



**Community Education Service  
Child & Youth  
Mental Health Program**

**Ron Joyce  
Children's Health Centre**



**Helping My Child or Youth  
with Organization & Focus**

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# Ten habits of organized people:

1. They write things down.
2. They have routines.
3. They **know** how to ask for help.
4. Their to-do lists stay current.
5. They purge clutter on a semi-daily basis.
6. They have a place for everything.
7. They're optimistic and goal-oriented.
8. They don't put things off until later
9. They come prepared
10. They know how they need to de-stress – and they do so

# **POLL ACTIVITY: Easily Distracted?**

- Makes decisions impulsively
- Has difficulty moving from one activities
- Has difficulty controlling behavior and emotions
- Starts a project or task without reading or listening to directions carefully
- Have a hard time following through
- Has trouble doing things in their proper order
- Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks
- Has a hard time staying focused in quiet activities
- Often has difficulty organizing tasks (homework, chores, routines)

# **Easily Distracted?**

**Do any of these sound familiar?**

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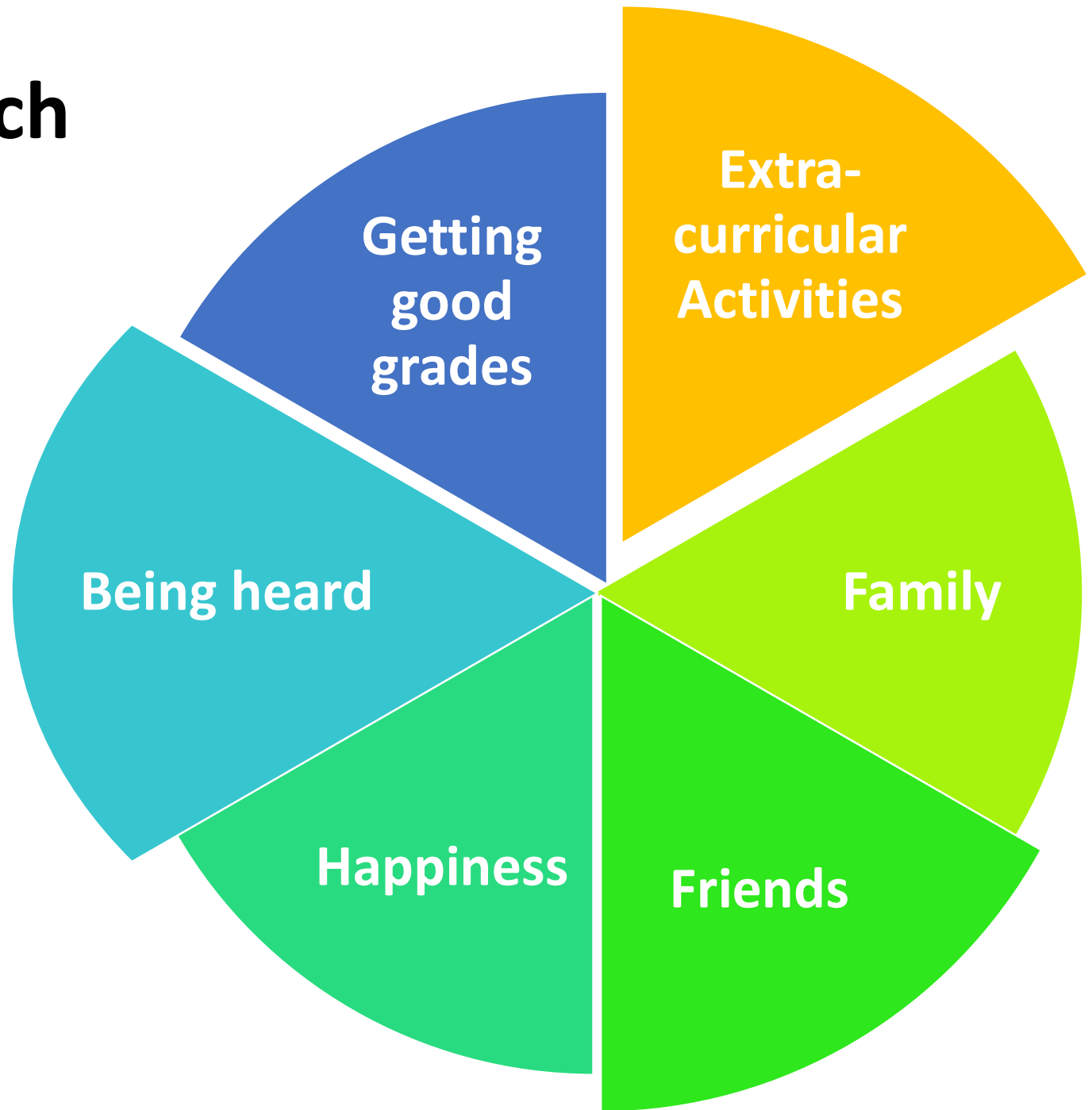
**What gets  
in the  
way?**





*Dr.. Thomas Brown*

**How Much  
Do They  
Value  
Each  
Goal?**



# Value Based Goals

- Understand what their long-term goals are
- What do they value
  - Friendships
  - Hobbies
  - Respect
- Once you know what they value, then we know how to motivate them
- What is the hook?
  - Working at Tim Hortons, I need to learn math



# Values

- Don't put your own value judgment on what their values are
- Your child/teen needs to do things for themselves, not to please other people
  - Do they know how to get there?
  - What are the steps they need to take?
  - Do they have the skills needed to make it happen?
  - Who are their supports?



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a silver pen, about to check off a box on a checklist. The checklist is on a white piece of paper with the word 'CHECKLIST' printed at the top. There are five boxes in a row, each with a red checkmark. The hand is positioned over the sixth box, which is currently empty. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the checklist and the hand.

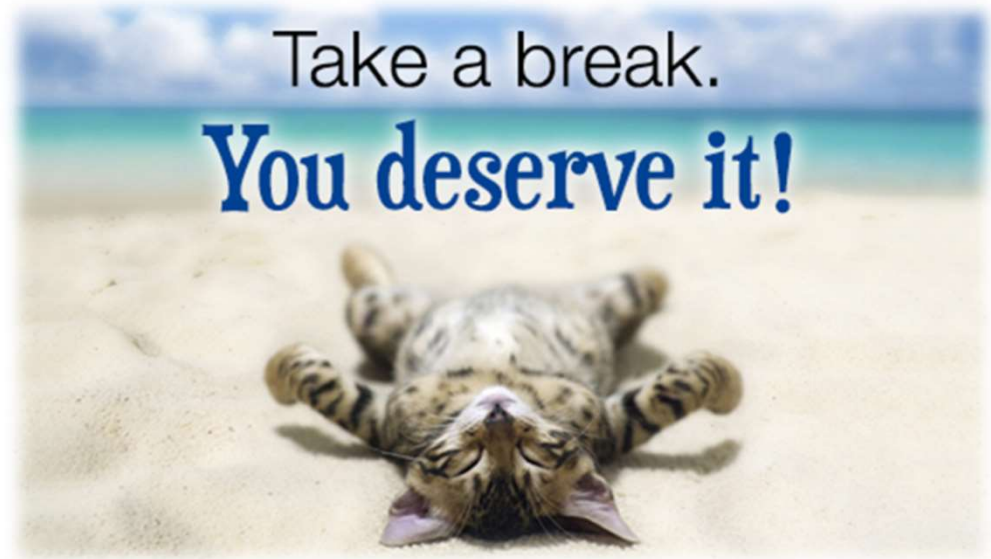
# Tips

## Strategies to help

- Know their distraction triggers
- Visualize finishing the task
  - what is the first step?
- Don't get distracted by feelings of disappointment
  - think positive



- Get clear directions
  - listening skills can lead to missed details
- Take breaks
- Create a plan
  - have a team



# 7 Ways to Avoid Distractions and Stay Focused on Studying

- **Get** organized with a to-do list.
- Silence alerts and keep open Internet tabs to a minimum.
- Break big projects into small pieces.
- Use music and headphones to cut down noise.
- Find the best environment for efficient **studying**.
- Clean up and organize **your** workspace.
- Reward yourself

<https://www.discover.com/student-loans/college-planning/college-life/academics/how-to-avoid-distractions-stay-focused>

# Interventions for Students who Struggle with Planning

Clipart by  
Kate  
Hadfield



www.thepathway2success.com

Pathway  
2 SUCCESS



**Take time to teach  
planning skills explicitly**



**Use a daily agenda  
or homework log**



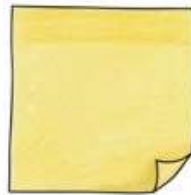
**Use graphic organizers  
before writing**



**Make to-do lists  
before starting work**



**Use an end-of-the-day  
reminder sheet**



**Use rubrics for longer  
assignments**



**Develop and write out  
SMART goals**



**Develop a classroom  
calendar**



**Use technology and  
apps for planning**



**Highlight positive  
examples of planning**



**Show models of  
completed assignments**



**Place individual schedules  
on top of desk or binder**

<https://www.thepathway2success.com/interventions-for-executive-functioning-challenges-planning/>





## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING MY WAY



# Homework Struggles

## Environment

- Where is the homework space?
- Is it cluttered?
- Noisy?
- Too far away for you to check in with the child?
- Too many distractions?



# Why does my child struggle with homework?

- Anxiety
- The avoidance behaviour has been working
- Child has difficulty with the work
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Feels overwhelmed
- Poor organization skills

# Take Ten

## When you first sit down to do homework:

- Take **2 minutes** to put loose papers into the proper folders.
- Use the next **8 minutes** to reread notes and/or handouts from school.
- These **10 minutes** will save you hours of searching and studying.
- You will quickly get into the habit of putting assignments where they belong.
- Reviewing your notes transfers information to long-term memory, saving hours of study time when test time comes around.

# Work in 30 Minute Blocks

- Set a timer and limit each study or work session to 30 minutes.
- Challenge yourself to finish a certain amount of work within that time.
- The adrenaline rush of the challenge will improve your focus.

# Skip Problems that Stump You

- The more you dwell on something you don't understand, the more anxious you will get.
  - The more anxious you get, the less energy you have for the rest of your homework.
- Stick with what you can figure out. Take the hard problems to your teacher at the start of class and ask for help.



# Routines

Because they work!

## My Morning Checklist

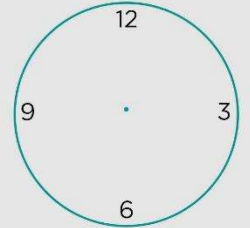
Draw hands on each clock to show kids when it's time to complete each task



Use the bathroom



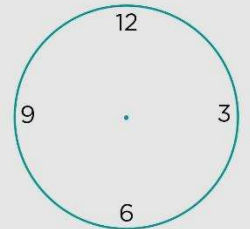
Brush teeth



Get dressed



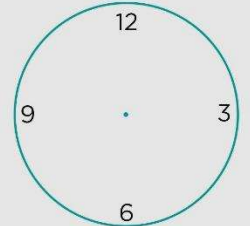
Make bed



Turn off lights



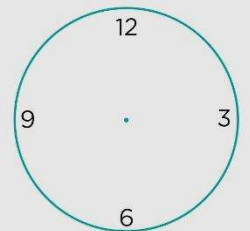
Eat breakfast



Grab Lunchbox



Ready to go!



# ROUTINES ARE GOOD FOR KIDS

- Teach children healthy habits and good organizational skills.
- Organized and predictable home environments help children and young people feel safe and secure.
- Routines focused on spending time together strengthen relationships.
  - Reading a story together before bed or going for a special snack after soccer practice can become a special time for you and your children to share.

# Praise, accommodate, teach

- Celebrate the behaviour you want to see more of
- If positive reinforcement isn't working, accommodate
  - help me understand how I can help you
- Validate their struggle
- Make a plan together

Book recommendation: The Power of Validation <https://www.amazon.ca/Power-Validation-Addiction-Out-Control/dp/1608820335>

# Part of the Family

- Having an important job to do in the family routine helps older children and teenagers develop a sense of responsibility.
- Routines help develop basic work skills and time management.

# Routines Are Good For Parents

- Regular and consistent routines can help you feel like you're doing a good job as a parent.
- When things are hectic, routines can help you feel more organized, which lowers stress.



# What makes a good daily routine?

- 1. Well planned** – in a good routine, everyone understands their role, knows what they need to do and sees it as reasonable and fair
- 2. Regular** – good routines become part of everyday family life
- 3. Predictable** – in a good routine, things happen in the same order each time.



# Resources

## **Community Education Service** – community groups

- Call: 905-521-2100 ext. 74147
- [www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/mcmaster-childrens-hospital/patients-visitors/family-resources](http://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/mcmaster-childrens-hospital/patients-visitors/family-resources)

## **Contact Hamilton** – central intake and referrals for child and youth services

- 905-570-8888
- [www.contacthamilton.ca/childrens-and-developmental-services](http://www.contacthamilton.ca/childrens-and-developmental-services)

## **Parents for Children's Mental Health** – local peer support for families

- [www.pcmh.ca](http://www.pcmh.ca)
- [Hamilton@pcmh.ca](mailto:Hamilton@pcmh.ca)
- Call or text: 905-536-9323