



COUNSELING CENTER

Improving Activation, Focus and Effort

Executive function is a set of mental skills and higher-level processes that we use every day to learn, work and manage daily life. They include our working memory, emotional regulation, motivation, inhibition, self-awareness, planning and problem solving. Challenges with executive function can be disruptive to our academic and work performance, social relationships and general well-being.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Low motivation
- Difficulty initiating / activating with tasks and academic work
- Feeling overwhelmed by tasks and responsibilities
- Procrastinating / avoiding
- Challenges attending and focusing on work
- Hyper-focusing on non-relevant tasks
- Easily distracted
- Often feeling the need to “multi-task.”
- Inability to sustain effort to complete tasks
- Increased stress and dysregulation from procrastination / avoidance

Quick coping tips/strategies:

- Take intentional and functional breaks
- Maintain consistency with sleep / sleep hygiene routine
- Engage exercise or movement daily
- Use behavioral cues and triggers to support goals and intentions
- Mitigate cues and triggers that pose distraction
- Use organization and management tools (Google calendar, to-do lists, etc.)
- Break down larger goals into realistic and manageable intentions
- Utilize accountability software to support moderation of digital media use
- Avoid multi-tasking
- Setup work environment for success
- Create a sensory diet to work with your unique sensory profile

To learn more, attend the “Improving Activation, Focus and Effort” workshop.