Why less is more: Cognitive & Executive functioning aids

June 23rd, 2016
Presented by: Genise Burnett SLPA ATS,
Jessie Salz, MS, OTR/L
Easter Seals Massachusetts
Welcome!

Presenters: Genise Burnett SLPA ATS, Jessie Salz, MS, OTR/L

Affiliation: Assistive Technology Department at Easter Seals Massachusetts
What is Executive Functioning?

A set of skills that enable people to work efficiently toward their goals, including:

* impulse control
* mental flexibility
* emotional control
* working memory
* planning and organization
* managing materials
* self-reflection and monitoring
Who would benefit from Executive Functioning Aids?

* Individuals with Acquired Brain Injury
* Individuals with Challenging Behavior
  * Individuals with Alzheimer's Disease
  * Individuals with Learning Disabilities
  * Individuals with Intellectual impairments or Multiple Disabilities
* Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis
* Individuals with Parkinson’s Disease
* Individuals who have experienced a stroke
Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities (AT Resources, 2016).
Types of Assistive Technology

* **Low Tech**- does not require a power source. Can be the easiest and most practical of solution (AdaptABLE, 2012).

* **High Tech**- requires a power source. May be expensive, and often require more training (AdaptABLE, 2012).
Low tech devices are items that don’t require a power source, but facilitate independence in various areas of life.

- Live (manual wheelchair, cane, walker)
- Learn (Pencil grip, Velcro PECS system, raised line paper)
- Work (Binder Clips, mouth sticks, Anti-glare filter)
- Play (Playing card holder, swimming floaties, (AdaptABLE, 2012).)
Requires a power source and can assist a person with the most minimal amount of movement to facilitate independence in various areas of life.

- **Live** (Power wheelchairs, Alarm Clock, electronic can opener, adapted driving controls)
- **Learn** (Smart Pen, Read Out Loud, CoWriter)
- **Work** (Dragon Naturally Speaking, ergonomic electronic desk, Satellite Braille Display)
- **Play** (2 deck automatic card shuffler, Basketball w/double bells, Poss-I Bowling system) *(AdaptABLE, 2012).*
Everyone’s disability is unique and requires a lot of thought and detail in order to create the most efficient and accessible environment for the them.
Why less is more!

* Strategies> Excessive Tools
  * Why?
* Sticking to a few goals> Trying to do it all!
  * Why?
* Knowing your abilities & limitations> Comparing someone else’s outcomes to yours
  * Why?
Low Tech Executive Functioning Aids

* **Memory**
  * Post-It Notes
  * Labels
  * Prompt Cards
  * Check Lists
  * Photo Albums
  * Medication Boxes
  * Visual Schedule
Low Tech Executive Functioning Aids

* **Organization**
  * Personal Planner
  * Large Monthly Calendar
  * Visual Schedule
  * Labels
  * File Cabinets/Containers
  * Landing Stations
Low Tech Executive Functioning Aids

* **Attention**
  * Noise dampening ear muffs
  * Fidgets
  * Desk Screen Divider
  * Privacy Screen
  * gum
Low Tech Executive Functioning Aids

* Starting Tasks
  * Writing template or organizer
  * Motivating visual
  * Goals sheet
  * Clock markers
  * Reminder from a person
Modeling!
Repetition!
* Adapt tools that you will actually use, and remember less is more!
High tech Cognitive Aid Devices

- Laptop or desktop computer
- Smartphone
- Tablet
- Smart watch or Programmable watch
- Digital voice recorder
- PDA (personal digital assistant), such as IPod Touch
- Smart home devices, such as Amazon Echo or Google Home
**High Tech Executive Functioning Aids**

*Memory and Organization*

**Devices:**
- Livescribe smartpens
- Digital Voice Recorder
- Alarm clock
- Programmable watch
- Smart Watch
- Digital Medication boxes

**Apps:**
- Reminder Apps
  - IOS Reminder App
  - Google Reminders
- Digital Calendars
- Note taking Apps
  - Sonocent
  - Notability
  - AudioNote
  - Evernote
- Audio Recording Apps
- Digital To-do list Apps
  - To-Doist
  - Wunderlist
  - Any.Do
- Medication Apps:
  - Medisafe App and iCap

**Diagnosis:**
- Executive Functioning
- Memory and Organization
- Aids
High Tech Executive Functioning Aids

*Attention and Starting Tasks*

Devices:
- Noise cancelling headphones

Apps:
- Procrastination Blockers
  - Stayfocsd App Chrome
  - Freedom App IOS, PC
- Timers
  - Goodtime App Android

*Task Management*
- 30/30 App IOS
- Mindly App IOS

*Screen Simplification*
- Mercury Reader Chrome
- Read and Write Screen Masking ($)
- Read out Loud Browser ($)

*Assignment Planner*
- iStudiez Pro
- Studyminder Windows
Livescribe Smart Pen Demonstration
Organizational Apps
Google Keep is a digital notepad which enables you to stay organized with photos, voice notes, hand drawings, and checklists.

Platforms: Android, iOS, Web

Pros:
- You can share entries with friends or family members
- Set reminders for a particular date and time or location
- Voice notes are automatically transcribed, and can be copied for use in other applications
- You can convert images and handwritten notes to editable digital text
A cross-platform, freemium app designed for note taking, organizing, and archiving.

Platforms: Mac, PC, Android, iOS, Web, etc.

Pros:
* Ability to share notes and whole notebooks with others.
* Ability to take and attach pictures to a note from within the app.
* Ability to take and attach voice memos and audio memo from within the app.
* Ability to sync automatically and access notes between all devices when offline.
App that helps to organize your thoughts, capture ideas, plan a speech, take notes.

Platforms: Mac, iOs, Android

Pros:
- Allows you to brainstorm ideas without having to write anything down.
- Helps you to visualize information using mind mapping technique
- Can attach notes, image or icon to any element.
- Ability to export as OPML, HTML, PDF, and TXT by mail
Reminder Apps
Dragon Anywhere App

* Voice activated personal assistant application
* Platforms: Android, iOS
* Pros:
  * Can operate in both hands-on and hands-free modes
  * Performs web, image, place, and contact searches by voice. Can dial, email, or send SMS messages to contacts by voice.
  * Can navigate and obtain driving directions, and open other applications on your device just by listening to your voice commands.

(virtual assistant, 2013)
Medisafe App

* App that helps you manage your medications and take pills on time
* Platforms: iOS, Android
* Pros:
  * Caretakers and family members can sync apps to monitor if someone missed their medication or skips.
  * Customizable icons and attractive graphs show how frequently you take medications and how often you remember to.
  * Newsfeed with tips on how to manage specific medical conditions.

(imedicalapps, 2015)
* App allows for multiple lists, date and time alerts, and location reminders.
* **Platforms:** Mac, iOS
* **Pros:**
  * Syncs across Apple devices via iCloud.
  * Adding a simple reminder can be done in 2 or 3 taps.
  * Simple and to the point.
Lastpass Password Manager

* App that enables you to safely store all of your passwords in one location
* **Platforms:** Mac, PC, Android, iOS, Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Microsoft Edge, etc.
* **Pros:**
  * Enables you to generate secure passwords
  * Search through your “locker” to find the usernames and passwords for all of your accounts
  * Automatically updates your passwords if it detects a change
  * Automatically fills in the information when logging in
Wunderlist App

* App that promises to get your stuff done easily.
* Platforms: Mac, PC, Android, iOS, etc.
* Pros:
  * Syncs lists in real-time
  * Easily share lists with others
  * Keep track of all tasks with friends and colleagues
  * Voice Command

(outfresh, 2015)
Time Management Apps
30/30 App

* App that enhances productivity through task timing.
* Platforms: iOS only
* Pros:
  * Gesture-based interface
  * Fully customizable task list: label, time, icon and color
  * Virtually unlimited number of tasks
  * Options let you control how you are notified
Organization/Time Management Tips

* Use a calendar app or calendar notebook every day
* Use a task management tool
* Respect your need for sleep by getting 7 to 9 hours of sleep each day
* Do a weekly review of the past 7 days
* Plan to achieve four hours of real work per day
* Focus on a single task at a time (i.e. no multitasking!)

(3030app, 2015)
Organization/Time Management Tips

* Separate strategic and mindless tasks
* Accomplish large projects by breaking them down into smaller tasks
* Set a maximum of three priority tasks per day
* Review the past to become better, not assign blame
* Set deadlines for every task
* Schedule travel time on your calendar
* Put personal rest and relaxation on your calendar
Organization/Time Management Tips

* take breaks during the work day
* Learn to say no effectively
* Use your values to make decisions about your time
What have your experiences with various forms of assistive technology been?
“It’s not our disabilities, it’s our abilities that count”
-Chris Burke
Resources & Links


* http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2483841,00.asp
* http://www.artofmanliness.com/2014/02/12/one-app-to-rule-them-all-30-ways-to-use-evernote-to-improve-your-life/
* https://inotes4you.com/2014/01/17/mindly/
* http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/put-iphone-reminders-better-use-right-apps-tips/
Resources & Links

* http://lifehacker.com/5883560/the-best-virtual-assistant-for-android
* http://www.imedicalapps.com/2015/03/review-medisafe-app-reminders/
* http://www.lifehack.org/articles/technology/3030-an-app-that-enhances-productivity-through-task-timing-video.html
Thank You

* Email: JSalz@eastersealsma.org
gburnett@eastersealsma.org

  for additional recommended apps.

* Handouts are also available in the front with recommendations and tips for cognitive & executive functioning aids.