




Executive Function and Student Success

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What do successful students do?



- **Learn academic content**
- **And...**

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This workshop will help you:

- Explore and develop a common language around EF
- Deepen your understanding of how EF impacts students at all levels
- Enhance your ability to effectively support students in developing their EF skills

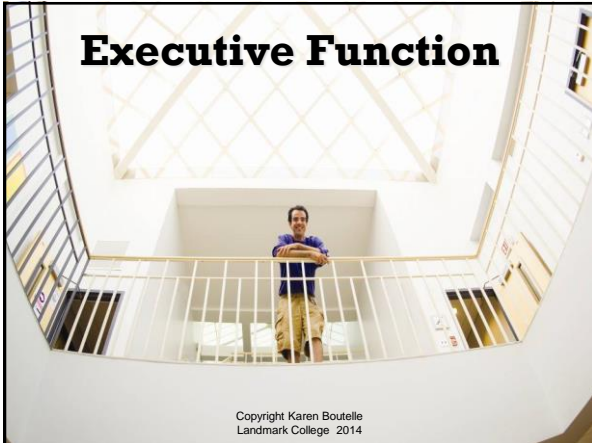
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Agenda

- Refine our understanding of EF and develop a common EF language
- Explore ways to best support students in managing EF challenges and developing EF skills
 - Alter the environment to decrease EF load
 - Teach EF skills and scaffold EF support
 - Support students around EF challenges using a non-directive, inquiry-based approach

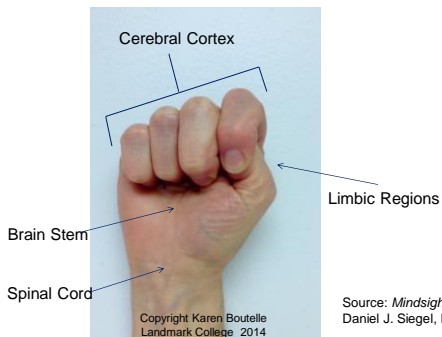
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Executive Function



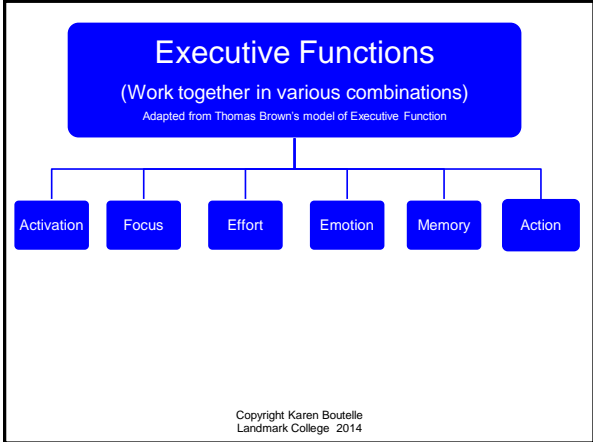
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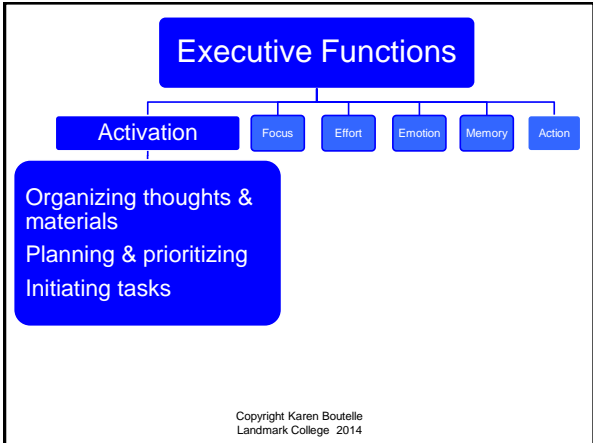
The Brain in the Palm of Your Hand

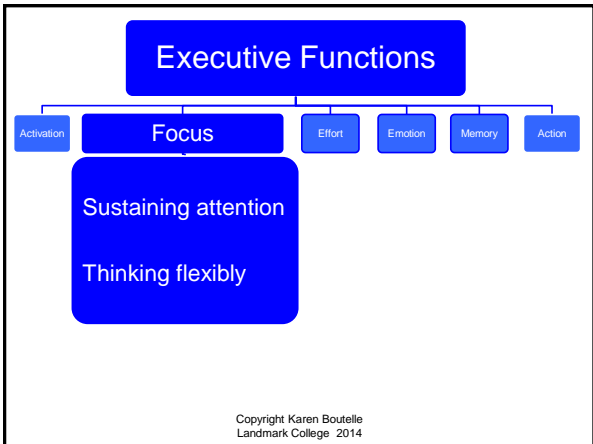


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Source: *Mindsight*,
Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., 2011







Cognitive Flexibility

- Switching mental sets (focus) to adapt to changing situations or transitions
- Engaging in mental play for problem-solving or finding new options
- Moving from big picture to details and vice versa

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Executive Functions



Sustaining effort
Regulating alertness

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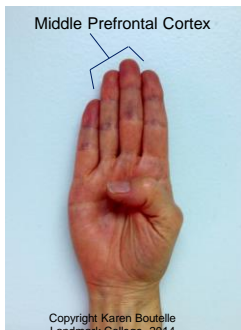
Executive Functions



Managing self in
the midst of
strong emotions
Bringing rational
thought to bear
on emotions

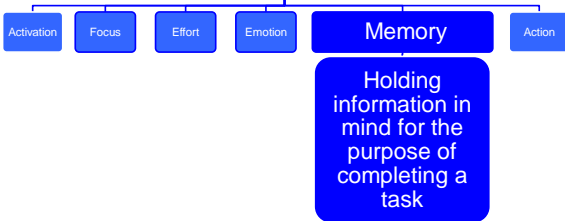
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The Brain in the Palm of Your Hand

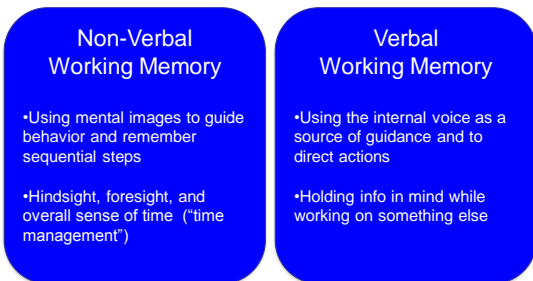


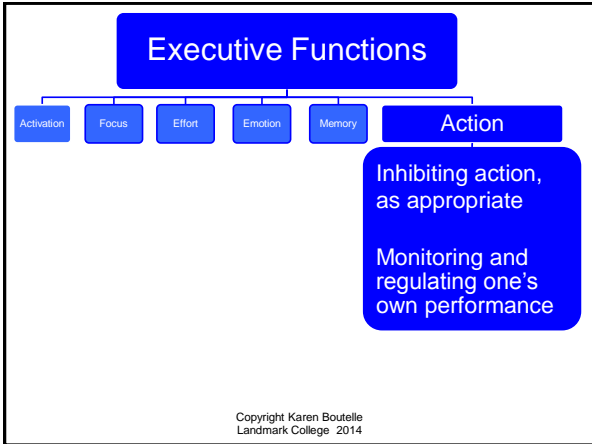
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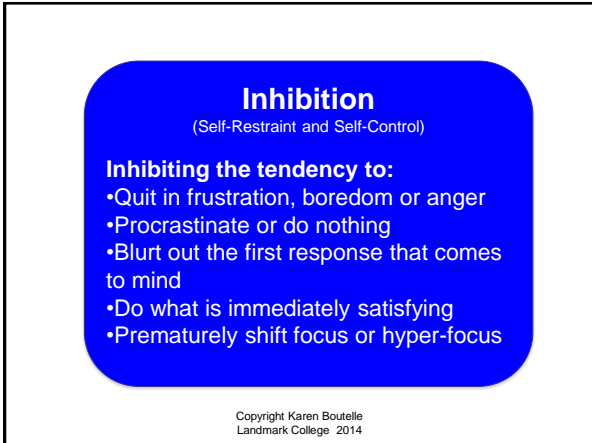
Executive Function

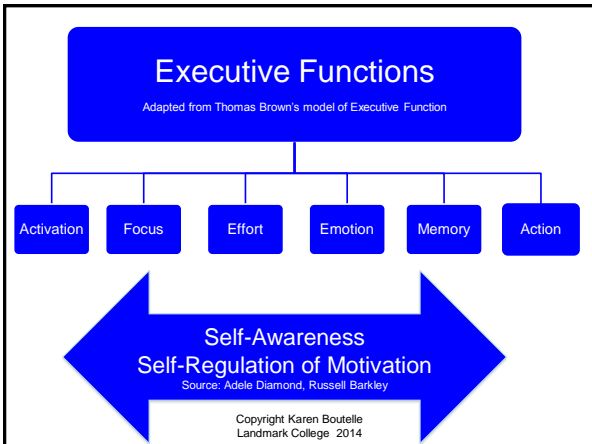


Working Memory







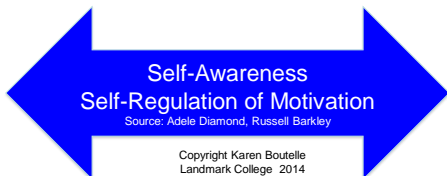
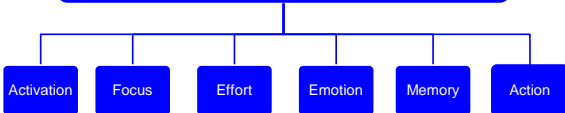




- Understanding of personal EF strengths & weaknesses in specific situations, under specific conditions
- Conscious knowledge of the EF or self-regulatory demands of a performance situation



- Ability to develop and engage internal sources of motivation
- Ability to alter environment and establish external motivators when necessary



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Starting with Ourselves

- What are your EF strengths and weaknesses?
- How do they impact your work with students?

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Creating an EF-Friendly Environment

- Explicitly bring attention to EF tasks and the EF skills needed for success
- Match EF task demands to students' developmental level
- Create routines; make steps, guidelines & expectations clear
- Provide "just enough" structure
- Rehearse what's next – set students up for success

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Creating an EF-Friendly Environment

- Build in choice and variety
- Use visuals to reduce memory load
- Reduce distraction
- Increase structure in socially complex situations
- Replenish the EF fuel tank

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Teaching EF Skills

- Students often know what to do, but not how to do it
- Study skills are essential, but are not enough
- Teaching EF skills is really teaching self-regulation skills

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Teaching EF Informally

- Use verbal scaffolding
 - Provide explanations, context, connections
 - Articulate feelings students are experiencing but may not know how to articulate themselves
 - Ask questions that engage students in reflection, problem solving or speculation
 - Cue students to visualize and verbalize
- Externalize self-directed speech to model using EF skills

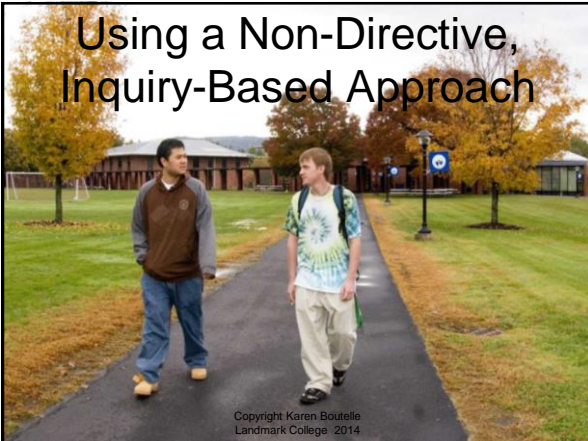
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Direct Instruction

- Provide tools
- Encourage self-observation & an attitude of experimentation
- Provide “just enough” support & structure
- Build in accountability
- Fade support gradually and explicitly

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Using a Non-Directive, Inquiry-Based Approach



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A Working Definition of the Mind

“The human mind
is a relational and embodied process
that regulates the flow
of energy and information.”

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., *Mindsight*, Bantam Books, 2010.

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EF support is most beneficial when it reinforces and facilitates students developing, and managing *their own* executive function skills and resources.

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Using a Coaching-Inspired Approach to EF Development

- Partner with students to:
 - Deepen their understanding of what works best for them
 - Experiment with strategies and structures
 - Encourage and support them to stay engaged with their own process

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Start with Ourselves

- Slow down
- Arrive
- Remember that we are not the problem-solvers; we are facilitators of problem-solving and EF development

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Align with the Student

- Acceptance
 - Clear seeing
 - Compassion
- Curiosity
 - Being open to mutual discovery
- Autonomy
 - Strengthening students' capacity to be fully themselves

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Engage in Dialogue for Learning and Action

- Basic skills
 - Listening to “get it”
 - Describing
 - The situation
 - The “gap”
 - Asking non-directive, curious questions to facilitate learning and action
 - Providing structure, strategies, skills, support

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“Up” Questions

- What would it look like if _____?
- How might your life be easier/better/happier if you _____?

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“Down” Questions

- What’s one small step you could take?
- What might get in the way?
- If that happens, what could you try instead?
- What support would you like?

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Helping Students Get Unstuck

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The Wheel: A Tool for Integrating and Clarifying



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Adapted from *Complete
Communication*, Alan
Gilburg, Growth
Dynamics, 2004.
