

ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS: PLANNING AND PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE DAILY LIFE

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About me

- I'm a second year graduate student studying Medical Speech Language Pathology at the UW.
- I had my internship here at Northwest Hospital last quarter.
- I'm interested in the adult medical world, particularly stroke and brain injury.

About this presentation

- What you are going to get:
 - Some interesting facts about your brain
 - An effective strategy to help you achieve your everyday goals
 - Some fun exercises to apply this strategy
 - A ginger cookie recipe (no kidding)
- What you are not going to get:
 - A quick and magical fix
 - A one-woman show

First, I want all of you to IMAGINE a scenario.

Imagine that you're thirsty and really want a coke...



Plan:

- There's a vending machine just around the corner.
- I need one or two dollars for a coke.
- It will take me about 5 minutes maximum.



Do:

- Find the coins or bills
- Go to the machine
- Inhibit distractions like “it’s beautiful outside, and I want to take a walk” or “I know Maggie the nurse, and I want to catch up with her!”



What do you need to achieve your everyday goals?

In reaching your everyday goals, you are...

- Formulating goals
- Planning how to achieve them
- Revising these plans in the event of obstacles

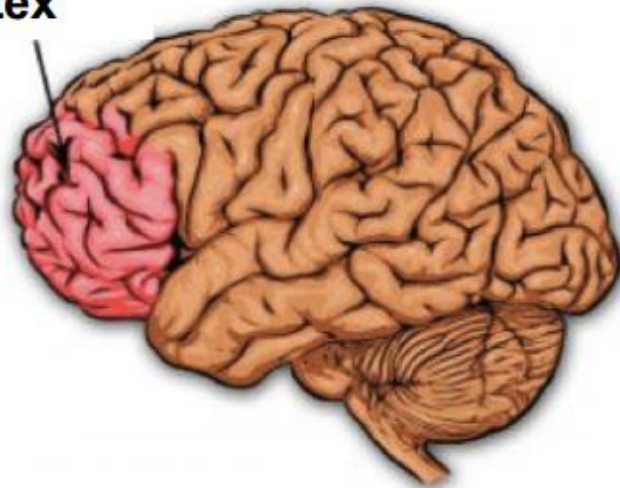


The associated abilities are:

- **Organize** your resource
- **Plan** your action
- **Take the initiative** to execute your plan
- **Reason** the pros and cons of your choice
- **Solve the problems** when things are not going as you planned
- **Regulate** thinking, communication and social behaviors
- **Inhibit** impulsive behaviors

The combination of the skills responsible for directing and regulating your thinking, communication, and social behaviors is called “**Executive Function**”.

**Prefrontal
Cortex**



If there's any weakness in one or more of these abilities...



Have you ever experienced...

- Miss paying your bills
- Come to your appointment at a wrong time
- Feel overwhelmed at a busy grocery store, for example, Costco
- Buy things you don't need



The truth is that EVERYBODY including the perfectly healthy ones are having some of these issues.



If you're concerned...

- People that are more likely to have challenges in executive function:
 - Young children
 - People with neurodegenerative diseases
 - People who are recovering from traumatic brain injuries
 - People who are recovering from strokes
- Talk to your doctor, SLP, or psychologist if you think this is an issue for you.

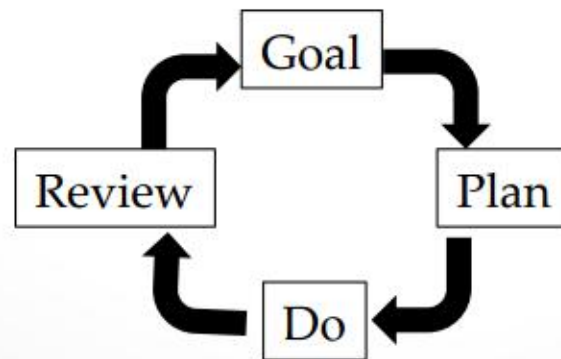
What can you do to improve your executive function?

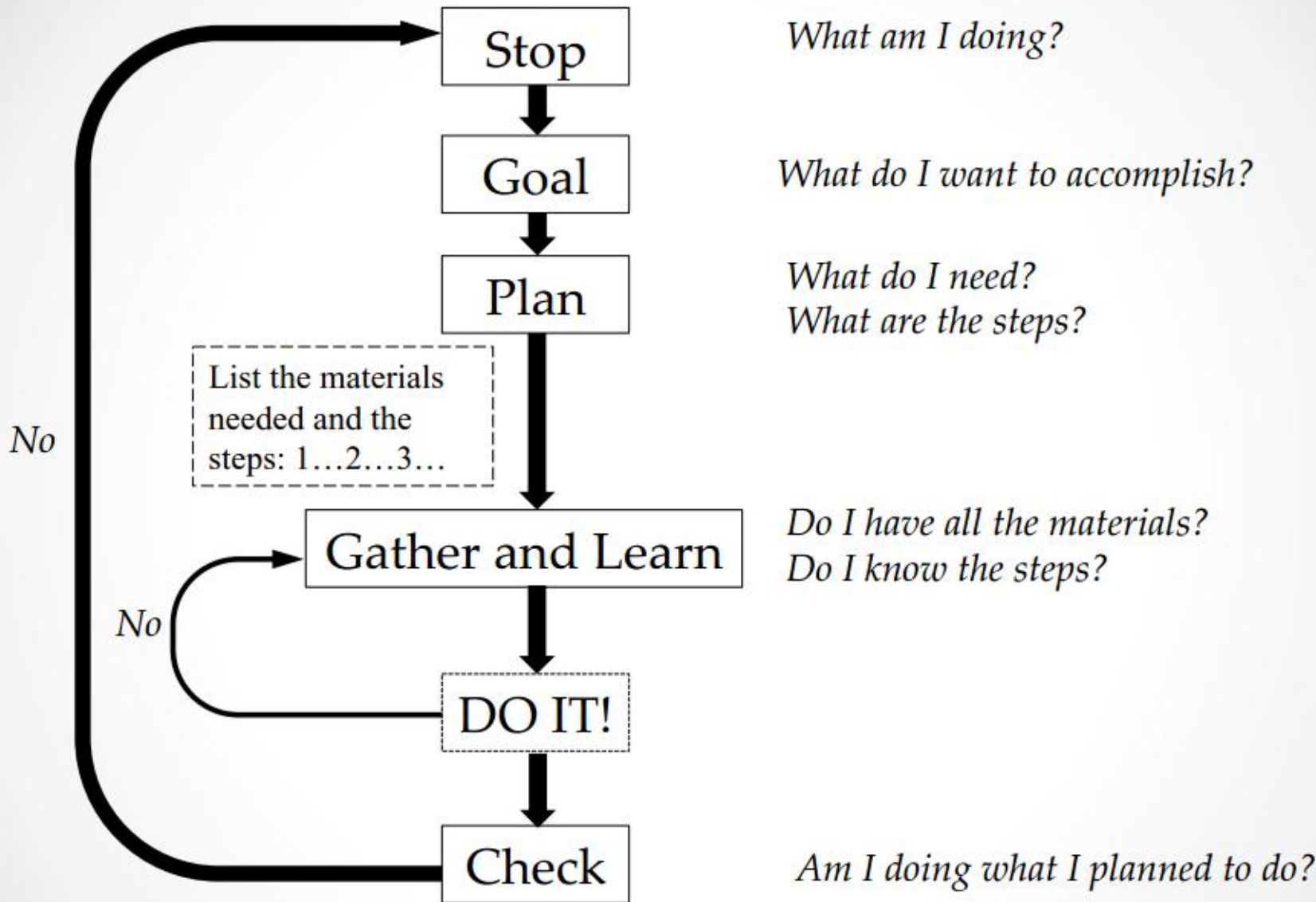
- One treatment is strongly recommended: “self-instructional training” aka “metacognitive strategy instruction” **or simply “self talk”**.
- Goal is not to train one specific task, but to guide the learning of using “self-talk” in everyday tasks.



Self talk...what is that?

- To reflect upon your thinking, communication and social behaviors
- Here's how:
 - to go through a cycle of “goal-plan-do-review”
 - To break down a task into small steps
 - To pace your work
 - To review what can be done differently





Here's an example

Recipe: _____

Preparation Time: _____

Cooking Time: _____

Total time: _____

Set Oven Temperature: _____

Collect the Ingredients:

Time needed:

CHECK: *Have I got everything I need?*

Prepare the Ingredients:

Time needed:

CHECK: *Is everything ready to start?*

Complete the steps one at a time:

Time needed:

CHECK: *Have I followed all the steps?
Have I got the result I want?*

Cooking Instructions:

Time needed:

CHECK: *What went well? What didn't go well? What can I do differently next time?*

What else can help?

- Calendars/Planners
 - Regular hardcopy or an app
 - Useful for planning and organizing
 - Set the due time/ date for each individual step
- Reminders
 - Alarm clock
 - Help you pace
 - Remind you the deadline for each step



Calendar/Planner Example

Time	Plan
6 AM	
7 AM	
8 AM	
9 AM	
10 AM	
11 AM	
Noon	
1 PM	
2 PM	
3 PM	<i>Potluck at Sidney's Place</i>
4 PM	
5 PM	

*Plan: 50 min to bake cookies and 30 min to get to Sidney's place.
When should I get started?*

Summary

- The combination of the necessary skills to reach your everyday goals is called **Executive Function**.
- It's **common** to have weakness in Executive Function. In another word, **everybody** can benefit from strategies in improving Executive Function.
- A very effective strategy is called "**self-talk**". It's simply a way to reflect upon your thinking and self-monitor your performance.

Questions?

