

Executive Skills-Informed “Powerful Questions” for Managers & Teams

These open-ended Executive Skills-informed “powerful questions” strengthen metacognition skills. They reinforce the shared language, mindset, and practice of Executive Skills Coaching in our work. Questions like these build muscle around talking about and considering where and how Executive Skills and their related behaviors show up individually and in team settings. This is just a starter list – feel free to add or edit to make these your own!

1. What Executive Skills strength of yours did you rely on this week? How did it show up in your work as a behavior or action, or strategy?
2. What Executive Skills challenge of yours was extra hard for you this week? How did that manifest in your work as a behavior or action?
3. What win at work did you have in the past week/month? How did you leverage your Executive Skills to contribute to that win?
4. “Strengths Spot” – Identify a couple of successes you noticed and call attention to that using the SEA model: Spot the strength – Explain what you noticed – Affirm why that’s valuable to the work.
5. Check in after a stressful period of time: Acknowledge the stress, the strength of the team, and then invite the team to go around round-robin style. Identify an Executive Skills strength you saw your colleague use during these stressful two weeks. What was the skill, and how did you see it come out as a behavior or action?
6. Watch Harvard Center on Developing Child ["Building Core Capabilities for Life"](#) video and ask reflection questions that are open ended: What is especially meaningful or relevant to you about this video? In what ways can this video apply to our work? How do you see the themes in the video coming up for the families/participants in our program(s)?
7. Together let's look at our Executive Skills team profile list. What do we notice about our team's collective strengths, or shared struggles? What may be more challenging tasks for us as a full team because of our collective Executive Skills?
8. Identify a challenging project or task you have this week (this will be different for everyone -- make it a project time limited to this week (not a larger, multi-week deadline), such as, getting caught up with my case notes, or finishing a report, completing a performance evaluation, etc. Look at your ES struggles...how may this get in the way of your project? What strategy do you want to try to mitigate for that struggle?
9. Identify one team challenge (examples: timely data entry, enrollment numbers, participant satisfaction surveys, etc). Why is this a barrier for the team? Discuss how Executive Skills struggle may play a role. Then use the Environmental Modifications list to brainstorm ways to mitigate this obstacle. (For example: making data entry a fun team-based activity with incentives, reducing the hassles for a new family at intake/enrollment, etc).
10. Ask the staff to identify a colleague who is strong in a skill that they may struggle in. Discuss the colleague’s positive behaviors or environmental modifications and identify 1 your staff might emulate (for example, do they time block on a calendar, listen to music while writing a report, take a short walk after a stressful meeting, etc?).