



Supporting Executive Functioning Skills

Working
memory

Cognitive
flexibility

Inhibitory
control

Scenario 1

Situation:

A youth is working a summer job. Their supervisor gives them a list of 10 tasks to complete by the end of the day, ranging from organizing supplies to setting up an afternoon event. The supervisor explains each task only once, without providing a written checklist or notes.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can this youth use working memory to complete the tasks efficiently without forgetting important details?
2. What strategies could the youth use to better manage their workload, such as creating mental or physical checklists, breaking tasks into smaller steps, or repeating the instructions to reinforce memory?
3. How can you simulate this scenario in a pre-worksite environment? For instance, providing complex task lists during a training session without written instructions, then having youth develop strategies to retain and manage the tasks.

Scenario 2

Situation:

A teen in a program is leading a group project to organize a small community event. Midway through the project, they are informed that the budget has been cut, meaning they can no longer afford the planned materials or venue. They must now come up with a new plan under tighter constraints, which may include finding a cheaper venue or scaling down the event.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does cognitive flexibility play a role in helping the teen adapt to the new constraints, and what steps should they take to quickly adjust the project plan?
2. What strategies can help the teen shift gears without becoming overwhelmed, such as brainstorming alternative solutions, prioritizing the most important event elements, or seeking input from their team?
3. How can you create controlled scenarios during training that challenge youth to adapt when plans change suddenly? For example, setting up a project



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simulation where parameters or resources change mid-task to help them practice flexibility and problem-solving.

Scenario 3

Situation:

A participant is working on a group assignment due at the end of the session. However, they are repeatedly distracted by their phone, chatting with friends, and finding it difficult to stay focused. The deadline is approaching, and their teammates are depending on them to finish their part of the project.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does inhibitory control help the participant stay on task in this situation, and why is it important in time-sensitive work environments like a retail job or fast-paced internship?
2. What strategies can the participant use to resist distractions and stay focused, such as turning off notifications, setting specific goals for completing portions of the task, or using time management techniques like the Pomodoro method?
3. How can you replicate this type of distraction-heavy scenario during training to help youth practice managing distractions? You could simulate a group project with external distractions like noise, phones, or competing tasks and see how youth stay focused under pressure.