

Environmental Modifications

The table below links Executive Skills, common resulting behaviors, and strategies to mitigate obstacles that result from Executive Skill struggles. Everyone can use these environmental modifications! Coaches can introduce participants to these strategies during goal setting, when thinking about designing incentives, modifying the environment in your program, or in any coaching conversation.

How We Organize		
Organization	 Do something fun while you're organizing Start VERY small in terms of time, space, or task Work off a checklist Establish/label a set place for items (e.g. your paystub always goes into a specific folder in your desk) Trade off with someone who is good at organization 	
Time Management	 Make a deal with a colleague that includes a reward for being on time Practice time estimation with colleagues—start with small tasks, and then practice larger tasks Set your watch ahead to "trick yourself" Ask for help—a colleague to cue you or send you a reminder about a deadline Use cell phone stopwatches or alarms 	
Planning/ Prioritization	 Use a planning template or calendar Use post-it notes to identify steps that can be easily re-arranged Ask for help from someone who is good at planning and prioritizing Practice the skill by starting with something fun to plan (e.g. a lunchtime potluck with colleagues) 	
How We React		
Response Inhibition	 Remove/sequester temptations such as a phone Create a cueing system as a reminder to use self-control Build in routine and automatic "wait time" Allow a small reward in exchange for giving up a big one Announce your goal in advance to a colleague or supervisor 	
Flexibility	 Preplan to minimize surprises—and have a back up plan in case something doesn't go to plan Avoid situations that require flexibility Learn to recognize your physiological cues and put in place a default strategy Create an Ifthen plan to rehearse for potential disruptions 	
Emotional Control	 Practice mindfulness meditation Use calming and affirmative self-talk Avoid situations that trigger poor emotional control Use a relaxation strategy in the moment Rehearse in advance how you will handle an anticipated emotionally-charged 	

	situation	
Stress Tolerance	 Reduce environmental inputs disruptive noise, scents, clutter or go to a different environment all together that does not include the stressful cues Add calming sensory inputs such as peaceful music, a gentle calming scent, touch a soft blanket or pillow Take a break from the situation by doing an activity that requires some attention but is not too difficult or taxing (a puzzle, wash dishes, etc) Tense and relax individual muscles: clench your jaw and release, curl your toes and release, and so forth Repeat a mantra, prayer, meditation or use deep breathing when encountering a stressor 	
Metacognition	 Create a system for analyzing mistakes (ex. monthly reflections with supervisor) Learn to ask for feedback from others, the more immediate the better Use a problem solving template Journal on a set day/time of week 	
How We Get Things Done		
Task Initiation	 Postpone a pleasurable activity until the task is started or done, or even pair the pleasurable activity with starting the task Suspend access to distractions, such as a snooze alarm or time limits Keep the degree of required effort low (e.g. limit the time spent on the aversive task) 	
Sustained Attention	 Set a "Personal Best" goal Limit access to distractions (e.g. shut down access to time-wasting websites) Screen out unpredictable distractions (e.g. listen to quiet music on headphones) "Temptation bundle": Pair the aversive task with something pleasant or a established habit (e.g. drink hot coffee while entering data) 	
Goal-Directed Persistence	 Use mental contrasting, implementation intention and process visualization Identify potential roadblocks and systematically eliminate them Build automaticity (do the same thing at the same time every day) Post visual reminders of the goal and why it is important 	
Working Memory	 Create a checklist Put visual cues in the environment Have a duplicate set of items/documents (home & work) Use apps/technology (i.e. Evernote, phone reminders, Tile) Mentally rehearse what you need to remember 	