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## Executive Functions Overview

The term executive functions is often used to explain behaviors and refers to higher-level cognitive abilities that enable us to engage in independent goal-directed behavior. The frontal cortex is believed to be where most or all of these capacities reside.

Executive functions include:

Organization – attention, decision-making, planning, sequencing, problem solving

Regulation – initiation of action, self-control, self-regulation

Behaviors Associated with Impaired Executive Functions:

1. Socially inappropriate behavior
2. Inability to apply consequences from past actions
3. Difficulty with abstract concept formations (the inability to make the leap from the symbolic to the real world)
4. Difficulty in planning and initiation (getting started)
5. Difficulty with verbal fluency
6. Inability to shift mental sets (deciding on a task, maintaining that task for a period of time, then deciding to do something else)
7. Difficulty processing, storing, and/or retrieving information
8. Needs frequent “policing” by others to monitor the appropriateness of their actions
9. Fine motor skills are more affected than gross motor skills. (Fine motor skills are small movements such as grabbing something with your thumb and forefinger. Gross motor skills are the bigger movements such as running and jumping)
10. Moody “roller coaster” emotions
11. May demonstrate lack of remorse toward people and animals and show apathy toward activities
12. Unawareness or denial that their behavior is a problem