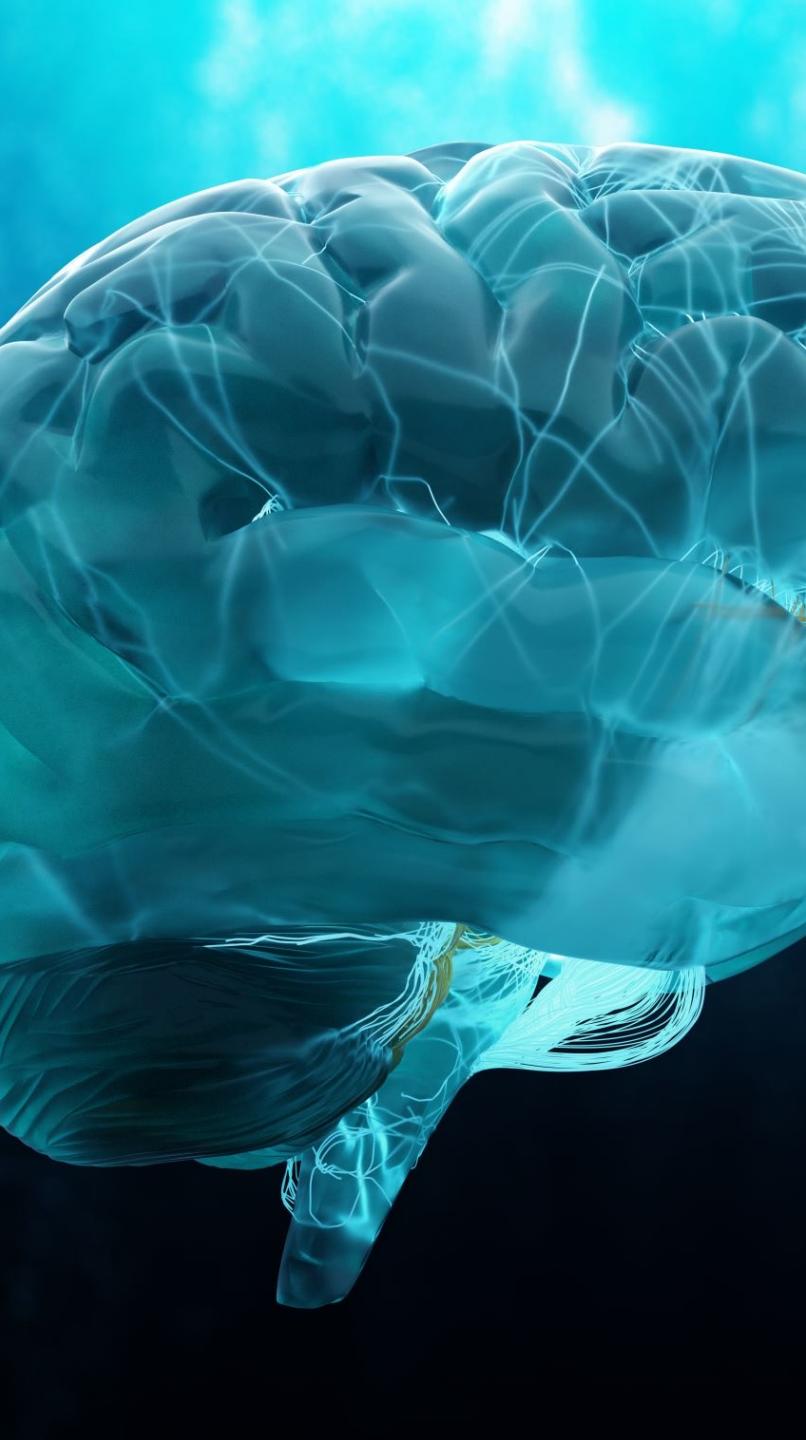


Executive Functioning & Gifted Children

A guide for parents





What is Executive Functioning?

- Brain skills that help us plan, organise, and complete tasks
- Includes time management, focus, motivation, and self-regulation
- Crucial for success in school, college, and life
- Think of it as the brain's 'task manager'

Executive Function

Prefrontal Cortex

9 Functions of the Prefrontal Cortex

1. Empathy
2. Insight
3. Response Flexibility
4. Emotion Regulation
5. Body Regulation
6. Morality
7. Intuition



Limbic Brain

1. Fight, flight, freeze stress response
2. Thinks, "Am I safe? Do people want me?"
3. Emotions live here

🧠 What is Executive Functioning?

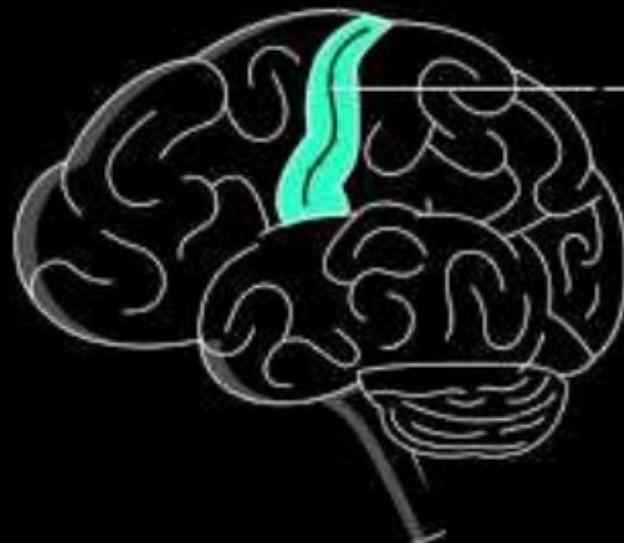
- According to [Harvard's Center on the Developing Child](#), the three dimensions of executive functioning that are most explored are Working Memory, Inhibitory Control, and Mental Flexibility because “in most real-life situations, these three functions are not entirely distinct, but, rather, they work together to produce competent executive functioning.”



Why Do Gifted Kids Struggle?

- New research into the gifted brain might shed light on another possible explanation for why executive function challenges feature prominently in the gifted community. In neurotypical children, the brain begins “pruning” excess information around the age of 8, which in turn allows for further development of the prefrontal cortex – the center of many executive functioning skills. In highly gifted children, this synaptic pruning process may not start until around age 12 because they have a prolonged “sponge phase” as their brain continues to take in information. Thus, further development of the prefrontal cortex—and advanced executive functioning—may be on a three- or four-year delay.

How your brain learns new things



**NEURAL
PATHWAY.**

🤔 Why Do Gifted Kids Struggle?

Asynchrony:
uneven
development
across skills

Advanced
memory but
poor task
switching

Delayed brain
pruning may
slow
executive skill
growth

Can do
complex
tasks but
forget
homework!



School Challenges



Multistep assignments feel overwhelming



Forget to turn in homework



Procrastination and emotional outbursts



Struggles with asking for help



Home Challenges

- Homework and chores = chaos!
- Tasks like 'clean your room' are multi-step puzzles
- Avoidance and resistance build over time
- Parents may unintentionally shame or guilt



Emotional Impacts



Difficulty managing frustration and emotions



Struggles with social skills and self-reflection



Long-term risks: anxiety, low self-esteem, apathy



Feeling misunderstood and unsupported



How Parents Can Help



Identify specific executive skill gaps



Use exploration questions: 'How long will this take?'



Celebrate small wins and progress



Provide scaffolding and positive reinforcement



Final Thoughts

- Executive skills take time to grow
- Your relationship matters most
- Be patient, flexible, and encouraging
- Celebrate effort, not just results!

