



CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY

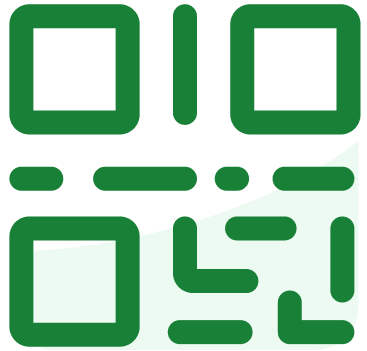
SUPPORTING PLANNING, ORGANISING AND REMEMBERING

Psychology in Schools Team

NSFT

April 2025

slido



Join at slido.com
#4983958

ⓘ Start presenting to display the joining instructions on this slide.

slido



How old is your child(ren)?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido

Please download and install the Slido app on all computers you use



What Stage are you at?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido

Please download and install the Slido app on all computers you use



**what presentation are you
interested in today?**

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



How would you rate your current understanding of skills such as planning, organising and remembering in children?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



How would you rate your current confidence in supporting your child with planning, organising or remembering things?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PERSONAL INFORMATION

Slido will be used as our main interaction tool. We will not be able to use the Q&A function or answer raised hands.

Slido is anonymous, but other users will be able to see what you have written. When answering questions please **do not** include personal or sensitive information such as names or anything that can identify you or your child.

By using Slido, you are consenting to your anonymised responses being used in possible service evaluation, research projects, publications and/or promotional material.

Our workshops are recorded and uploaded to YouTube, please be aware that anything shared on Slido may be included in a publicly accessible recording.



CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY

SUPPORTING PLANNING, ORGANISING AND REMEMBERING

Psychology in Schools Team

NSFT

April 2025

Today's workshop

What is executive function?

Executive function differences

Supporting executive function skills

Supporting planning and organising

Supporting memory

Advice for schools



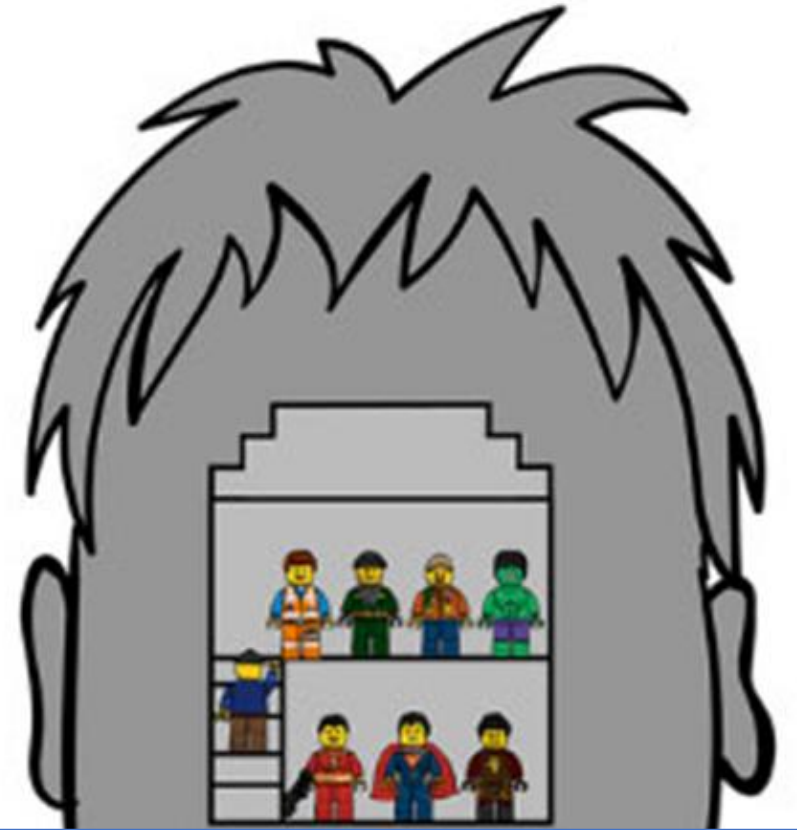
The Brain House

Upstairs brain

- **The control tower – “executive function”**

Downstairs brain

- **The alarm system – fight or flight response**



Some children may spend more time in their ‘downstairs brain’ when things feel overwhelming. With support, they can learn to feel regulated again.’

Illustrated by Dr Hazel Harrison

What is executive function?



INHIBITION



ATTENTION



EMOTIONAL
CONTROL



INITIATION



WORKING
MEMORY



PLANNING

Quick self-reflective question





Some children find these skills especially hard to access in the moment – support and safety make the difference!

Executive functioning takes support – for all of us!



“Executive functions are complex capacities for everyone, and it is unrealistic to expect that anyone can master these functions without some help” (Paula Moraine 2016)

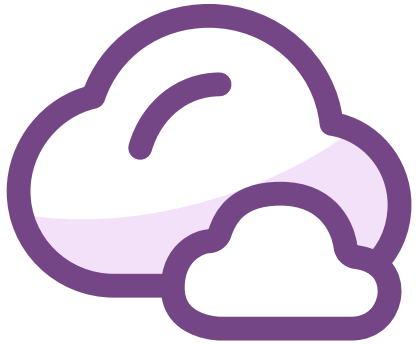
How Executive Functioning Differences May Present

Inhibition	Attention	Emotional control
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May act quickly when overwhelmed or excited• May struggle with waiting their turn• Speaking/acting before thinking• Interrupting in conversation• May engage in activities that are not safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May find it hard to focus• Easily distracted• Finding it hard to remain on task• May struggle to follow instructions• Making errors in relation to information that may have been missed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Becoming overwhelmed and upset• Swinging between high and low moods• Emotions felt very intensely• May need more support in order to manage emotions

How Executive Functioning Differences May Present

Initiation	Working memory	Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needing more support to start activities• May find it difficult to remain engaged• May need more support to ask for help	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incomplete recall• May need prompts or support to retrieve information• Finding it difficult to follow instructions• Losing track of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finding it difficult to be organised• May struggle to complete tasks to the end• Finding it difficult to plan ahead and make big decisions

slido



What differences in executive functioning do you notice in your children?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.



**How does this impact them at home
and at school?**



What strengths do you notice in your child's executive functioning skills?

Brain house in neurodivergent children

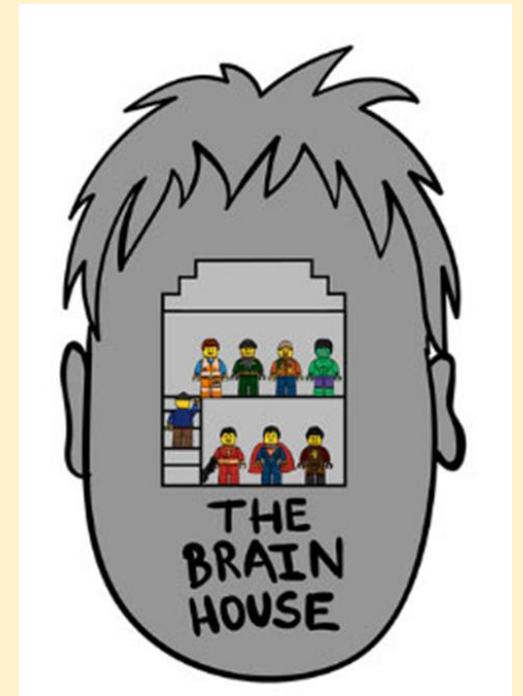
Processes sensory input differently – may need more or less input to feel regulated

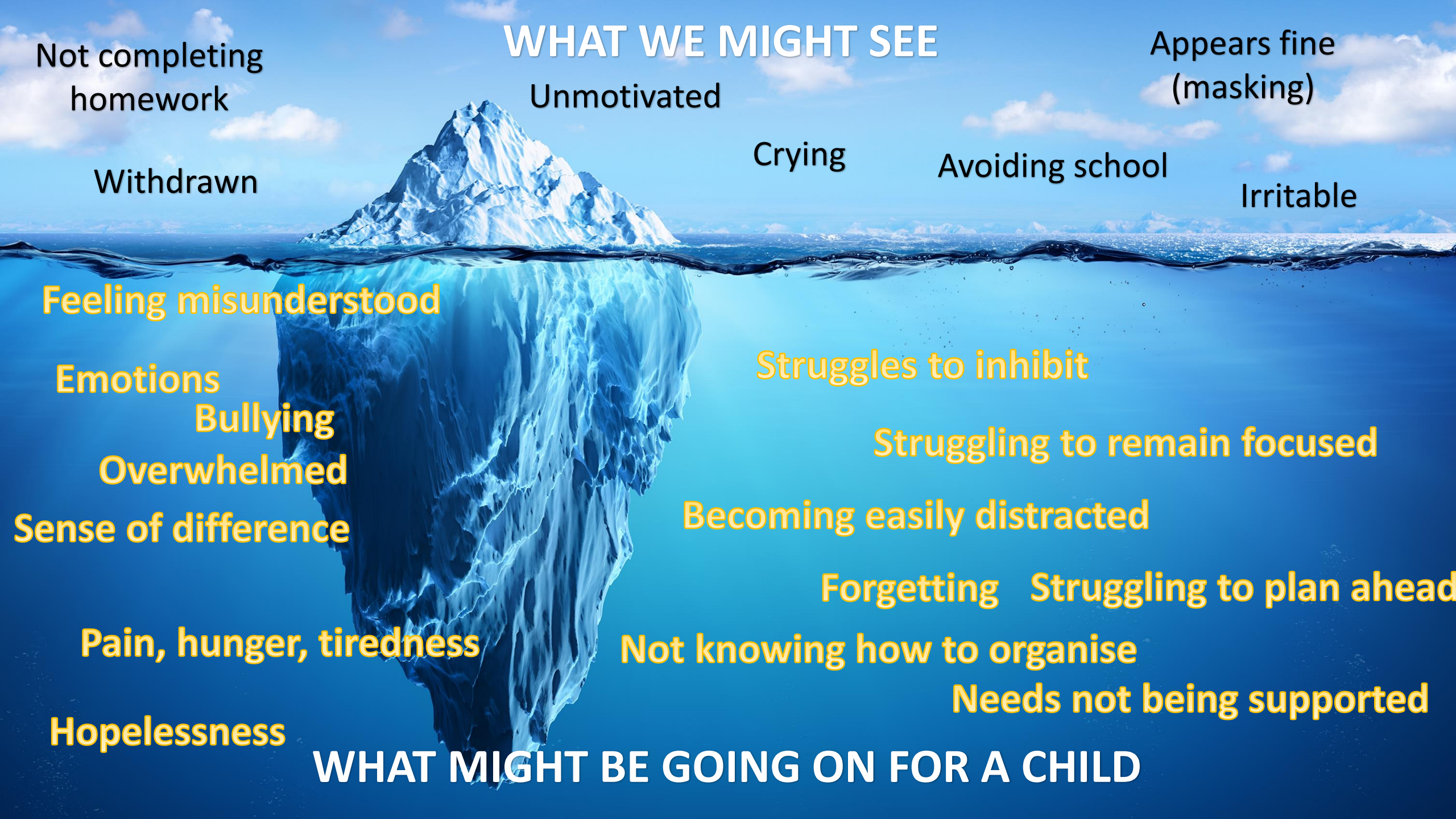
May experience emotions more deeply and need co-regulation

May need help to identify and make sense of big feelings

May feel misunderstood or overwhelmed in environments not set up for their needs

Executive functioning differences





WHAT WE MIGHT SEE

Not completing
homework

Unmotivated

Appears fine
(masking)

Withdrawn

Crying

Avoiding school

Irritable

Feeling misunderstood

Emotions

Bullying

Overwhelmed

Sense of difference

Struggles to inhibit

Struggling to remain focused

Becoming easily distracted

Forgetting Struggling to plan ahead

Pain, hunger, tiredness

Not knowing how to organise

Needs not being supported

Hopelessness

WHAT MIGHT BE GOING ON FOR A CHILD

Neurodivergence and Executive Function

- Both ADHD and autism are associated with similar executive function difficulties:
 - Attention
 - Flexibility
 - Working memory
 - Processing speed
 - Response inhibition
- *E.g. Townes et al. (2023), Demetriou et al. (2017), Willcutt et al. (2005), Sonuga-Barke (2003)*





Supporting your child with executive functioning



What is executive function?



INHIBITION



ATTENTION



EMOTIONAL
CONTROL



INITIATION



WORKING
MEMORY



PLANNING

slido



What skills do you need to play Monopoly?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

The power of games!

- Playing games is an effective and fun way of helping your child develop executive function skills
- Games for younger children create opportunities to practise turn-taking, flexible thinking and emotional regulation in a fun, no pressure way.
- Games for older children/teenagers help practise high-level skills like planning and organisation
- Play builds connection and confidence – both vital for executive functioning





**What kind of things do you do to try
and help direct their focus or attention?**

Strategies to redirect (Paola Dabel, 2024)

- Timer
- Exercise
- Breaks
- Focus music
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Stand up
- Visual aids
- Remove distractions
- Healthy snacks



Executive function map – attention example

(P. Moraine 2016)

Table 5.1: Attention

Strengths	I am good at paying attention to one thing at a time.
Weaknesses	I can't pay attention to someone talking and write at the same time (classroom demands, taking notes, etc.).
Learning goals	Learn how to shift between listening and writing.
Accommodations	Provide an outline of notes for class to lessen the demand for note-taking.
Approaches	Lessen the amount of attention shifts needed between listening and writing simultaneously by giving an outline of the notes.

slido



What helps your child with planning and organising?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Supporting planning and organising

- Routines
- Making plans when feeling calm
- Using a checklist to simplify a task e.g. getting ready for school
- Using a calendar and/or planner
- Setting reminders
- Visuals, movement-based plans or co-planning can reduce overwhelm – the goal is to make the task feel possible



Task initiation

- Start with the smallest, easiest step
- Start 'doing', then shift momentum to the avoided task
- Turn the task into a game
- Create the illusion of urgency
- Make space for sensation seeking
- Not starting a task isn't always about motivation – it can reflect stress, perfectionism or uncertainty



Prioritising

- Set a timer and write freely about the tasks for 3 minutes.
- Write down the steps needed to complete the task
- Cut out each step and physically order the tasks in front of you.
- Making steps visible can help the task feel less intimidating – use pictures, movement or physical sequencing



slido



What helps your child with their memory?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

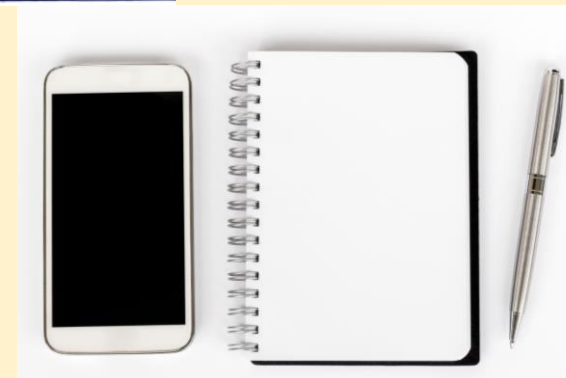
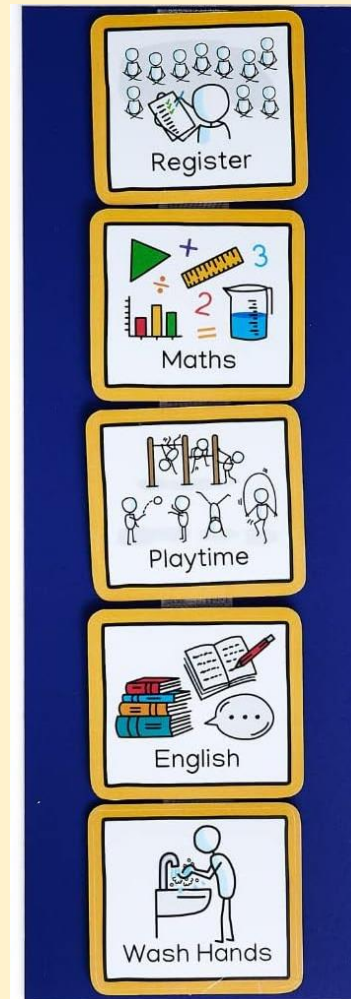
Supporting memory

- Reduce the amount of information to be remembered
- Break things down into small steps
- Re-present information if needed



Supporting memory

- Using memory aids/visuals
 - Visual timetable
 - Wall charts for regular tasks
 - Voice recordings for instructions
 - Setting timers and reminders



Supporting memory

- Other memory strategies
 - Rehearsal – practice makes perfect
 - Creating stories from the to-be-remembered information
 - Using rhymes or mnemonics
- Working memory training is available, but research shows this doesn't seem to improve 'real-life' memory



Scaffolding

- Model how to do it
- Ask open questions
- Encourage thinking out loud
- Give hints and praise
- Offering a range of possible answers
- Break it down into steps
- Pitch a task just above current ability



When confidence takes a knock

- Repeated 'failures' will impact on anyone's confidence and self-esteem
- Neurodivergent children may experience this due to others not understanding or supporting their differences
- This can make it really difficult to engage in new tasks
- Create opportunities for success and scaffold to support this
- Focus on strengths and special interests





What kind of things do you or school do to celebrate successes?

Positive affirmations

- “Positive affirmations can help you feel better about yourself, help you to refocus and motivate yourself, and help you see things in a more optimistic and positive way” (Paola Dabel, 2024)
- Repeat them every day-put reminders up
- Spot negative self-talk and try replacing with positive affirmations



Refocus your mindset



Fixed mindset

- I can't do it
- I'm not good enough
- I'm a failure
- I'm not good at this
- This is too hard

Growth mindset

- I'm still learning
- I'll keep trying
- Mistakes are part of learning
- I can get better with practice
- I can try a different way

Growth includes resting, resetting and starting again – every small step matters

Working together across home and school

- Share difficulties in executive functioning you are noticing both at home and school
- Discuss and formulate ways to support your children across both environments – Don't forget to share what already works!
- Have ongoing communication to evaluate strategies put in place
- Support should be needs-led



Advice for schools

- You can share relevant advice from today's workshop and these school-specific resources could also be shared:
- [The EPIC Strategy Booklet: a guide for teachers](#)
(adhd.foundation.org.uk)
- [Working Memory: A Practical Guide for Teachers](#)



KEY MESSAGES FROM OTHER PARENTS

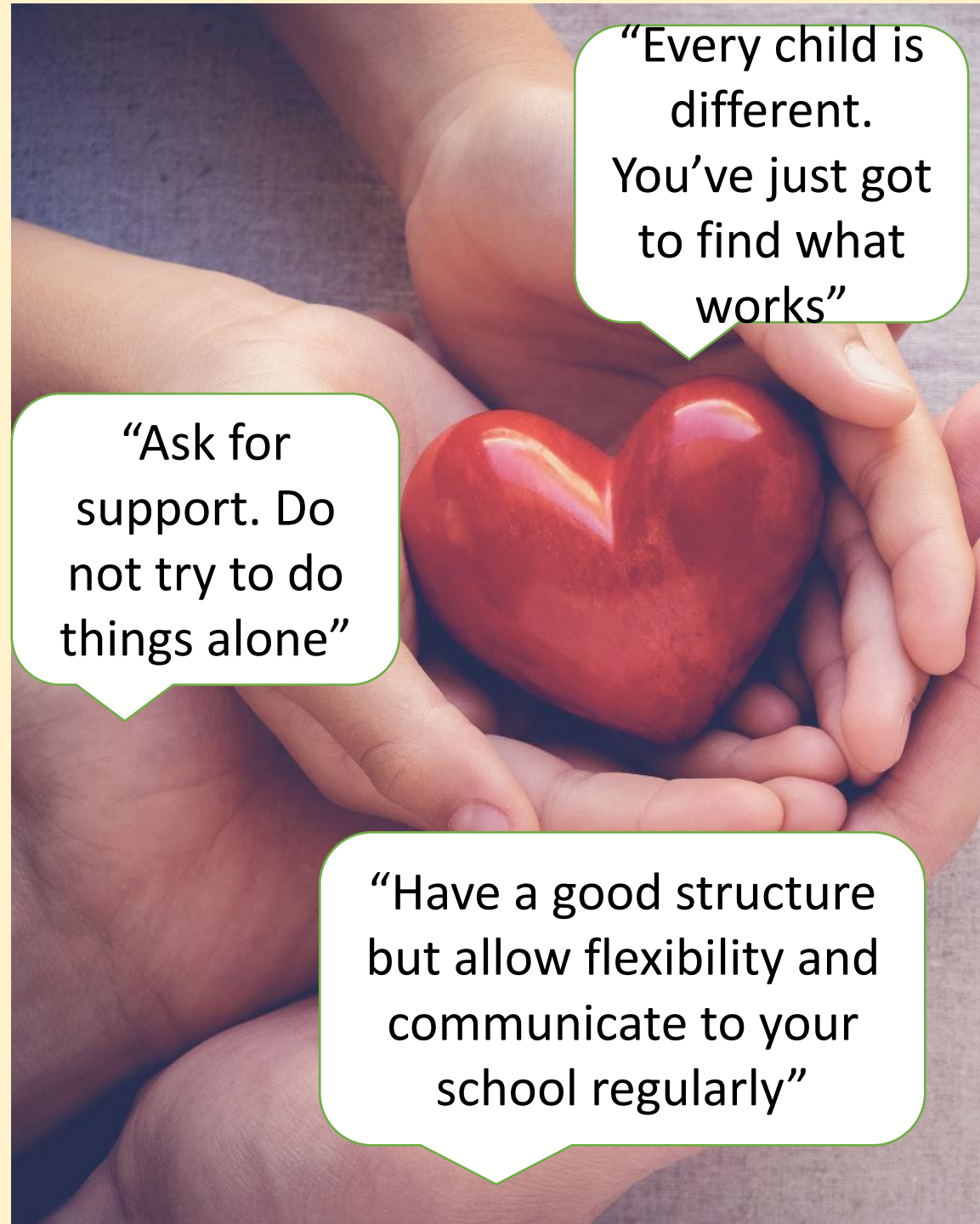
“Understand your neurodiverse child's brain is wired different so don't expect them to respond or change to your ways. It's NOT a disorder it's just a different order to you.”

“Clear simple instructions. One instruction at a time. If they get overwhelmed take a step back, wait for them to calm and then approach them explaining the situation.”

“Ask for support. Do not try to do things alone”

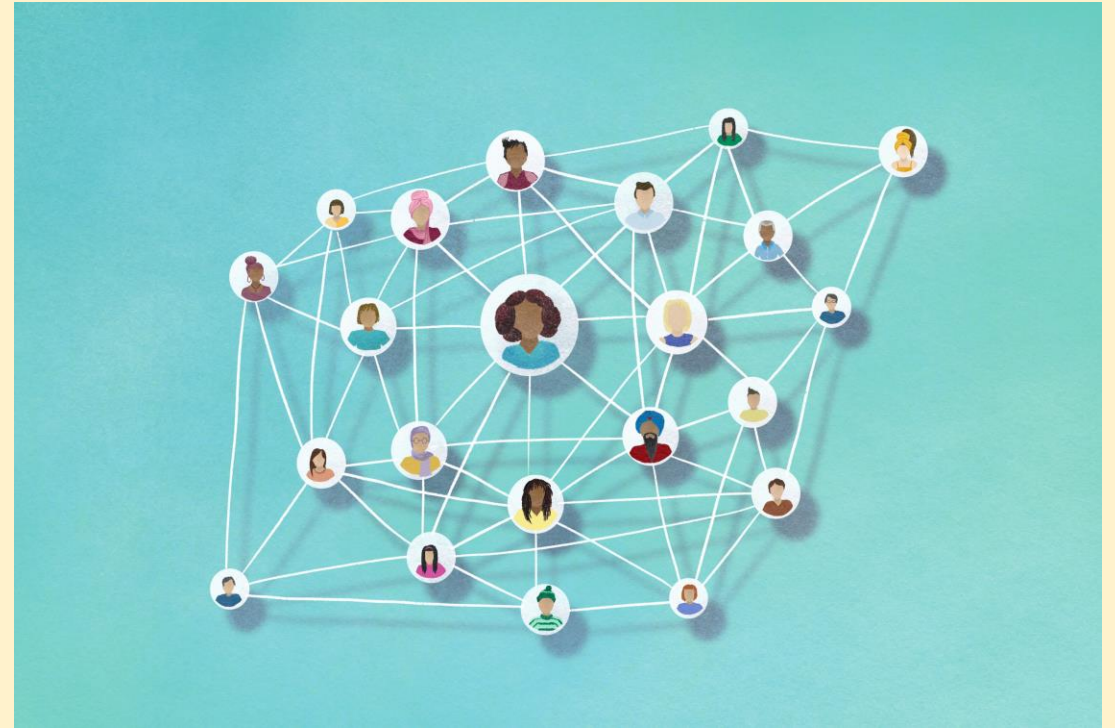
“Have a good structure but allow flexibility and communicate to your school regularly”

“Every child is different. You've just got to find what works”



Support Systems

- Building, connecting and utilising support systems
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Support groups
 - Professionals
 - Hobbies
- Embracing neuro-affirming spaces



Resources

Further resources

- [Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children](#) by the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University
- [How You Can Manage Your Executive Dysfunction ·ADHD/ Autism \(youtube.com\)](#)
Irene, The Thought Spot
- [What is Scaffolding? – YouTube](#)
- [Managing Impulsive and Risky Behaviour – Episode 6 ‘ADHD, A Young Person’s Guide’ – ACAMH](#)
- [Organising and prioritising - a guide for all audiences \(autism.org.uk\)](#)
- [Childhood Neurodiversity: How the Brain Develops \(youtube.com\)](#)

For schools

- [The EPIC Strategy Booklet: a guide for teachers \(adhdfoundation.org.uk\)](#)
- [Working Memory: A Practical Guide for Teachers](#)

Suffolk support

- Barnardo’s Phoneline for advice on emotional wellbeing – call 0345 600 2090 option 2

Key resources if you are worried about your young person

- **Young Minds parent helpline** 0808 802 5544 (9am -4.30pm M-F) and webchat service: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/>

- **111, option 2 crisis support**

- **Papyrus – Prevention of Young Suicide**

[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/)

- **Psychology in Schools Parent**

Workshop: Understanding Self Harm in Children/Adolescents

[Understanding Self-Harm in Children/Adolescents \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

- [MIND urgent help](#)



Books

- “The ADHD Teen Brain Organizer for school” – Paola Dabel 2024
- “Autism and everyday executive function: A strengths-based approach for improving attention, memory, organisation and flexibility” – Paula Moraine 2016

CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

FUTURE WORKSHOPS

- [Neurodiversity online parent/carers workshops - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)

Childhood Neurodivergence: Supporting Your Child with Low Mood

Wednesday 21st May 2025: 1:00pm - [Book here](#)

Childhood Neurodivergence: Understanding and Supporting Eating Difficulties

Childhood Neurodivergence: Managing Big Feelings including Anxiety and Low Mood
[here](#)

Childhood Neurodivergence: Supporting Your Neurodivergent Teenager

- Monday 18th August 2025: 1:00pm - [Book here](#)



www.nsft.uk/workshops Psychology in Schools Team Eventbrite page

OTHER FREE WORKSHOPS

Psychology in Schools Team: Upcoming live parent/carer workshops:

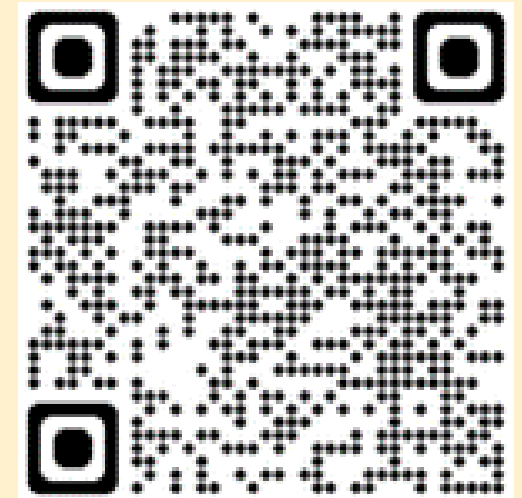
- Supporting our young people with anxiety
- Supporting our children to manage anxiety and big feelings (ages 0 – 11)
- **Understanding the adolescent brain**
- Supporting our young people with bereavement

Recorded previous workshops on NSFT YouTube:

- Self-harm, school avoidance, tics and Tourette's, sleep, trauma, and more!

www.nsft.uk/workshops Eventbrite page for live bookings

<https://www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops> All recorded workshops



slido



I have found today's workshop helpful

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



Two key things I will take away from this workshop are...

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



How would you rate your understanding of skills such as planning, organising and remembering in children?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



How would you rate your confidence in supporting your child with planning, organising and remembering things?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido

Please download and install the Slido app on all computers you use



One thing I would Improve about this workshop is...

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Childhood Neurodiversity:
Supporting Planning, Organising
and Remembering Feedback LIVE



<https://forms.office.com/e/tyvxHABeJS>