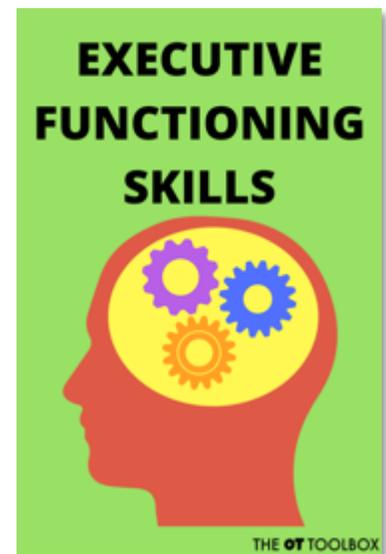


Social Engagement Interventions to Improve Executive Functioning

What is Executive Function and Why Is It Important?

As an older adult, your cognitive function is an important factor to recognize when it comes to overall well-being and successful aging. Executive functioning (EF) abilities are a part of cognition that enable an adult to engage in purposeful, independent and self-serving behavior. When an older adult has impairment in EF, it can result in issues with cognitive processes such as initiation, decision-making, self-perception, planning, cognitive flexibility, and hypothesis generation. This may manifest in having trouble making decisions, planning your day, initiating actions, coming up with hypothesis or thoughts as well as struggling with the perception of yourself. Due to these symptoms, it is very easy to feel isolated and alone from lost friendships or a decrease in social participation.



Since cognition is related to functional well-being in everyday life of older adults, it's important to have strategies to support and maintain your independence (Barney & Perkinson, 2016).

How to Improve/Maintain Social Engagement with Impaired Executive Functioning



In a study completed by Fried and colleagues (2004), he studied the effects of older adults joining a volunteer group named Experience Corps to promote healthy aging through social engagement and executive functioning. Through Experience Corps, participants volunteered in elementary schools

helping children problem solve, reading to classes, volunteering in the library and promoting student attendance. In conclusion, the study resulted in the feelings of increased social and physical activity for involved participants suggesting an intervention such as Experience Corps can be helpful in facilitating successful aging in older adults. Below are some strategies that can help maintain executive function through social engagements.

1. Volunteer Time at Local Elementary Schools

- Look for volunteer programs in your community like Experience Corps
 - Helps older adults stay connected with each other in communities
 - Psychosocial, physical and cognitive stimuli to promote executive functioning.
- Volunteer independently
 - Reach out to local elementary schools
 - Read to classes
 - Help out in the library

<https://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/>

2. Local Senior Social Clubs/Churches

- Provides a social experience
 - Sense of community
 - Activities to promote cognitive and physical well-being
 - Community outings and trips

3. Women's or Men's Clubs

- Social experience of others that identify as the same sex
 - Tell stories, share laughs, make new friends
 - Participate in lunches, activities, attractions, events or hanging out
 - Introduce others to secret, fun spots you enjoy visiting
- <https://www.meetup.com/SWANS-Senior-Women-Socials/>

Resources in Metro Detroit

Grosse Pointe/Harper Woods Area/Wayne County

- The Helm Life Center
 - A great place for successful aging
 - Open to citizens 60+ and caregivers
 - Social gatherings, exercise classes, and fellowship
 - Contact
 - 313-882-9600
 - www.helmlife.org
 - <http://www.grossepointefarms.org/residents/services-for-older-citizens-1>



Rochester/Rochester Hills Area/Oakland County

- The Older Persons' Commission (OPC)
 - Fine arts, crafts, aquatic, fitness and leisure offerings
 - Social clubs
 - Military History club
 - Independent Potters Club
 - Computer Club
 - Knitters
 - Language Conversation Groups
 - German, Indian, Spanish, Italian, Polish, English Learning, French and Chinese
 - Associated Volunteer Groups
 - Blooming Buddies
 - Garden Groups
 - Open to citizens 50+
 - Contact
 - 248-608-0263
 - opcseniorcenter.org
 - <https://www.opcseniorcenter.org/cards>



Sterling Heights Area/Macomb County

- Sterling Heights Senior Center
 - Gorgeous facility built to help older adults maintain an active, healthy lifestyle
 - Find a community
 - Meet people with similar interests
 - Drop in activities, educational and fitness classes
 - Sports leagues
 - Social opportunities
 - Travel opportunities
 - Contact
 - 586-446-2750



Link to Senior Clubs in Metro-Detroit

<https://www.seniorcenterdirectory.com/michigan/Detroit.htm>

Interprofessional Team



Social workers would be able to provide more resources for social groups to join in the local area.

Psychologists/Psychiatrists may be involved to assess executive/cognitive functioning and prescribe medications helpful to improve function

Physical Therapists to assess physical function and ability to participate in more physically demanding activities and events.

Occupational Engagement

Occupational engagement is defined as participation in activities of daily living (self-care, dressing, grooming, sexual activity), instrumental activities of daily living (care of others, driving, financial management, home management), work, sleep, physical, social, leisure and religious activities. Functional cognition is required to fully participate and benefit from the listed daily activities listed above. Executive functioning (purposeful, independent and self-serving behavior) is required to participate in occupational engagement.

Below is a picture of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health Framework (ICF). The ICF Framework is broken down into two groups.

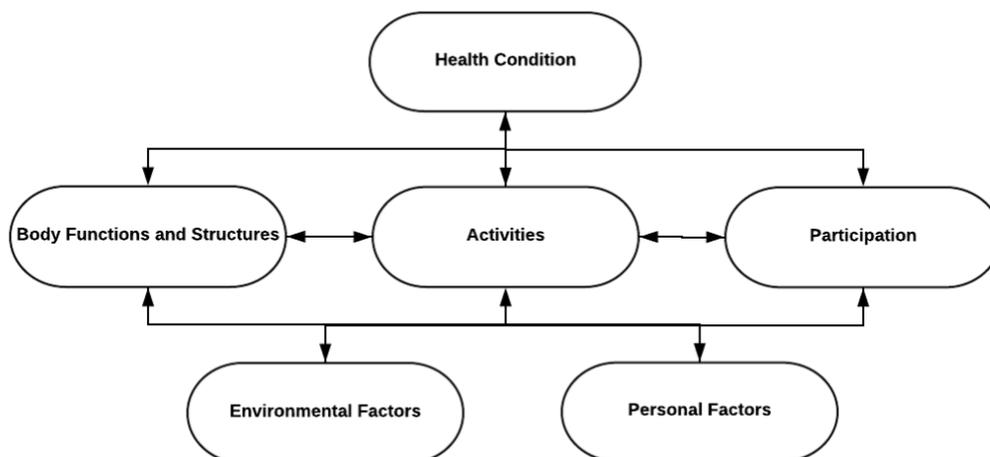
ICF

1. Functioning and Disability

- Body Functions and Structures
 - Anatomy/Physiology and Psychology of the human body
- Activities and Participation
 - Describes a person's functional status
 - Communication, mobility, self-care, learning, applying knowledge, interpersonal interactions, etc.

2. Contextual Factors

- Environmental Factors
 - Family, work, government agencies, laws and cultural beliefs.
- Personal Factors
 - Race, gender, age, education level and coping styles



<https://www.asha.org/slp/icf/>

By using the ICF framework, we can see that impaired executive functioning would be the health condition. Impaired executive functioning will affect brain function, and possible physical function (body structures) due to a decrease in participation of activities. Any personal or environmental factors may play a role.

References

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