

Productivity Apps

How to Stay Organized

Productivity Apps

Presented by Kate Woodworth

Kingsport Public Library

423-224-2539

katewoodworth@kingsporttn.gov

Why did I become interested in this?

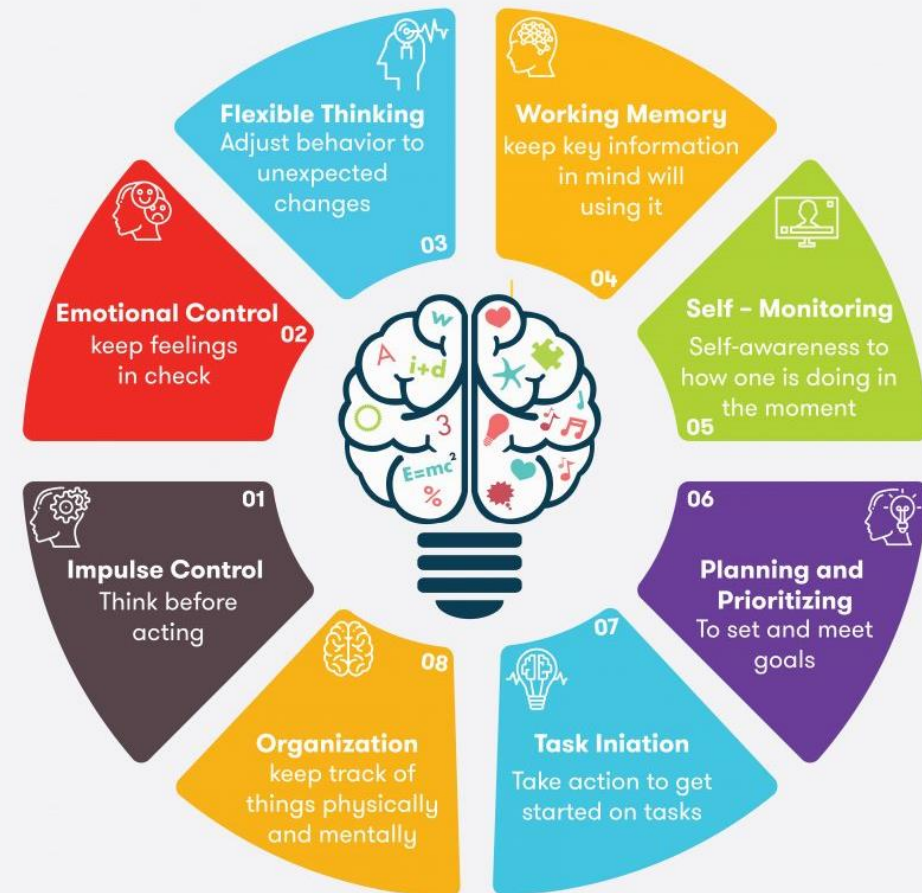
- Attention Deficit Disorder leads to Executive Dysfunction
- To compensate, I have to be vigilant about organization

What is Executive Function?

- *“The executive functions are a set of processes that all have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal. It is an umbrella term for the neurologically-based skills involving mental control and self-regulation.”*

[-http://www.ldonline.org/article/29122/](http://www.ldonline.org/article/29122/)

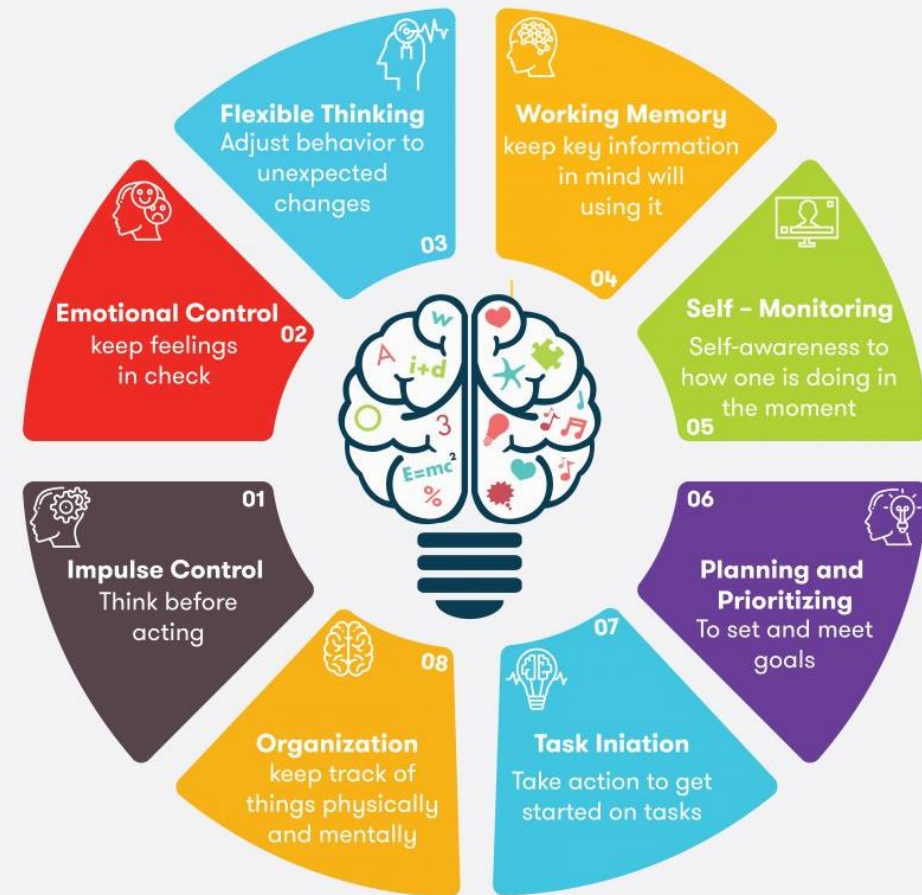
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING



What is Executive Function?

Problems with executive function are the reason that someone might easily have the energy to go on a 6 mile hike but be unable to focus enough to call the cable company to deal with a bill. It isn't about physical capability, but the processes of the brain. Certain tasks require special types of thinking and focus to properly execute.

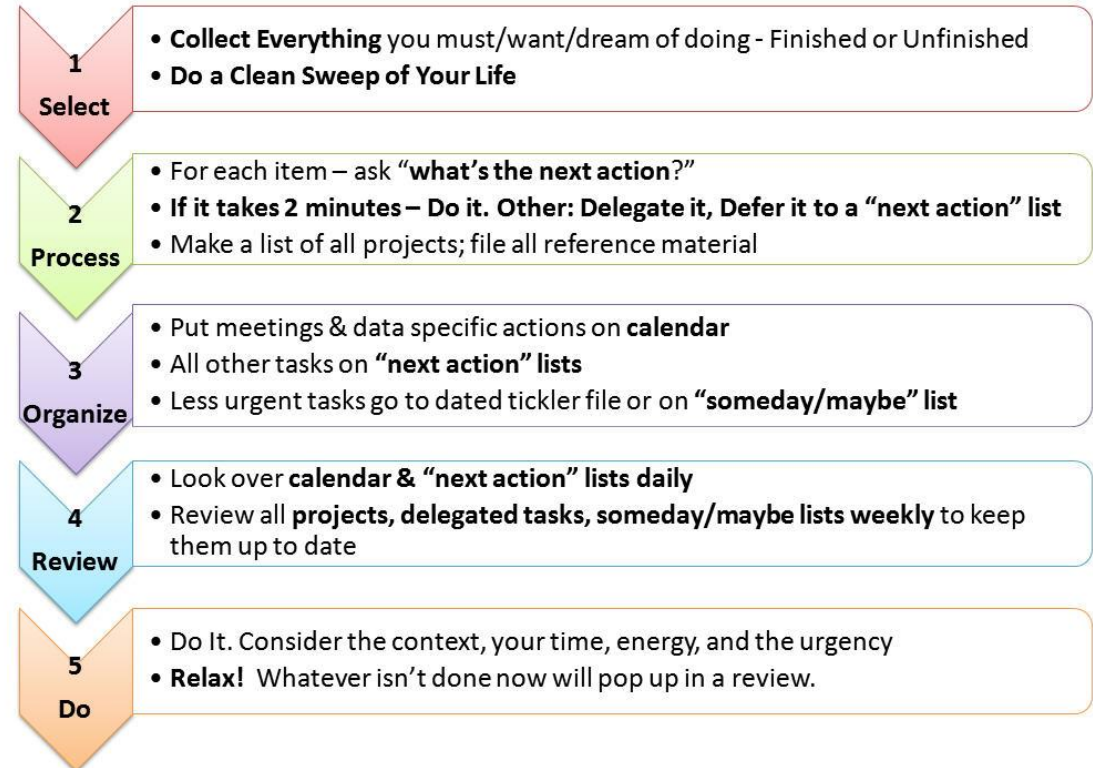
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING



What overall method works best for me?

- Getting Things Done by David Allen
- I'm much better at organizing than I am at doing. I'm also a work in progress, and that's okay. Learning is iterative.

GTD



Getting Things Done

I highly recommend this book. The basic concept is that you write down everything you have to do, no matter how simple or complex, regardless of what or why. For example, write down that you need to get milk at the store as well as take care of your estate plan. All of this information is in your head taking up space and concentration, so putting it on paper or in an app on a phone will free up your mind to focus on actually getting things done.

Getting Things Done

Here is what the process would look like:

1. Write down everything you can think of that you need or want to do, for work, for home, whatever. Gather all your to do items from e-mail, text messages, voicemail, mail, random papers sitting on your desk or your couch, anything you may need to act upon at some point. This all goes to your inbox to become your to do list.

Getting Things Done

2. Now we go through each item for sorting. Ask yourself if it is something you can easily do right now in less than two minutes. If so, do it. Ask yourself if this is something someone else needs to do. In that case, delegate it. If it is something you can do but will require something besides two minutes (either it will take longer or you need certain circumstances like access to a printer, access to your computer, you need to schedule a meeting or an appointment, you need to buy something to complete the task) then you determine what that is and put it on your “next action” list. Some things might just be information to refer to later, like a restaurant menu, a recipe, a book you would like to read at some point. Those can be filed (put on a shelf, put in a folder in a filing cabinet, whatever is appropriate for the type of item).

Getting Things Done

3. Now that you've sorted everything, prep it for acting upon it. If the item is an appointment to be made or a meeting to attend, put it on a calendar (whatever type of calendar works best for you). Put everything else either on a next actions list (stuff you will be doing relatively soon) or on a someday/maybe list (perhaps a dream vacation, a skill you want to learn when you have some free time, a hobby you want to pursue after you retire).

Getting Things Done

4. Every day review your calendar and next actions list to keep up to speed, and add items as necessary. Once a week take some time to check on big projects, delegated tasks, and someday/maybe lists to update them.

Getting Things Done

5. This is the hardest for me, and that is actually do the things on the list. But don't be too hard on yourself. Do things that make sense for your context, your time, and your energy. For example, if you've got 10 minutes of free time, maybe read an article you've been meaning to read, or send off a quick e-mail. If you've got a nice uninterrupted block of time and have the energy, get focused and make headway on a project that is time sensitive and needs concentration. If you happen to be at the store, pick up that odd item on your list. No matter what, feel secure that you aren't forgetting something because you are now in the habit of writing it all down in your system.

What tools do I use to implement this method?

So, what tools do I use for this system? I use various productivity apps as well as low tech options. I use both electronic and paper calendars, but mostly I use apps for capturing my to do lists. I like the apps because I can access the information on any computer with internet access as well as my phone. Also, I have bad handwriting, so digital works better for me. It also helps to have a neat physical workspace, because not all tasks are accomplished on the computer screen, and books and paper are still very much a part of my life.

What tools do I use to implement this method?

- Habitica
- Trello
- Calendars
- Google
- MyFitnessPal
- Organized workspace

Habitica



- If I had to pick one app, this would be it
- Habits, Dailies, and To Do lists
- Gamification: fight monsters, get achievements, collect pets, level up
- Guilds and Challenges

Habitica

- This is the Wiki that explains how to get started with Habitica, and it contains all sorts of articles about different features:
https://habitica.fandom.com/wiki/Habitica_Wiki
- This is a nice overview video to see what Habitica is like. It is from a few years ago, so things might look a little different, but the overall concepts are the same:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2kRWywgePM>

Trello



- Great for collaboration
- Can be used alone or with others
- Teams, Boards, projects
- Checklists, due dates, file attachments, templates

Trello

- Trello has a great resource page for learning how to use their product:
<https://trello.com/en-US/guide>
- This is a good video about setting up a board in Trello:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvkTamEjDXk>

Calendars



- I use both digital and paper
- Do what works for you
- My calendars:
 - desk calendar at work
 - multiple Google calendars
 - Apple ical
 - wall calendar in kitchen at home
 - monthly planner in my purse

Google



- Great for collaboration
- Can be used alone or with others
- Cloud storage
- Google accounts are free
- Docs, sheets, email, drive, photos, etc.

MyFitnessPal



My Fitness Pal

- Free, can pay for premium
- Tracking weight, calories, nutrients, and exercise
- Social aspect for encouragement

Organized workspace

For me a filing cabinet is a must, both at work and at home. Paper clutter is a major stumbling block for a lot of people, and a lot of time and energy gets wasted trying to find things and worrying about losing things. Having a nice blank surface to lay out a paper calendar, open up a journal, read a book, or work on a paper project of some variety is important. It also allows the mind to maintain focus and calm. Also just having easily accessible tools like pens and pencils, staplers, flash drives, etc. can be helpful.

Organized workspace



- This will depend on your particular needs
- I incorporated ideas from Getting Things Done
- Organized workspaces can be used for a job or for personal projects; I use both

What are some other things that can help you?

While Getting Things Done is a great framework for organizing all the things and making sure I don't forget stuff I need to do, sometimes I need other tools to help me with the actually doing things part. It's all well and good to add declutter kitchen or weed wardrobe to my list, but how do I do that? With executive dysfunction, it can be difficult to break things into steps or figure out how to focus. So here are some tools.

What are some other things that can help you?

- KonMari Method
- Pomodoro Technique
- Bullet Journal
- Pareto Principle
- Mindfulness

KonMari Method



- How to weed and organize your stuff
- Does the object spark joy? Keep it.
- Declutter by object type:
 - Clothes
 - Books
 - Papers
 - Komono (Misc. stuff)
 - Sentimental

KonMari Method

For getting rid of stuff in your home or office, the KonMari method is pretty great. Marie Kondo breaks stuff down into categories, so you're not just chaotically pawing through stuff and trying to figure out what to do with it. By starting with something like getting all your clothes in a massive pile so you can see what you really have and then sorting them out one item at a time, you can get a sense of what you really use and need. This method can be time consuming, but it is thorough and orderly. Once you've gone through all the stuff, she also has tips for storing your possessions to make life easier and can even make your closet aesthetically pleasing. I haven't gone through her whole process, but I certainly use her shirt folding method for my t-shirts, and it has really improved my dresser drawers. If you have Netflix you can check out her show for some examples of people using her methods.

Pomodoro Technique

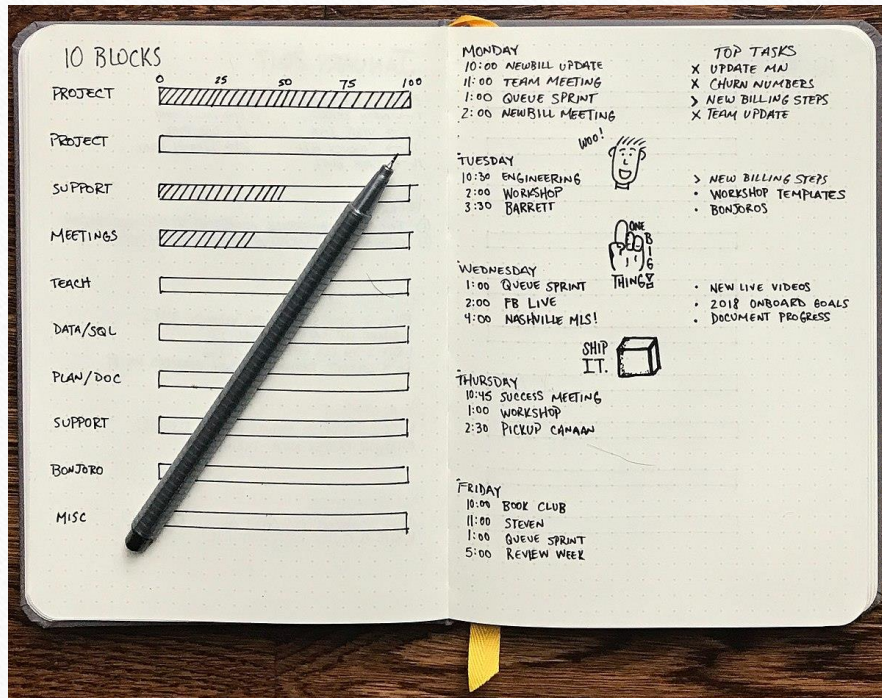


- Decide on the task to be done.
- Set the pomodoro timer (traditionally to 25 minutes).
- Work on the task.
- End work when the timer rings and put a checkmark on a piece of paper.
- If you have fewer than four checkmarks, take a short break (3–5 minutes), then go to step 2.
- After four pomodoros, take a longer break (15–30 minutes), reset your checkmark count to zero, then go to step 1.

Pomodoro Technique

This is a very simple concept, but it can be highly effective. It just helps you with your focus and self discipline. Breaking things down in to pieces really helps to mitigate feeling overwhelmed. This moves us away from the idea that we need to be constantly multitasking, and allows for a more efficient workflow. It can be difficult to fight against that pressure to multitask, but we find that multitasking really isn't all that effective.

Bullet Journal

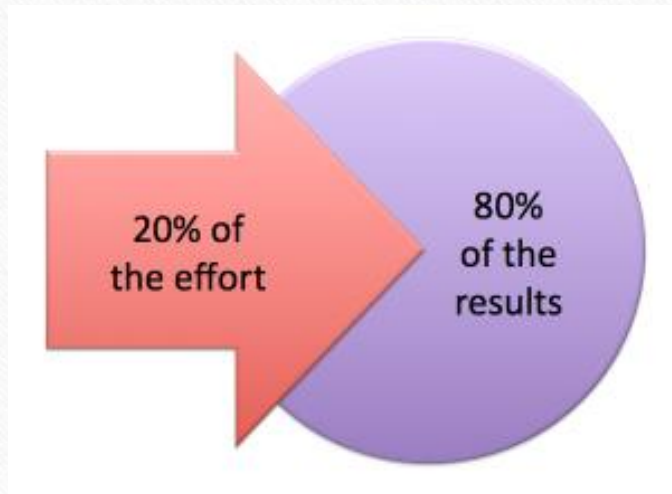


- Index
- Key
- Future Log
- Monthly Planning
- Weekly Logs or Weekly Spreads
- Dailies

Bullet Journal

This is something that has been popular but I have only just recently tried. This is a tool you can use if you're much more analog. It is flexible in its form and how artistic you want to be. Any blank journal will do, but there are some journals out there designed for this particular approach. I use one that is more of a planner because I don't want to take the time to fill out a lot of the structure myself, and my penmanship and drawing capabilities are not so great. There are quite a few blogs and examples of bullet journals out there, and this particular method of organization and information capture might really appeal to you, so consider all of your options when looking at tools. The best tool is the one you will use consistently.

Pareto Principle



- “The 80/20 rule can be simplified to: *80% of the output or results will come from 20% of the input or action.*”
[-https://www.dansilvestre.com/80-20-rule/](https://www.dansilvestre.com/80-20-rule/)
- For example, 20% of your time may bring about 80% of your accomplishments for the day
- This principle also applies to wealth distribution

Pareto Principle

This is more of any idea than a tool. It is a way of thinking about your productivity and energy expenditure. The idea is that 20% of your time in a given day will yield 80% of your results or productivity. I can attest to this. When my daughter Nora is taking her nap, I get more done in that 1 to 3 hours than the entire rest of the weekend. And for many of us this is just how we are wired. Even when you don't have a toddler in the equation, we can only focus for so long or push ourselves so much before we are either tired or our brain needs a break. If you pay attention to your habits during the day, whether at work or at home, you may notice this. You might get a nice 2 hour block in the morning where you clean the house or work on a project at work and feel super accomplished, then the rest of the day is essentially busy work, cruising social media, shooting the breeze with coworkers, some type of low energy/low brainpower task.

Mindfulness



- Studies* support the benefits of mindfulness:
 - Reduced rumination
 - Stress reduction
 - Boosts to working memory
 - Focus
 - Less emotional reactivity
 - More cognitive flexibility
 - Relationship satisfaction
- Meditation is a way to engage in mindfulness: <https://www.headspace.com/>

*<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/cc-corner>

Mindfulness

So how do we push past those low energy days, regain focus, and become more aware of those executive dysfunction stumbling blocks? There is research to indicate that mindfulness can help us with these things. Mindfulness is just being aware in the moment, being present, being conscious of what is going on around us and within us. Self awareness is a powerful tool. Just being able to sit back, reflect on what my body is doing, what am I feeling, what is going on around me? It allows us to reposition our thinking and take ourselves out of a situation, or bring ourselves back to our focus. Practicing meditation can help with mindfulness, and the app I use for that is Headspace. Some people will have an easier time with things like meditation, and there are multiple apps, websites, books, videos, etc. on the subject. Find what works for you, and be kind to yourself.

Books

These are some books related to our tools. I have read the first two myself.

- Thriving with Adult ADHD by Phil Boissiere
- Getting Things Done by David Allen
- The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up by Marie Kondo
- The Bullet Journal Method by Ryder Carroll
- The Headspace Guide to Meditation and Mindfulness by Andy Puddicombe

Resources

These are the links to the various apps and websites for the tools we discussed, as well as related handy resources.

- <https://gettingthingsdone.com/free-articles/>
- <https://habitica.com/>
- <https://trello.com/>
- <https://get.google.com/apptips/apps/#!/all>
- <https://www.myfitnesspal.com/>
- <https://shop.konmari.com/pages/about>
- <https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>
- <https://bulletjournal.com/pages/learn>
- <http://zenofplanning.com/>
- <https://www.dansilvestre.com/80-20-rule/>
- <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner>
- <https://www.headspace.com/>