

Executive Functioning and Gifted Learners

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What is Executive Functioning?

“Brain–based skills required for humans to effectively perform tasks and solve problems.”
(Guare and Dawson, 2013)



How Does Executive Functioning

- **Begins at birth**
- **Ongoing development through at least late adolescence**
- **Partially tied to personality tendencies**
- **Can be taught/learned through explicit instruction and experience**
- **Not always a disability or pathology**



Neurobiology of Executive Functioning

- Prefrontal cortex
- Impacted by stress and environment

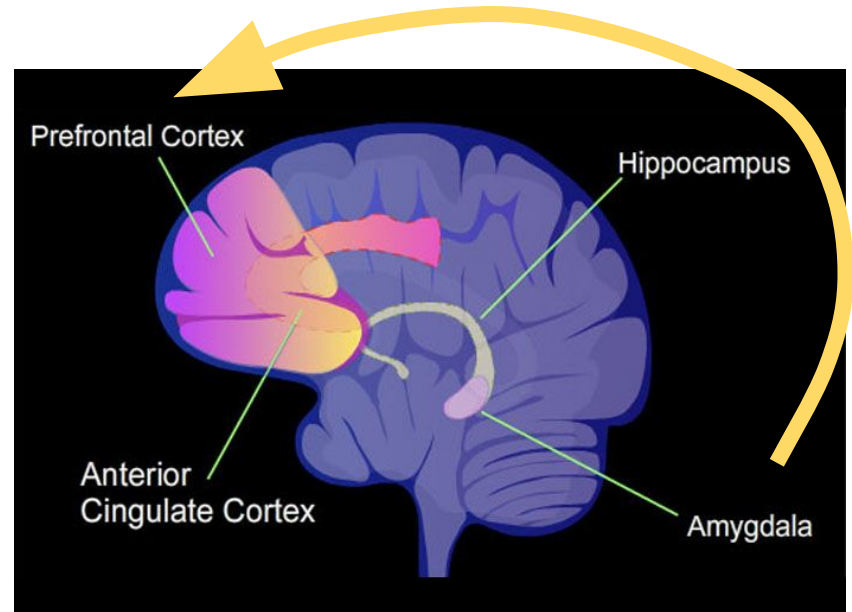


Image from <https://www.psypost.org/2017/05/study-psychopathy-linked-abnormalities-prefrontal-cortex-48948>



Specific Executive Functioning Skills

- **Planning**
- **Working Memory**
- **Time Management**
- **Organization**
- **Metacognition**
- **Response Inhibition**
- **Emotional Control**
- **Task Persistence**
- **Task Initiation**
- **Sustained Attention**
- **Cognitive Flexibility**

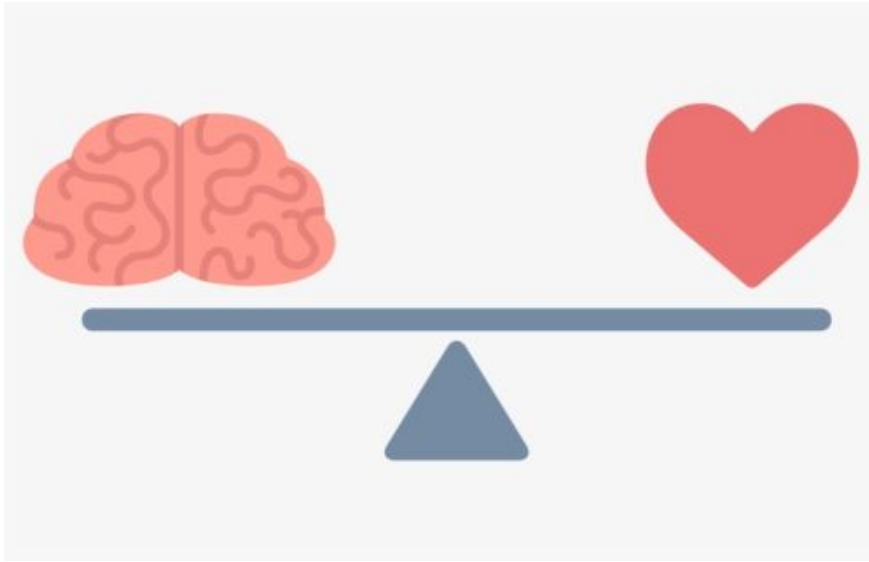


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Gifted and EF: Myth Vs. Reality

Myth

- Advanced cognition or academics = advanced EF
- Struggle is due to laziness or obstinance

Reality

- Overexcitabilities intensify things
- EFs develop asynchronously, too
- Only develop skills they need or have opportunity to practice and use



When Executive Functioning is Lacking

- **Anxiety**
- **Stress**
- **Defiance**
- **Lower self-esteem**
- **Depression**
- **Underachievement**



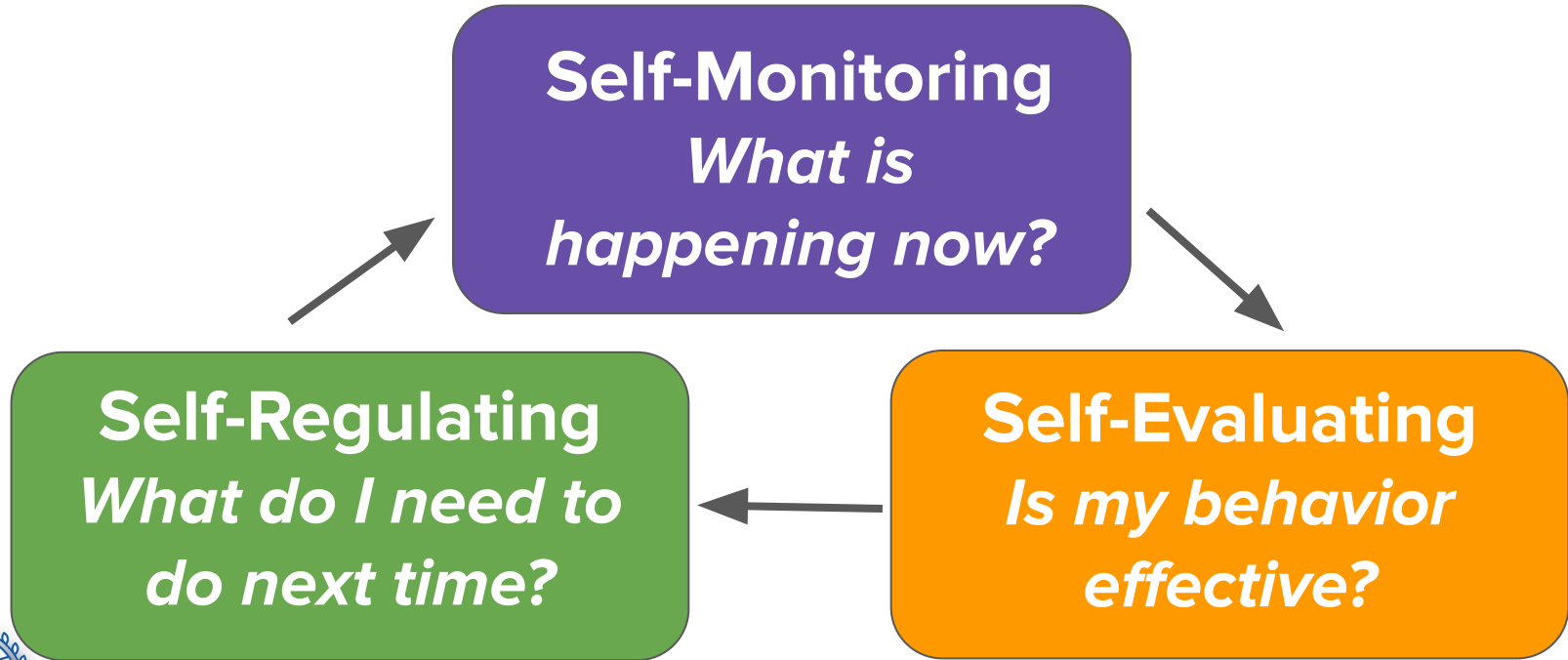
General Strategies to Support EF

- **Realistic expectations**
- **Baby steps**
- **Child-driven goal**
- **Model**
- **Provide multiple opportunities for practice**
- **Stop and talk through strategies at time of real life application**



Reflect after practice and real-time application

Metacognitive Cycle

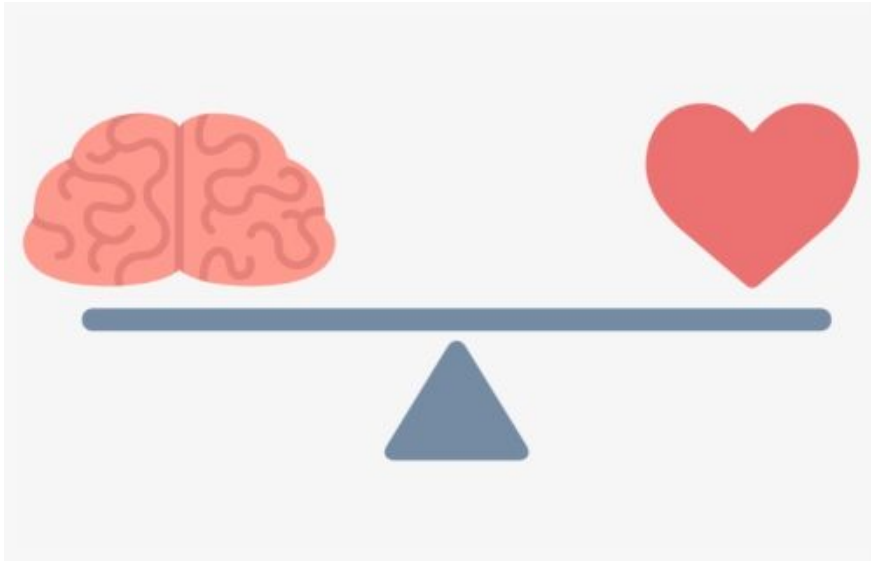


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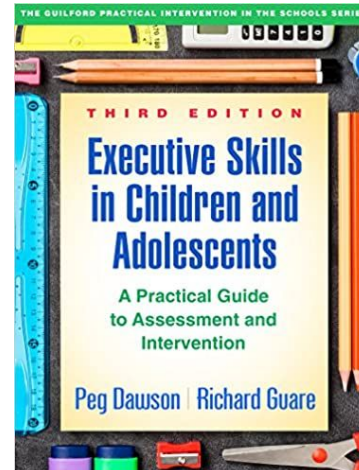
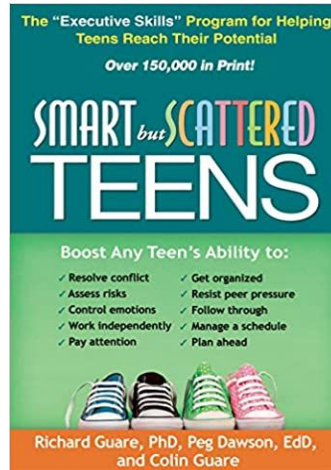
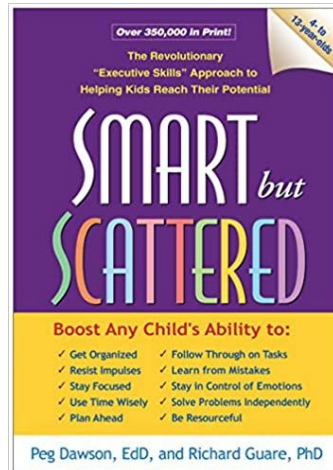
Twice Exceptional/Problems with EF

- **Assessment**
- **Plan**
 - Gradual
 - Adjustable
 - Personalized
 - Simple
- **Accommodate vs. Enable**



Resources

- **Richard Guare & Peg Dawson**
 - *Smart but Scattered* (Teen version available)
 - *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents*



Questions
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