



# S TRATEGIES FOR O PTIMUM S UCCCESS

RIFKA SCHONFELD, DIRECTOR

## Executive Function

### Quiz:

#### DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION DISORDER?

- Has difficulty with paying attention
- Is easily distracted
- Requires many reminders to stay on task
- Finds it difficult to set goals
- Seems to struggle with making decisions
- Has trouble identifying where to start on assignments
- Focuses on either details or the big picture at the expense of the other
- Struggles to comprehend how much time a project will take to complete
- Takes longer than peers to complete homework and other tasks
- Needs numerous prompts from adults to stay on-task
- Loses track of time or assignment due dates
- Forgets to turn in completed work
- Struggles with keeping track of needed materials; often leaves materials at home or school
- Finds checking his/her work very difficult (and may not do it at all)
- Has trouble following multiple-step directions
- Forgets what he/she is saying or doing in the middle of a task

### Quiz Continued:

- Forgets the details of reading while reading or soon after finishing
- Gets frustrated with changes in schedule or usual routines (especially when the rules/task demands change)
- Struggles with shifting between information that is literal vs. figurative, past vs. present, etc.
- "Gets stuck" on parts of tasks and can't move forward
- Often talks out of turn and/or interrupts others' conversations

*If you checked more than 6 of the categories above, your child might be exhibiting signs of Executive Function Disorder (EFD), a learning disability that is receiving a lot more attention in the world of education today.*



# RIFKA SCHONFELD

SOS Director

An acclaimed educator and social skills specialist, Mrs. Rifka Schonfeld has served the Jewish community for over thirty years. She founded and directs the widely acclaimed educational program, *Strategies for Optimum Success (SOS)*, servicing all grades, levels and subjects, specializing in Kriyah and English reading.

A consummate teacher's teacher, Mrs. Schonfeld created and presents a social skills workshop focusing on key issues in social interaction: shidduch coaching, self-esteem, communication, trust, conflict resolution, bullying, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

In addition to a children's book on bullying, Mrs. Schonfeld has recently published a picture book for children who struggle with ADHD or have trouble focusing.

Mrs. Schonfeld is available for school engagements and Skype sessions.

SERVICING ADULTS, ADOLESCENTS & CHILDREN.



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## WRITE TO US!

We welcome questions and comments from readers. Is your child struggling with school or friends? Get your question featured in our next newsletter!

In order to recognize Executive Function Disorder, it is important to understand what executive skills are. In their book, *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents*, Peg Dawson and Richard Guare explain:

*Executive skills allow us to organize our behavior over time and override immediate demands in favor of longer-term goals. Through the use of these skills we can plan and organize activities, sustain attention, and persist to complete a task. Executive skills enable us to manage our emotions and monitor our thoughts in order to work more efficiently and effectively. Simply stated, these skills help us to regulate our behavior.*

Among the individual skills that allow people to self-regulate are:

- **PLANNING:** the ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal. This also includes the ability to focus only on what is important.
- **ORGANIZATION:** the ability to keep track of multiple sets of information and materials.
- **TIME MANAGEMENT:** the ability to understand how much time one has, and to figure out how to divide it in order to meet a goal.
- **WORKING MEMORY:** the ability to hold information in mind even while performing other tasks.
- **METACOGNITION:** the ability to self-monitor and recognize when you are doing something poorly or well.
- **RESPONSE INHIBITION:** the ability to think before you speak or act.
- **SUSTAINED ATTENTION:** the ability to attend to a situation or task in spite of distraction, fatigue or boredom.



People who suffer from Executive Function Disorder lack many of the abilities above. This can lead to persistent lateness, impulsive behavior, and the inability to complete any task completely.

## Executive Function Disorder & ADHD



Some educators today believe that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder falls into an executive function category. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a common behavioral disorder that affects between 8-10% of school age children. Boys are three times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with ADHD. Children who have ADHD have trouble sitting still, focusing on one thing at one time, and attending to details. While their attention seems unfocused, it is multi-focused. Their mind takes in multiple stimuli at once, making it hard to engage in one activity for long periods of time. For this reason, reading through conventional methods can be frustrating.

## Benchmarks for Executive Functioning

<b>PRE-SCHOOL</b>	Run simple errands ("Put your clothing in the laundry). Inhibit behaviors (don't touch a hot stove or hit another child). Self help tasks: brush teeth, get dressed.	
<b>K - GRADE 2</b>	Run errands ("Get your shoes, coat, and hat. Then, go downstairs and grab your lunch." Clean up bedroom or playroom. Bring homework to and from school. Inhibit behaviors (safety rules, raising hand in class).	
<b>GRADE 3 - 5</b>	Run errands that involve a time delay or a distance. ("Remember to stop by the corner store on your way home and buy a pen.") Complete homework assignments (maximum of one hour). Keep track of changing daily schedule. Save money for desired objects. Inhibit behaviors (refrain from rude comments, temper tantrums).	
<b>GRADES 6 - 8</b>	Help out with chores around the home (empty dishwasher, shovel snow). Babysit younger siblings. Plan and carryout long term projects for school or personal interest. Inhibit rule breaking in the absence of visible authority.	
<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	Manage schoolwork on a day-to-day basis while planning for the long term. Establish a goal upon exiting high school and work towards that goal. Make use of leisure time through employment or recreational activities. Inhibit reckless and dangerous behaviors.	

## Get Organized!

The Center for Learning Disabilities suggests multiple ways to improve life and overall organization for those struggling with Executive Function Disorder.

### What are some solutions to Executive Function Disorder for adults?

As the disorder centers on a lack of internal organization and planning, it is extremely important to create external organization. Some forms of organization that may be helpful:

- **Create checklists.** These checklists allow you to keep track of the different components of each task, ultimately leading to a goal.
- **Put a clock in every room.** Having a constant reminder of time will keep you on course. In addition, wear a watch with

digital numbers so that the passage of time is immediately apparent.

- **Keep your house and office clutter-free.** Clutter creates visual and physical distraction. Because initially this step might be hard, ask for assistance from someone who is skilled at organizing. Then, do daily checks to make sure the clutter is not piling up.
- **Write down directions and instructions.** Since working memory is often weaker in people with Executive function disorder, writing things down will significantly reduce mistakes and forgetfulness.

### What can children do in school to help them get organized?

If you feel that your child always misunderstands directions, loses track of time, and misplaces his belongings, consider taking him to be evaluated

for Executive Function Disorder. With just a bit of organization, your life and his life can get a whole lot easier.

- Break long assignments into chunks and assign time frames for completing each chunk.
- Use visual calendars to keep track of long term assignments, due dates, chores, and activities.
- Be sure to write the due date on top of each project.
- Plan breaks in the middle of longer homework assignments.
- Sit with a parent at the beginning of each week to organize assignments into manageable portions of time.
- Clean out backpack at the end of each week.

# SERVICES BY RIFKA SCHONFELD

**SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING:** General language and communication skills: children, adolescents and adults. Includes: explosive and isolated children, bullying issues, phobias, nonverbal communication issues.

**SHIDDUCH COACHING:** Private sessions for life-preparedness for young adults of shidduch age. Issues include: inability to maintain a conversation, poor body language, anger problems, poor self-esteem, and difficulty making commitments. Get your Bochur & Kallah Maidel ready for a Bishov!

**EVALUATION & REMEDIATION:** All grade levels Kriyah, English and Math. Help for bochorim and girls to pass GEDs, Regents, CLEP, NYS exams. Evaluations, and advocate for proper school placement.

## 2 MUST-READ BOOKS:

"My Friend The Bully" and "My Friend The Troublemaker" focusing on Bullying and ADHD. For Parents, educators and children. Available at your local Judaica store.

Also offering workshops on these books.



Coming soon! Another edition of the bibliotherapy series "MY FRIEND THE VOLCANO: ODD"

## ONLINE FORUM:

Check out Rifka Schonfeld's forum on LetsGrowOnline.com. Call or write in questions which Rifka Schonfeld will answer. Also view many important questions on various topics.

## PHONE HOTLINE:

Listen to Rifka Schonfeld, live on the Akeres Habayis Hotline: 212.444.1900. Press 7, then 5, then 1 from the main menu.

## NEWSLETTERS:

For previous newsletters on various topics please call: 718.382.5437.



## RADIO SHOW:

Listen to Rifka Schonfeld's radio show on JRoot 97.5 FM in the archives, interviewed by Eliezer Gruber of Nutri-Supreme. Also hear it on RifkaSchonfeldSOS.com

## AUDIO CDS:

Get your CDs on various topics, including anxiety and ADHD.



## DYNAMIC WORKSHOPS:

Interactive workshops for mechanchim, mechanchos, parents, teachers, seminary students. Kriyah, English reading, and social skills training.



### *New release!* RESOURCES DYNAMICS

This wide-ranging workshop includes resources for parents and educators to aid children with learning disabilities or other disorders. Spanning topics such as Attention Deficit Disorder, Executive Function Disorder, Anxiety, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Sensory Processing Disorder, and Bullying, this workshop provides something for everyone!

The packet includes frequently asked questions, checklists, quizzes, reward charts and much more to help improve the lives of children struggling with disorders. **4 Audio Cds included!**



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