

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Brain's Air Traffic Control:

Executive Function Explained for Kids and Parents

Executive function is the brain's management system. Use these questions to talk, reflect, and build these skills together as a family.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- ♥ Executive function helps us focus, plan, remember, and adapt.
- ♥ These skills are still developing and need practice, not pressure.
- ♥ With support and routines, kids can build strong "brain managers."



1 KNOWING OURSELVES



- When do you notice it's hard to focus or get started?
- What helps your "brain manager" the most?
- What can you do when your plan feels hard?

2 MAKING A PLAN



- What's something you want to get better at planning?
- How can breaking a big task into smaller steps help?
- Who can help you stay on track?

3 REMEMBERING AND ORGANIZING



- What tricks can we use to help remember important things?
- How can a checklist or calendar make your day easier?
- Where do you keep things so you can find them?

4 HANDLING CHALLENGES



- What happens when plans change?
- How can we stay calm and keep going?
- What helps you bounce back when things get tough?

5 GROWING TOGETHER



- What's one way we can support each other this week?
- How can we celebrate small wins?
- What's one routine we can build or improve together?

TRY THIS TOGETHER



Beat the timer: Turn a task into a friendly race.



Plan it out: Talk through steps before starting.



Check it off: Use lists to keep track and feel accomplished.



Launch ritual: Create a small starting routine that works.

REMEMBER



These skills take time to grow. We're building strong brain managers—one day, one practice, one success at a time.

ONE LAST THING



You don't have to be perfect—just present. Your support today helps them soar tomorrow.



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology



Understanding minds.



Strengthening connections.