

IMPROVE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

THE PART NOBODY TAUGHT YOU

*How to plan, focus, and
follow through when
it actually matters*

8 SKILLS COVERED

- **SELF-MONITORING**
Knowing when you're off track
- **WORKING MEMORY**
Holding information while you use it
- **PLANNING & PRIORITIZING**
Knowing what to do first
- **IMPULSE CONTROL**
Pausing before you react
- **FLEXIBLE THINKING**
Adapting when plans change
- **TASK INITIATION**
Starting instead of stalling
- **ORGANIZATION**
Finding what you need when you need it
- **EMOTIONAL CONTROL**
Feeling it without letting it take over

Research shows executive functioning skills are learnable at any age, and the earlier you start, the bigger the payoff.

BY

KELLY GARASHAY

kellygarashay.com

INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK

THE PART NOBODY TAUGHT YOU
You won't learn this in school – but you'll
use it for the rest of your life

A WORKBOOK FOR

THE PART NOBODY TAUGHT YOU

*How to plan, focus, and
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8 EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

The complete set — from starting tasks to
managing emotions

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INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK

A WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

THE PART NOBODY TAUGHT YOU

*How to plan, focus,
follow through when
it actually matters*

8 SKILLS COVERED

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INTERACTIVE

Write it, track it, own it —
not just read it and forget it

BY

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INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK

REAL LIFE SCENARIOS

Every skill shown through scenes and examples teens actually recognize from their own life

BRAIN SCIENCE - PLAIN LANGUAGE

Understand why your brain does what it does – without the textbook

SELF-ASSESSMENT BUILT IN

Know exactly where you are before you try to change anything

NAMED STRATEGIES THAT STICK

Not a list of vague tips – actual tools with names you'll remember

5 DAY EXPERIMENT TRACKER

One strategy, one week, one real attempt at change - one for each of the 8 skills

PARENT AND COACH FRIENDLY

Works as a standalone workbook or alongside coaching, therapy, or school support

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AUTHOR KELLY GARASHAY
ICF Certified Life Coach with 25+ years
working with youth and families

BY
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INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING?

THE SHORT ANSWER

*Executive functioning is the set of mental skills your brain uses to **plan, focus, remember, and manage yourself** — especially when things are hard, boring, or overwhelming. Think of it as your brain's operating system.*



SELF-MONITORING

Knowing when you're off track



WORKING MEMORY

Holding info while you use it



PLANNING & PRIORITIZING

Knowing what to do first



IMPULSE CONTROL

Pausing before you react



FLEXIBLE THINKING

Adapting when plans change



TASK INITIATION

Starting instead of stalling



ORGANIZATION

Finding what you need, when you need it



EMOTIONAL CONTROL

Feeling it without letting it take over

*These aren't personality traits — you weren't born organized or disorganized, focused or scattered. They're **skills**. Skills can be learned. That's what this workbook is for.*

WHY YOUR PARENTS THINK IT MATTERS

Your parents aren't pushing this because they want to control you. They're pushing it because they can see a pattern you might not be able to see yet — missed deadlines, lost things, reactions that cost you relationships, big feelings that take over the whole house. They've watched it play out enough times that they're genuinely worried. Not about who you are. About habits that could follow you into adulthood if nothing changes.

WHY IT MATTERS IN THE REAL WORLD

Jobs, relationships, money, health — every area of adult life runs on executive functioning. People who can plan, follow through, manage their emotions, and organize their time aren't just "more successful" — they have less chaos, less regret, and more of the life they actually want. These skills don't show up automatically at 18. You build them now, or you spend years catching up later.

WHY I THINK IT MATTERS – FROM THE AUTHOR

KELLY'S STORY

I didn't figure out how much executive functioning mattered by reading about it. I figured it out the hard way — when I realized I was **letting people down** without even noticing I was doing it. Leaving out details. Not coming through on responsibilities. Missing things that mattered to people I cared about. And then one day, people started letting **me** down in the same ways — and suddenly I could feel exactly what I'd been doing to others.

That was the moment everything shifted. I stopped getting invited to help with events and experiences I wanted to be part of. And I knew — **I had earned that**. So I started coaching myself through it. I could see clearly that growing in these skills would give me a richer, fuller life. More connection. More fun. More discipline in my own goals. More dependability in my relationships. And eventually, the ability to handle much harder things with ease.

Nobody taught me this stuff. I had to forge it myself. That's why this workbook exists — so you don't have to wait until something goes wrong to start paying attention.

WHY YOU SHOULD WORK ON THIS

You don't have to wait until something goes wrong to decide you want more. More connection, more follow-through, more freedom, more of being someone people can count on — including yourself. These skills are the foundation under all of it.

Nobody is born with great executive functioning fully developed. The brain builds these skills through experience, practice, and honest reflection — which is exactly what this workbook is designed to give you. Every section will ask you to look at yourself clearly, try something specific, and notice what changes. That's the whole method. It's simple, but it works.

WHAT YOU'LL ACTUALLY GET IF YOU DO THIS WORK

RIGHT NOW – THIS WEEK
Less panic about deadlines. Less searching for things you lost. Fewer blow-ups that leave you feeling bad about yourself. More follow-through on the small stuff — which is actually the big stuff.

SOON – THIS SEMESTER
Better grades — not because you're smarter, but because you're more organized, more consistent, and more able to start hard things before the night before. More trust from the adults in your life.

LATER – IN A FEW YEARS
The ability to handle harder and harder things with ease. Real independence — not the kind that's handed to you, but the kind you've earned. A reputation as someone who comes through. Relationships that last.

FOR LIFE – THE LONG GAME
A richer, fuller life. More connection, more fun, more discipline in your own goals. The freedom that comes from being someone you can trust. And eventually — the ability to teach someone else what you figured out here.

One last thing before you start
This workbook will only work if you're honest. Honest with yourself about where you are, what's hard, and what you actually want to change. Nobody is grading this. Nobody needs to see it. The only person this is for is you — and the person you're becoming.

Self-Monitoring

THE SCENE

You're doing homework and you've been on the same math problem for 20 minutes. You haven't written anything. You're thinking about a video you saw earlier. You don't even notice you're stuck.

YOU SAY: "I've been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

PARENT THINKS: "She's been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

YOU SAY: "I've been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

PARENT THINKS: "She's been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

YOU SAY: "I've been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

Planning & Prioritizing

THE SCENE

You have a project due Friday, math due tomorrow, and a test Thursday. You spend Sunday on the project. Tuesday you remember the math. Wednesday you panic about the test. Nothing gets done well.

YOU SAY: "I worked all week. I don't know why everything went wrong."

PARENT THINKS: "She only sees tonight. We've had this same meltdown every Thursday."

YOU SAY: "I worked all week. I don't know why everything went wrong."

PARENT THINKS: "She only sees tonight. We've had this same meltdown every Thursday."

YOU SAY: "I worked all week. I don't know why everything went wrong."

PARENT THINKS: "She only sees tonight. We've had this same meltdown every Thursday."

Working Memory

THE SCENE

Your teacher says: "Open to page 47, answer questions 1–4, then check your work." By the time you open the book, you remember page 47 but have no idea what you're supposed to do there.

YOU SAY: "I've been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

PARENT THINKS: "She's been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

YOU SAY: "I've been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

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YOU SAY: "I've been stuck on this problem for 20 minutes. I haven't written anything. I'm thinking about a video I saw earlier. I don't even notice I'm stuck."

Impulse Control

THE SCENE

A kid says something annoying. Before you can stop yourself you blurt out "That's so dumb." Teacher sends you out. On the way there you think, "Why did I say that? I didn't even mean it."

YOU SAY: "I barely said anything. Everyone acts like I'm the problem."

PARENT THINKS: "She keeps blowing up relationships — teachers, friends, coaches. We've had this same meltdown every Thursday."

YOU SAY: "I barely said anything. Everyone acts like I'm the problem."

PARENT THINKS: "She keeps blowing up relationships — teachers, friends, coaches. We've had this same meltdown every Thursday."

YOU SAY: "I barely said anything. Everyone acts like I'm the problem."

PARENT THINKS: "She keeps blowing up relationships — teachers, friends, coaches. We've had this same meltdown every Thursday."

Project 1: Introduction to Project Management

Project Overview

The purpose of this project is to introduce you to the fundamentals of project management. You will learn how to define a project, identify stakeholders, and develop a project plan. This project will be completed over the course of the semester.

Objectives

By the end of this project, you should be able to:

1. Define a project.

Project Scope

The project scope is the range of work that must be completed to deliver a product, service, or result with the stated purpose and objectives. It is the foundation for project management.

The project manager is responsible for ensuring that the project is completed on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of the stakeholders.

Project Plan

The project plan is a document that describes the project's goals, objectives, and the steps that will be taken to achieve them. It is a key tool for project management.

1. Define the project.

Project 2: Project Management Tools

Project Overview

The purpose of this project is to introduce you to the various tools and techniques used in project management. You will learn how to use project management software, create a project chart, and develop a project plan. This project will be completed over the course of the semester.

Objectives

By the end of this project, you should be able to:

1. Define a project.

Project Scope

The project scope is the range of work that must be completed to deliver a product, service, or result with the stated purpose and objectives. It is the foundation for project management.

The project manager is responsible for ensuring that the project is completed on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of the stakeholders.

Project Plan

The project plan is a document that describes the project's goals, objectives, and the steps that will be taken to achieve them. It is a key tool for project management.

1. Define the project.

Project 3: Project Management Tools

Project Overview

The purpose of this project is to introduce you to the various tools and techniques used in project management. You will learn how to use project management software, create a project chart, and develop a project plan. This project will be completed over the course of the semester.

Objectives

By the end of this project, you should be able to:

1. Define a project.

Project Scope

The project scope is the range of work that must be completed to deliver a product, service, or result with the stated purpose and objectives. It is the foundation for project management.

The project manager is responsible for ensuring that the project is completed on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of the stakeholders.

Project Plan

The project plan is a document that describes the project's goals, objectives, and the steps that will be taken to achieve them. It is a key tool for project management.

1. Define the project.

Project 4: Project Management Tools

Project Overview

The purpose of this project is to introduce you to the various tools and techniques used in project management. You will learn how to use project management software, create a project chart, and develop a project plan. This project will be completed over the course of the semester.

Objectives

By the end of this project, you should be able to:

1. Define a project.

Project Scope

The project scope is the range of work that must be completed to deliver a product, service, or result with the stated purpose and objectives. It is the foundation for project management.

The project manager is responsible for ensuring that the project is completed on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of the stakeholders.

Project Plan

The project plan is a document that describes the project's goals, objectives, and the steps that will be taken to achieve them. It is a key tool for project management.

1. Define the project.

Self-Monitoring

THE SCENE

You're doing homework and you notice you've read the same paragraph three times. You stop, put your phone in another room, reset, and finish the

Working Memory

THE SCENE

Your teacher gives three instructions. You jot them down fast before she finishes. You complete all three steps in order without asking a single

Planning & Prioritizing

THE SCENE

Sunday night you look at the whole week. Project due Friday — you start the outline tonight. Math due tomorrow — you do it second. Test Thursday — you schedule review for Wednesday. Thursday comes and you're not panicking.

YOU SAY:

"I knew what was coming so I just

PARENT THINKS:

"No meltdown this week. She

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000 1001 1002 1003 1004 1005 1006 1007 1008 1009 1010 1011 1012 1013 1014 1015 1016 1017 1018 1019 1020 1021 1022 1023 1024 1025 1026 1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035 1036 1037 1038 1039 104

[illegible]

Impulse Control

THE SCENE

A kid says something that gets under your skin. You feel the urge to fire back. You take one breath. You let it go. Later your friend says "I can't believe you didn't react. That was impressive."

YOU SAY:

"It wasn't worth it. I didn't want to deal with the fallout."

PARENT THINKS:

"She chose her response instead of just reacting. I've watched her work

[illegible][illegible]

Flexible Thinking

THE SCENE

The projector breaks right before your presentation. You take a breath, turn to face the class, and say "Okay, no slides — I'll just walk you through it." It goes better than the rehearsed version. You surprised yourself.

Task Initiation

THE SCENE

You don't want to write the essay. You know you don't want to. So you set a five-minute timer, open a blank doc, and just start typing anything. Twenty minutes later you have a draft and the hard part is over.

Organization

THE SCENE

Teacher asks for last Tuesday's worksheet. You unzip your binder, go to the math section, pull it out in four seconds. The kid next to you is still

Emotional Control

THE SCENE

You get a 68 and feel that familiar drop in your stomach. This time you let yourself be disappointed for a few minutes, then you ask what went wrong

SELF-MONITORING

WHAT IT IS

The ability to notice what you're doing while you're doing it — and adjust when something isn't working.

IN THIS SECTION

- 1 You are here — the scenes and why it matters
- 2 Why this skill is hard — and why it matters
- 3 Honest self-assessment
- 4 The toolkit — strategies that actually work
- 5 My experiment this week

SOUND FAMILIAR?

WHEN IT'S GOING WRONG

You're doing homework and you've been on the same problem for 20 minutes without writing anything — thinking about something else entirely. You don't even notice you're stuck until someone points it out.

WHEN IT'S GOING RIGHT

You notice you've read the same paragraph three times. You stop, reset, remove the distraction, and finish in 20 minutes. Nobody had to tell you. You caught it yourself.

If you can't notice when you're off track, you can't fix it. Your parents can't be your alarm system forever — and neither can your teachers.

BEFORE YOU GO FURTHER — QUICK THOUGHT:

"When's the last time you thought you were working hard but the result didn't match?"

YOUR BRAIN HAS A BUILT-IN OBSERVER. YOURS IS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

The part of your brain responsible for self-monitoring — the prefrontal cortex — isn't fully developed until your mid-twenties. That's not an excuse. It's just the truth. You're not broken. You're early.



What's actually happening

Self-monitoring requires your brain to do two things at once: complete a task AND watch itself completing it. That's called metacognition — thinking about your thinking. It takes significant mental energy, and when you're tired, stressed, or distracted, it's the first thing to go offline.



Why some people struggle more

ADHD, anxiety, and high stress all make self-monitoring harder — not because something is wrong with you, but because those conditions put extra load on the same brain system. The good news: this is a trainable skill. Like any muscle, the more you use it deliberately, the stronger it gets.



What it looks like when this skill is developed

People with strong self-monitoring catch themselves before things go sideways. They know how long tasks actually take. They notice when they're frustrated before they snap. They finish a test and have a realistic sense of how they did. They don't need constant external feedback to stay on course — they've built an internal one.

The goal isn't to be perfect. It's to shorten the gap between "going off track" and "noticing you went off track." Right now that gap might be 45 minutes. With practice, it becomes 5. That's the whole game.

Rate yourself honestly on each statement below. This isn't a test — nobody sees it but you. The point is to get a real picture of where you are right now so you know exactly where to focus.

KEY: ○ Rarely or never ○ Sometimes ○ Most of the time

STATEMENT	RARELY	SOMETIMES	USUALLY
I notice when my mind has wandered during a task	○	○	○
I have a realistic sense of how long tasks take me	○	○	○
I can tell when I'm starting to get frustrated before I react	○	○	○
After a test or assignment, I have a good sense of how I actually did	○	○	○
I notice when I've been avoiding something instead of doing it	○	○	○
I can catch myself going off-topic during a conversation or class	○	○	○
I know which environments or times of day I work best in	○	○	○
I adjust my approach when something isn't working, without being told	○	○	○

THE STATEMENT I RATED LOWEST – AND WHY

ONE SITUATION WHERE I CAN ALREADY SEE THIS SHOWING UP

There are no right answers here. More "Rarely" circles just means more room to grow — and more to work with in the next two pages.

You picked one strategy. Now make it real. A goal you can't measure is just a wish. Fill this out before you leave today — specific enough that you'll know by Friday whether it worked.

THE STRATEGY I'M TRYING THIS WEEK

☐

 The Check-In Alarm

☐

 The One-Word Log

☐

 The Time Prediction Test

☐

 The Rewind Question

☐

 The Ask a Trusted Person

SPECIFICALLY, HERE'S WHAT I'LL DO AND WHEN

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE BY FRIDAY

5-DAY TRACKER — CHECK THE BOX EACH DAY YOU FOLLOWED THROUGH, JOT ONE NOTE BELOW IT

MON

☐

TUE

☐

WED

☐

THU

☐

FRI

☐

END OF WEEK — WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

SOMETHING I NOTICED ABOUT MYSELF THAT I DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE

HOW I FEEL ABOUT IT — AND WHAT I WANT TO DO ABOUT IT

Pick one strategy to try this week — not all five. Check the box next to it, then turn the page to build your plan. These are all specific enough to actually do, not vague advice like "pay more attention."

1

The Check-In Alarm

☐

Set two phone alarms during homework time — one at the start and one halfway through. When it goes off,

2

The One-Word Log

☐

At the end of each class or subject block, write one word that describes your focus level: "locked," "scattered,"

3

The Time Prediction Test

☐

Before starting any homework or task, write down how long you think it will take. After you finish, check. Most

4

The Rewind Question

☐

When something goes wrong — a bad grade, a missed deadline, a fight — ask yourself: "At what point did I

5

The Ask a Trusted Person

☐

Pick one person — a parent, coach, teacher, or friend — and ask them: "When do you notice me going off track?"

WORKING MEMORY

WHAT IT IS

The ability to hold information in your head while you're actively using it — instructions, steps, ideas — without losing it before you're done.

IN THIS SECTION

- 1 You are here — the scenes and why it matters
- 2 Why this skill is hard — and why it matters
- 3 Honest self-assessment
- 4 The toolkit — strategies that actually work
- 5 My experiment this week

SOUND FAMILIAR?

WHEN IT'S GOING WRONG

Your teacher gives three instructions: open to page 47, answer questions 1–4, then check your work. By the time you open the book, you remember page 47 but have no idea what you're supposed to do there.

WHEN IT'S GOING RIGHT

Your teacher gives three instructions. You jot them down fast before she finishes. You complete all three steps in order without asking a single classmate what you were supposed to do.

Real life runs on multi-step everything — recipes, jobs, directions. If you can only hold one thing at a time, you'll always need someone to walk you through it.

BEFORE YOU GO FURTHER — QUICK THOUGHT:

"Does this happen more when you're tired, distracted, or stressed — or pretty much always?"

YOUR BRAIN CAN ONLY HOLD A FEW THINGS AT ONCE.

Working memory is like a mental whiteboard. It holds information temporarily while you use it — but it has a small surface and erases quickly, especially under stress, distraction, or when you're tired.

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What's actually happening

Working memory lives in the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for executive functions like planning, decision-making, and problem-solving. It's like a mental workspace where you can temporarily hold and manipulate information. However, this workspace is limited in capacity and duration, meaning you can only hold a few things at once, and the information will be lost if you don't use it quickly or if you're distracted.

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Why some people struggle more

ADHD directly affects working memory. People with ADHD often have a harder time holding onto information in their working memory, which can lead to forgetfulness, difficulty following instructions, and trouble staying organized. This is because the ADHD brain has a harder time filtering out distractions and staying focused on the task at hand, which makes it difficult to keep information in working memory.

How to improve working memory

There are several strategies you can use to improve your working memory. First, try to minimize distractions by finding a quiet place to work or study. Second, use external aids like lists, calendars, and reminders to help you keep track of information. Third, practice working memory exercises, such as memory games or puzzles, to strengthen your brain's ability to hold and manipulate information. Finally, get enough sleep and exercise, as these can help improve overall brain function and memory.

Working memory is a crucial skill for many tasks, and while it's not perfect, there are ways to improve it. By understanding how it works and using the right strategies, you can make the most of your brain's limited capacity and stay on top of your work and life.

Rate yourself honestly on each statement below. This isn't a test — nobody sees it but you. The point is to get a real picture of where you are right now so you know exactly where to focus.

KEY: ○ Rarely or never ○ Sometimes ○ Most of the time

STATEMENT	RARELY	SOMETIMES	USUALLY
I can follow multi-step directions without writing them down	○	○	○
I remember what I was doing after being interrupted	○	○	○
I can hold a question in my head while still listening to the rest of a lecture	○	○	○
I don't lose my place in a process when something distracts me	○	○	○
I can remember verbal instructions from earlier in the day	○	○	○
I can track multiple pieces of information at once during a task	○	○	○
I remember what I need to bring or do without being reminded	○	○	○
I can mentally hold one idea while I write down another	○	○	○

THE STATEMENT I RATED LOWEST – AND WHY

ONE SITUATION WHERE I CAN ALREADY SEE THIS SHOWING UP

There are no right answers here. More "Rarely" circles just means more room to grow — and more to work with in the next two pages.

Pick one strategy to try this week — not all five. Check the box next to it, then turn the page to build your plan. These are all specific enough to actually do, not vague advice like "pay more attention."

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The Write It Down

Stop trusting your brain to hold instructions. The moment you receive multi-step directions — in class, from a

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You picked one strategy. Now make it real. A goal you can't measure is just a wish. Fill this out before you leave today — specific enough that you'll know by Friday whether it worked.

THE STRATEGY I'M TRYING THIS WEEK

☐

The Write It Down

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The Repeat Back

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8 SKILLS COVERED

- **SELF-MONITORING**
Knowing when you're off track
- **WORKING MEMORY**
Holding information while you use it
- **PLANNING & PRIORITIZING**
Knowing what to do first
- **IMPULSE CONTROL**
Pausing before you react
- **FLEXIBLE THINKING**
Adapting when plans change
- **TASK INITIATION**
Starting instead of stalling
- **ORGANIZATION**
Finding what you need when you need it
- **EMOTIONAL CONTROL**
Feeling it without letting it take over



You've been through all eight skills. Now go back and pull out the one thing that hit hardest in each section — the idea, the scene, the strategy, or the moment of recognition that stuck with you most. There are no right answers here.

● Self-Monitoring

Noticing what you're doing while you're doing it

● Working Memory

Holding information in your head while you use it

● Planning & Prioritizing

Looking ahead and deciding what matters most

● Impulse Control

Pausing between impulse and action

● Flexible Thinking

Shifting your approach when something isn't working

● Task Initiation

Starting instead of stalling

● Organization

Finding what you need when you need it

● Emotional Control

Feeling it without letting it take over

"The skill I most need to work on right

"The strategy I'm committing to for the

"One thing I understand about myself