Executive Dysfunction 101:

Why Can't My Young Adult Just Grow Up?



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tonight's agenda

- Welcome + meeting logistics
- Presentations: Executive Dysfunction 101
- Open dialogue with participants

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meeting logistics



Please keep your mic on mute until it's your turn to speak.



Questions for the presenters may be submitted:

- Through the chat
- Anonymously through a link we will share momentarily



If you have not yet received your Parent Toolkit, it will be emailed to you after tonight's group.

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our presenters tonight



Rick Silver, M.D.
Psychiatrist
Thrive Emerge Founder

Mary Jo Puglisi, LCPC
Therapist/ Executive Function Coach

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our offer to you

free

15-Minute Consult with one of tonight's presenters

Look for the sign-up link in the chat!

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Upcoming EVENTS

Summer Parent Support Groups

- Summer break – August
- Parent Support Group – restart September

Thrive Emerge InauguralConference

- Fall 2022: Designed to Be Different: Parenting Your Neurodiverse Teens and Young Adults

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KEY QUESTIONS

What is executive function?

When executive function is glitchy, what does it look like at the junction with young adulthood?

How does executive dysfunction relate to attention deficit disorder – and how do we diagnose them?

If my child is diagnosed with executive dysfunction or ADHD, how can we help them deal with it?

What about parents themselves? What should they keep in mind during this transition time?

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THE WORRIED PARENT

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WHAT SEEMS TO BE WRONG WITH YOUR CHILD?

Doing poorly in school

Takes forever to do homework assignments

Forgets to turn them in

Seems irritable, overly emotional

Fights with us a lot

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WHAT SEEMS TO BE WRONG WITH YOUR CHILD?

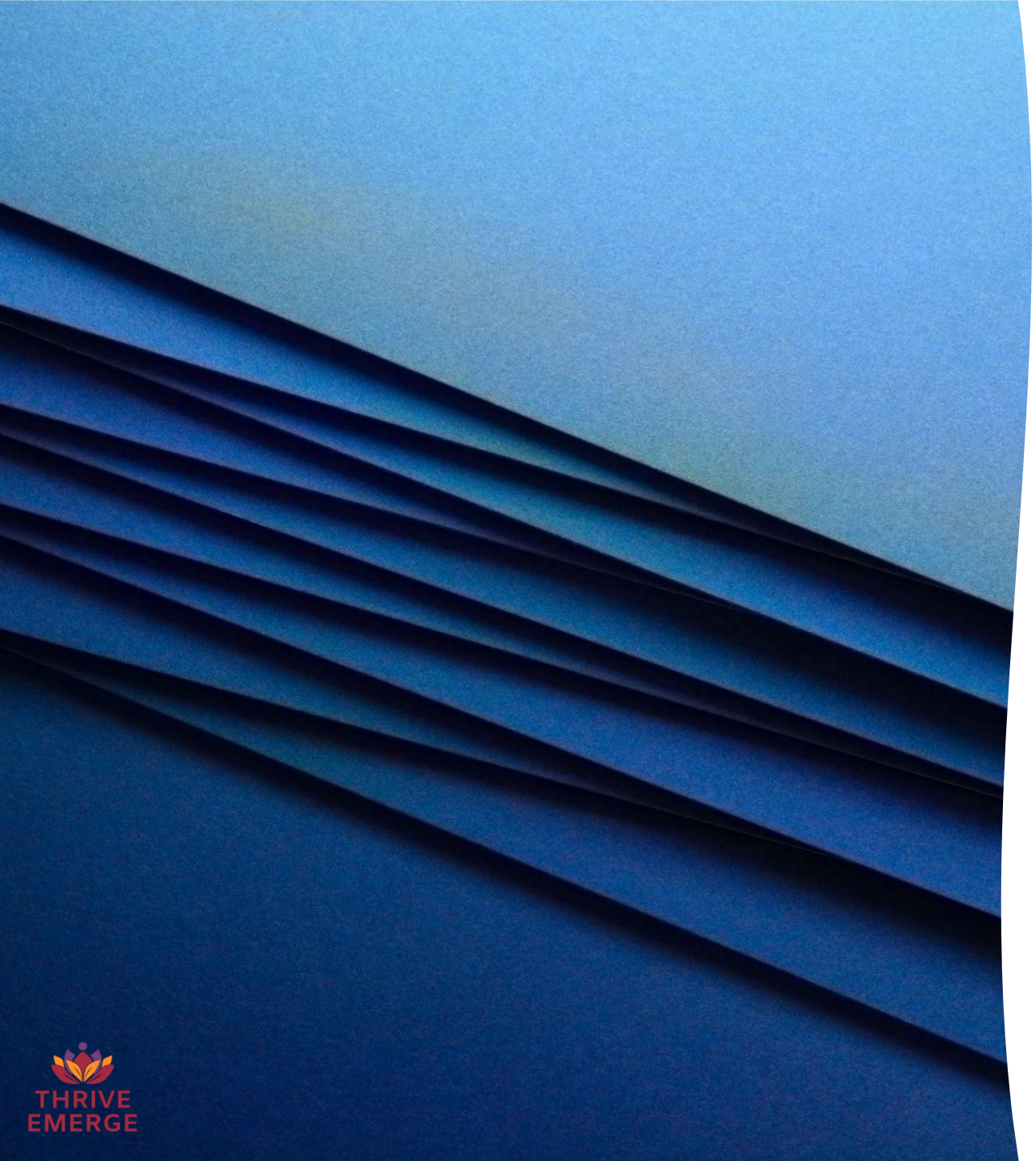
Never sits still, fidgets all the time

Interrupts conversations, irritates people

Can’t plan projects

Forgets things and forgets where he is on assignments all the time

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THE NIKE APPROACH:

"JUST DO IT."

WHY CAN'T YOU "JUST DO IT"?

"Designed to Be Different": born with a neurodivergent brain

Exposed to academic, family, employment, social systems that don't understand the ways they experience the world

Multiple failures with each of the systems above

Outcomes: learned helpless/ loss of intrinsic motivation, avoidant/ numbing coping patterns

Unable to master the psychological and life skills required to meet adult life demands with resilience

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WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?

"Software packages" (neural circuits) in the brain

that govern a range of cognitive, social and emotional functions

necessary for creating adaptive responses to the demands of life;

and for responding fluidly and flexibility

to life's continuous changes and uncertainty.



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WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?

The ability to:

1. initiate an action
2. plan and organize
3. hold ideas in short-term (working) memory
4. regulate emotions
5. be cognitively flexible
6. control impulses and avoid distractions
7. be self-aware

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STRUGGLING TO LAUNCH

- Multiple failures in key developmental areas – academic, employment, social
- Emotional dysregulation and overreactivity, often marked by high levels of anxiety and depression
- Avoidance of tasks that demand a high level of sustained effort and organization
- Inability to structure a productive day

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STRUGGLING TO LAUNCH

- Use of distracting, numbing and high stimulation activities ---–screen and marijuana overuse.
- Poor self-care – sleep, grooming, diet, exercise
- Avoidant coping patterns
- “Arrested” emotional and social growth

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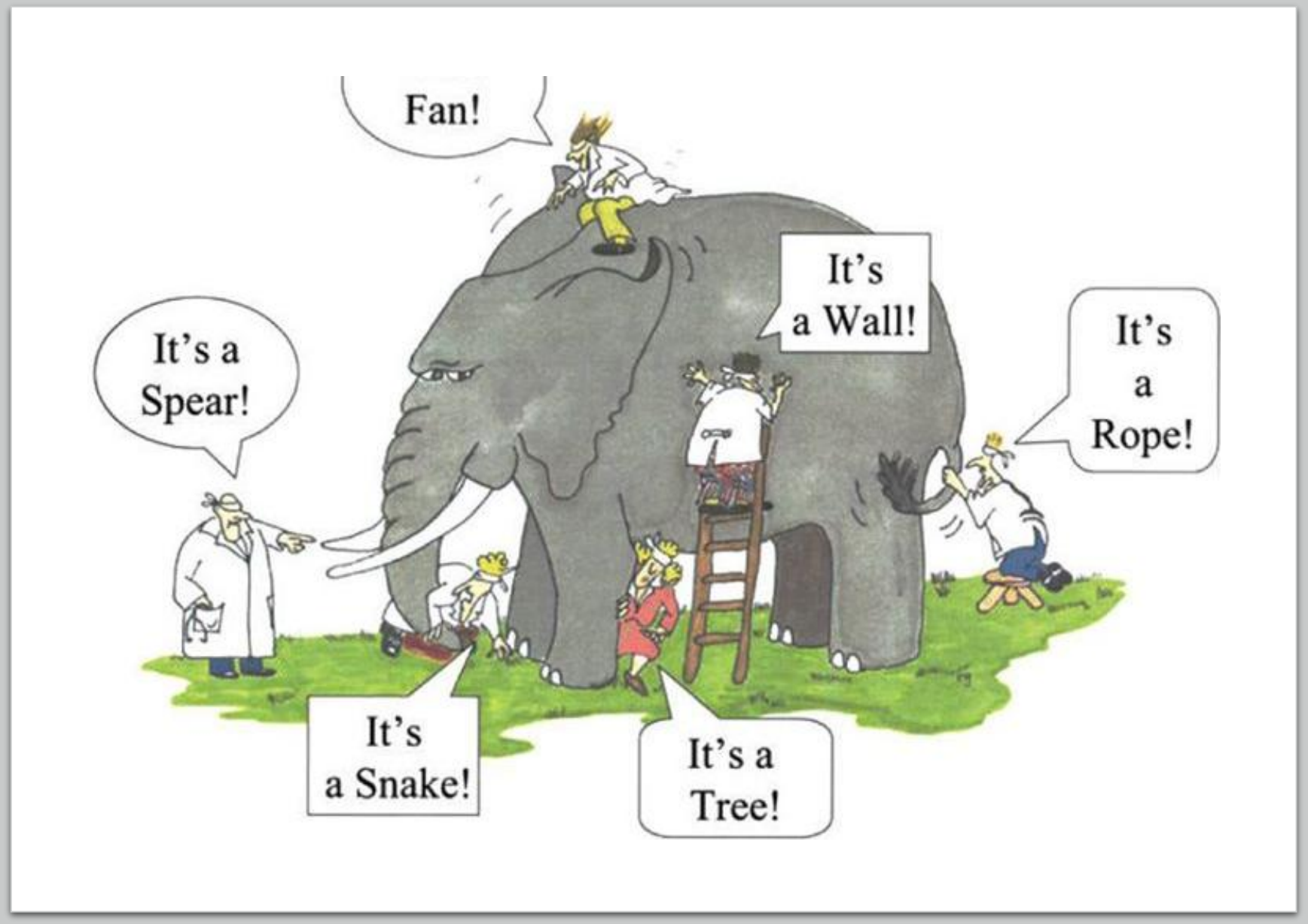
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THE BLINDFOLDED SCIENTISTS



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WHAT THE PEDIATRICIAN/ PSYCHIATRIST DOES

1. Clinical evaluation
2. **SCALES** – completed by child, parent, teachers
   - Barkley Deficits in Executive Functioning Scale (BDEFS)
   - Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF)
   - Conners Comprehensive Behavior Rating Scale (Conners CBRS)
3. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM V)
4. Diagnosis: ADHD
   - Inattention
   - Hyperactivity/ Impulsivity

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INATTENTION

- Poor follow through on goals, tasks, and the future (can't sustain attention/action over time)
- Distractible
- Skips uncompleted tasks
- Impaired working memory (forgetful in daily activities, cannot remember what is to be done)
- Poor self-monitoring

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HYPERACTIVITY-IMPULSIVITY

- Restless, hyperactive
- Excessive talking, interrupting
- Difficulty suppressing task irrelevant thoughts, rapid decision making
- Impulsive, prefers immediate gratification, discounts delayed consequences
- Emotion dysregulation

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WHAT THE NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST DOES

1. Clinical Evaluation

2. Administers a battery of psychoeducational/ neuropsychological **TESTS**

   Fine-tooth comb analyses of cognitive and emotional functioning

3. Dx: ADHD

   Executive Dysfunction

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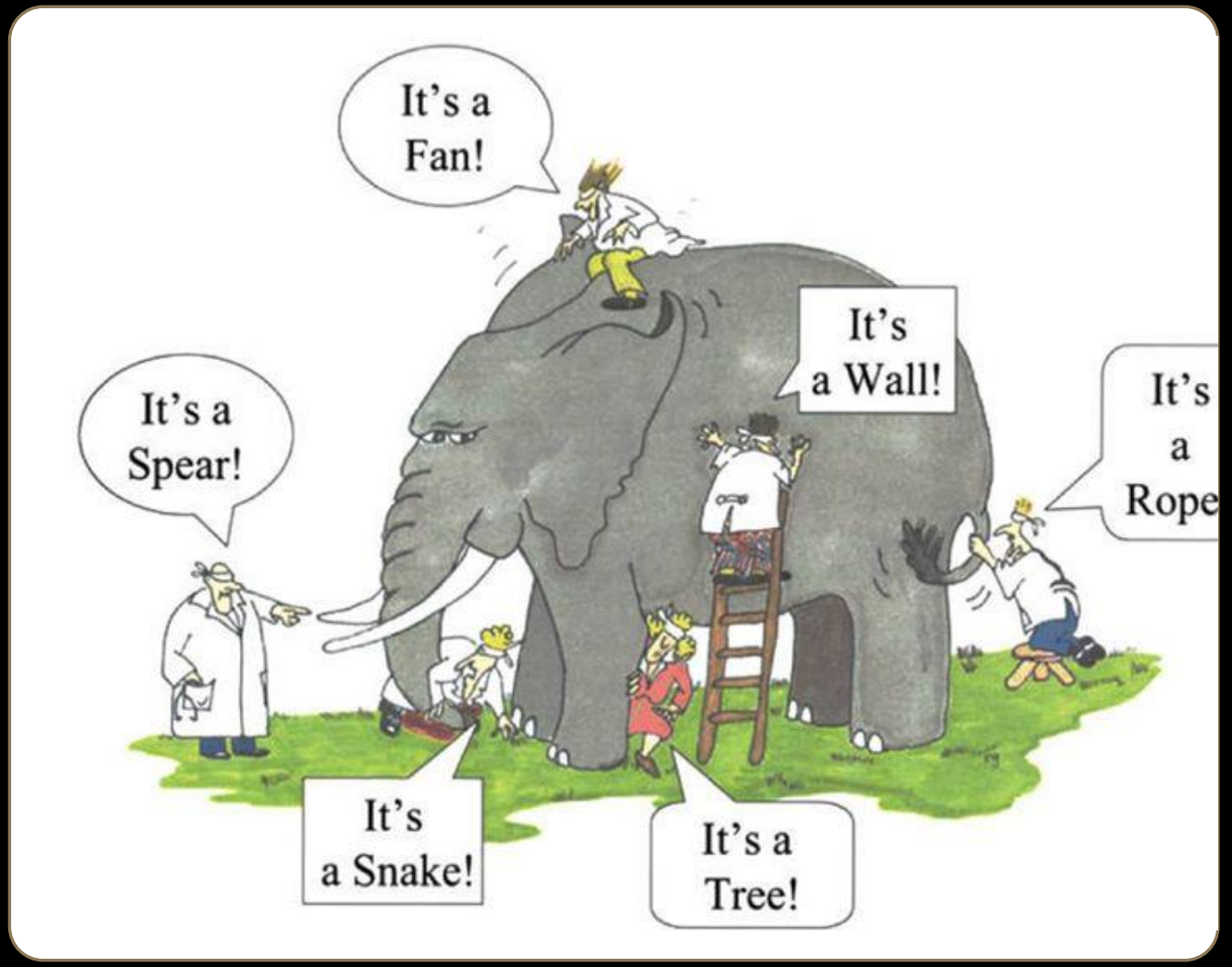
ADHD OR EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION?

PROFESSIONAL	TOOLS	DIAGNOSIS
Psychiatrist	Clinical Interview, Rating Scales	ADHD
Neuropsychologist	Testing – Neuropsychological, Psychoeducational	Executive Function Disorder

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THE WHOLE ELEPHANT:

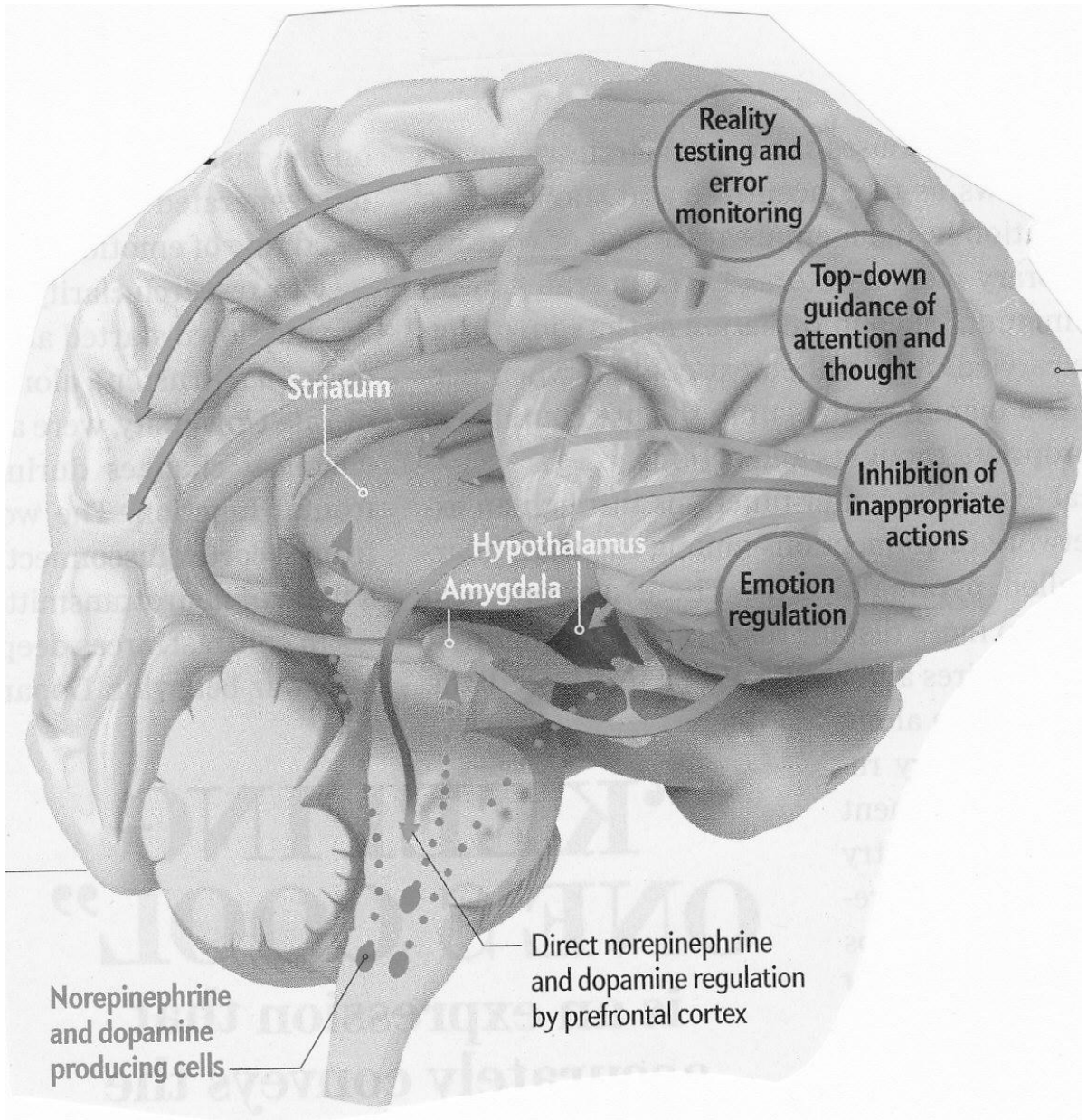
PREFRONTAL CORTICAL DYSFUNCTION



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THE NEUROATYPICAL BRAIN:

PREFRONTAL CORTICAL DYSFUNCTION



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HOW CAN WE HELP THEM?

- Executive Function Coaching
- Medication Management
- Accommodations at School and in the Workplace
- Family and Parenting Support
- Individual Therapy
- Social Skills Training
- Emotional Self-Regulation Training
- Addictions/ Overuse Treatment
- Self-Care Support

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PARENTS KEEP IN MIND:

- ADHD is biologically based
- ADHD has nothing to do with willpower.
- Find ways to soothe your own feelings. Don't direct them at your child.
- Look at your own emotional reactions
- Work towards compassion and away from blame.
- Explore your role as an EF coach
- You cannot take away your child's suffering. Fine line: support vs. rescuing.

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SET REALISTIC TIME FRAMES

- The ADHD prefrontal cortex develops 4-6 years more slowly than peers.
- Do not expect “mature” executive function until lates 20’s at best.
- Leave A LOT more time for the standard developmental milestones: school, job, relationships, identity, planning a future

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PARENTS KEEP IN MIND:

- Don't do this alone: get help for them and for yourself.
- Long haul: ADHD brains mature later/ Competent adulthood: late 20s.
- Expect complexity: 70% have other mental health diagnoses
- Be alert: overlap between the symptoms of ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Make room for your child to grow up as they need to – not how you expected them to.
- Encourage them to discover how they want to live, learn and love.

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DESIGNED TO BE DIFFERENT

- Drop your expectations for what you think their life should be.
- See their experiences from their perspective.
- Let them figure out their way of growing up.
- Validate their choices – with support and guidance.

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THIS IS A LONG AND EXPENSIVE JOURNEY

- Get your financial ducks in a row
- Raising neurodivergent kids to adulthood costs tens of thousand of dollars

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NEURODIVERGENCE AND LOSS GO HAND IN HAND

- Help your kids -- and yourself -- deal with those losses
  - “I want to be normal.”
  - But: their development path will differ from their peers – and they can still lead a fulfilling and wonderful life!
- For you: Help them imagine paths that fit for who they are – not who you wanted them to be.

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KNOW WHAT COMES FIRST – AND DO THINGS IN THE RIGHT ORDER

- Jobs and school might need to be longer term goals
- Take care of these first (The Bottom of the Iceberg):
  - Emotional regulation
  - Executive functions – structured days, sleep, planning
  - Social skills
  - Many small successes – entry level jobs, one class at the CC
  - Family issues that impede progress

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OBJECTIVE OUTSIDERS ARE CRITICAL

- Your kid's main developmental task is **individuation**.
- Ask yourself: who are they most likely to listen to?
- Find the right professionals to form trusting relationships with your kids.

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KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

- You are not likely to be able to OBJECTIVELY assess your kid's strengths and limitations – emotional, cognitive, life skills, social.
- Lack of clarity > overestimating their skills > not get adequate support.
- Be clear about the level of scaffolding that you have provided. all along the way.

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START NOW!

It is never too early to get help for:

- Executive functions
- Communications/ social skills development
- Emotional self-awareness and self-regulation

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GET HELP EARLY – AND OFTEN!

- Find educational and mental health professionals who can help you identify all the transitional supports that are required.
- Very few parents are able to do this alone.

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IF COLLEGE IS NEXT:

- Start close to home – a trial at community college for 1-2 years
- Save the out-of-state, 4-year college for when they have acquired a solid foundation of life and self-regulation skills

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KNOW THE ACADEMIC SUPPORT RESOURCES

- Not every school is created equal regarding the richness of support provided for neurodivergent teens/ young adults.
- Assess the school's resources
- Assess your child's readiness to use these services.

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HOW YOU COMMUNICATE MATTERS

Do a good self-assessment of the impact of your parenting on the child.

- How are you too enabling (poor limit and consequences)?
- How are you too controlling (not enough room to explore self)?
- How hard is it for you to let go?
- How do you express your fear to them -- with criticism, anger and harsh expectations?
- How does the family dynamic impact their mental health and readiness for adulthood?

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Short-Acting Stimulants

Drug Name	Generic	Duration
Adderall	Amphetamine	4-6 hours
Dexedrine	Amphetamine	4-6 hours
Focalin	Methylphenidate	4-6 hours
Methylin	Methylphenidate	3-4 hours
Ritalin	Methylphenidate	3-4 hours

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Intermediate and Long-Acting Stimulants

Drug Name	Generic	Duration
Adderall XR	Amphetamine	8-12 hours
Adzenys XR-ODT	Amphetamine	
Aptensio XR	Methylphenidate	10-12 hours
Concerta	Methylphenidate	8-12 hours
Daytrana Transdermal Patch	Methylphenidate	up to 10 hours
Dynavel XR Oral Suspension	Amphetamine	

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Intermediate and Long-Acting Stimulants

Drug Name	Generic	Duration
Dexedrine Spansule	Amphetamine	6-8 hours
Evekeo	Amphetamine	6 hours
Focalin XR	Methylphenidate	6-10 hours
Metadate CD	Methylphenidate	8-10 hours
Metadate ER	Methylphenidate	6-8 hours

Intermediate and Long-Acting Stimulants

Drug Name	Generic	Duration
Methylin ER	Methylphenidate	6-8 hours
Mydayis	Amphetamine	16 hours
Ritalin LA	Methylphenidate	8-10 hours
Ritalin SR	Methylphenidate	4-8 hours
Quillivant XR/ **Quillichew ER**	Methylphenidate	12 hours
Vyvanse	**Lisdexamfetamine**	10-12 hours

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Nonstimulants

Drug Name	Generic	Duration
Catapres	Clonidine HCL	4-6 hours
Catapres-TTS patch	Clonidine	Up to 7 days
Intuniv	Guanfacine HCL	24 hours 4-7mg daily
Kapvay	Clonidine HCL	12 hours 0.2 mg 2x/day
Strattera	Atomoxetine HCL	24 hours 80mg daily
Tenex	Guanfacine HCL	6-8 hours
Vayarin	Medical food (EPA)	Takes 90 days to work

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