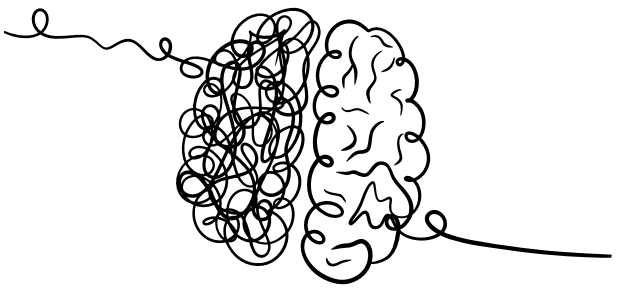
When these systems are working well, most of this happens automatically. When they're overwhelmed, even simple tasks can require enormous effort.

This is why executive function challenges are often mistaken for laziness or a lack of motivation. In reality, knowing what to do and being able to do it are two different things.

Executive function isn't about intelligence. It's about how the brain coordinates the many skills needed to move from thinking to doing.

No two people have the same executive functioning profile. Some struggle to start. Others lose track of time, forget important details, or become overwhelmed when switching tasks.

The goal isn't to compare your brain to someone else's. The goal is to understand how your brain works.



The key idea

Executive function problems are not a character flaw. They are brain based challenges with biological reasons

Understand

Knowing doesn't always lead to doing

Many people assume that if we know what to do, we'll naturally do it. But our brains don't work that way. Knowing what to do lives in the prefrontal cortex- the problem solving part of our brains.

Knowledge is only one part of behavior. Turning knowledge into action also depends on executive functioning, energy, attention, emotions, motivation, environment, and available support.
That's why you can know you need to reply to an email, fold the laundry, make a phone call, or go to bed—and still find yourself unable to begin.

This isn't a failure of character. It's a reminder that understanding a problem and solving a problem are different processes.

Insight is valuable because it helps us understand why something is happening. But understanding alone rarely changes behavior. Lasting change happens when insight is paired with practical supports, repeated practice, and an environment that works with your brain.

The goal is to make it easier to do what already matters to you.

> **"It's not laziness, it's a resource mismatch.**

Understand

Executive function is a network.

Planning:
Deciding what and how to do it

Task initiation:
starting tasks



Flexibility:
adapting to change and switching gears

Emotional regulation:
managing emotions

Working memory:
holding information in mind while using it

These skills draw on attention, energy, and regulation. When resources are low, executive function gets harder.

Think about your own experience...

Which parts of executive function come easily to you?

- [ ] Planning
- [ ] Organization
- [ ] Task Initiation
- [ ] Working memory
- [ ] Flexibility
- [ ] Emotional Regulation

Which tend to be more difficult?

- [ ] Planning
- [ ] Organization
- [ ] Task Initiation
- [ ] Working memory
- [ ] Flexibility
- [ ] Emotional Regulation

> “Curiosity comes before change.”

What systems are you already using?

Support

If support creates change, what kind of support may be helpful for you?

For getting started

- [ ] Body doubling
- [ ] Visual countdown
- [ ] Pomodoro Technique
- [ ] Competition
- [ ] Urgency
- [ ] Other

For focusing

- [ ] Noise canceling headphones
- [ ] Music
- [ ] Emotional regulation
- [ ] water nearby
- [ ] Fidget
- [ ] Other

For follow through

- [ ] External reminders
- [ ] Visuals in your environment
- [ ] Support partner
- [ ] Other

Think about your own experience...

When you think about getting something done, notice what happens in your body. What is it communicating to you?

What stories do you tell yourself around tasking?

What patterns do you notice?

Understand

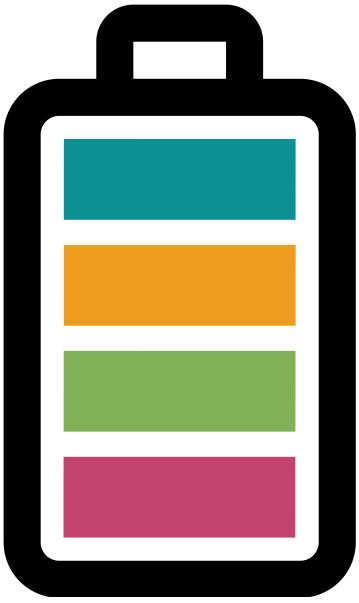
Executive function isn't fixed.

Your executive function changes every day.

Your executive function isn't a personality trait, it is influenced by many factors including:

- Sleep
- Stress
- Sensory Input
- Nutrition
- Illness
- Environment
- Nervous system
- Interest
- Support

Some days your brain has more resources available than others. That doesn't mean you've become more or less capable. It means your brain has different resources to work with.



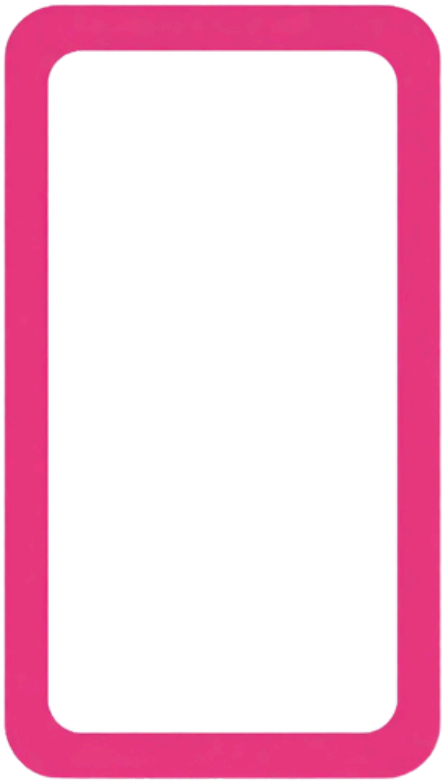
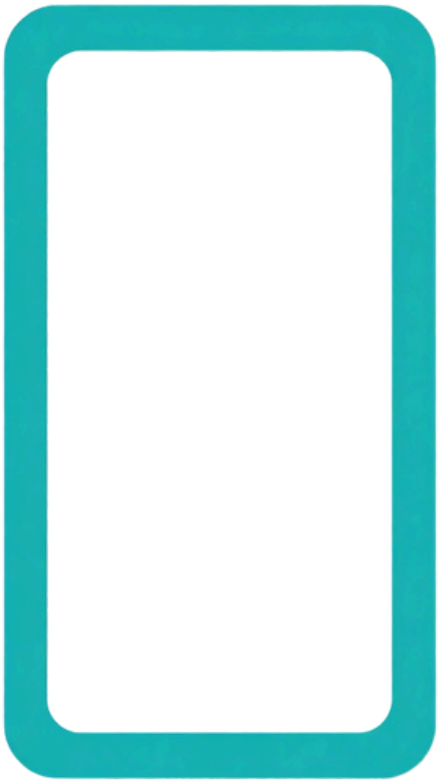
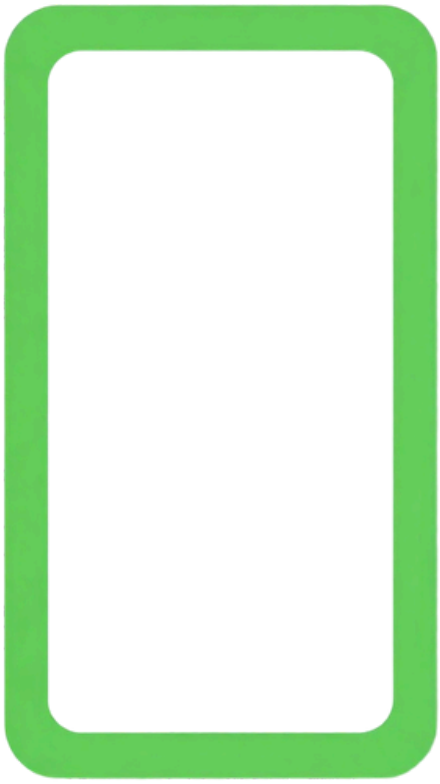
Key Idea:

We don't build support because we are failing. We build support because our brains aren't static.

Understand

What drains your executive functioning?

Different things drain different brains

Drains Me	Neutral	Supports me
		

Examples to get you started

Crowds	Background noise	Deadlines
Lack of sleep	Hunger	Movement
Social settings	Interruptions	Routines
Transitions	Decision Making	Pressure

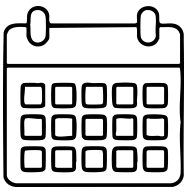
Understand

What fills your battery?

Resources refill your brain. Circle the things that help restore your energy and focus. Add anything that's not listed.


Movement


Connection


Predictability


Quiet


Medication


Sleep


Nature


Music


Support


Caffeine


Nutrition


Sunlight


Learning

Other things that refill me:

Support

My support plan

Support isn't a last resort. It's a strategy.

When I notice _____
facts, not stories

I will try _____
What support will I use?

Because _____
Why is the support helpful

Curiosity before criticism.
Understanding comes first.
Support creates change.

This week's experiment

One small experiment can create new data for your brain.



One support I will try.



One habit I will practice.



One thing I will observe.



One thing I am curious about.