



FEBRUARY

Counseling Newsletter

Executive Functioning Skill: Task Initiation and Completion

Have you ever thought, "I'll do it tomorrow..." Or how about "I'll start at 6:00..." Spoiler alert! Tomorrow never comes and 6:00 turns into midnight! Unfortunately, we've all been there, and procrastination is all too common in our big world of distractions. Task initiation and completion is one executive functioning skill that requires several other executive functioning skills: planning, prioritizing, time management, organization, impulse control, attention, and working memory. Despite all of these potential components of task initiation and completion, the biggest issue is often getting started! Also, never underestimate the power of a checklist.

Task initiation involves starting a task and seeing it through until the task is complete.

Strengthening Task Initiation Skills

Do Now: The "Do Now" strategy involves taking away any "later" option. Any time you catch yourself saying that you will complete something later, correct yourself and start it that very moment. Remember, getting started is often the most difficult part. Once you build momentum by completing that first problem or reading that first sentence, you will be more likely to see the task through to completion.

Do After: The "Do After" strategy involves getting rid of time constraints. Rather than saying "I'll start at 6:00," try saying "I will start after my shower." That way, you are not pressured nor constrained by a certain time, and are instead tackling things task-by-task.



Just for Fun

Q: What did February Fourteenth say to February First?



A: "I heard you're single."

Important Dates

February is Black History Month!

Check the Counseling Cohort Canvas page for daily announcements containing information and resources!

February 15 – President's Day
(No School for Students)

February 26 – Kane County Institute Day
(No School for Students)



FEBRUARY

Counseling Newsletter

Protective Factors

For one reason or another, we at the school tend to see a spike in our students' negative feelings and emotions throughout the month of February. Protective factors are things that contribute to mental health, and allow a person to be resilient in the face of challenges. By focusing on controllable protective factors, we can improve our ability to cope with many of life's challenges.

Activity

Step 1: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (weak) to 5 (strong) in the following protective factor areas:

Social Support - Having the ability to talk about your problems with others and ask for help.

Coping Skills - Having the ability to manage uncomfortable emotions in a healthy way.

Physical Health - Engaging in adequate exercise or physical activity.

Sense of Purpose - Having meaningful involvement in your different roles as a person as well as understanding your own values and beliefs.

Self-Esteem - Believing that you have value and deserve acceptance.

Healthy Thinking - Considering your strengths while also allowing yourself to make mistakes.

Step 2: Reflect and Prepare

1. Which protective factor has been the most valuable to you during difficult times?
2. Specifically, how have you used this protective factor to your advantage in the past?
3. What are two protective factors that you would like to improve?
4. Describe how things might be different if you were able to improve these protective factors.
5. List specific steps or actions you can take to help make these goals a reality.

Camera Shy

It is a very common experience for middle school students to feel self-conscious about asking questions or engaging in the classroom (or online learning environment). However, taking part in discussions allows students to feel more connected to their teachers and peers. Encourage your student to write down comments or questions in preparation for class so they can easily jump in when the time is right!

A Mindful Minute

Your brain is mostly made of water. It takes only 2% dehydration to begin to affect your attention, memory, and other cognitive skills. Keep a water bottle handy and pause to rehydrate your brain and body. Take sip and pay attention to the experience of drinking your water. Hold the water in your mouth for a moment before you swallow. How does it taste? Visualize the water moving down your throat and into your stomach as you swallow.

Vocabulary of the Month: Unconditional Positive Regard

Unconditional Positive Regard involves showing complete support and acceptance of a person no matter what that person says or does.

Guiding Thoughts

- "I approve of my student/child without condition, although I may not always approve of all the choices they make."
- "I show overall acceptance of my student/child by setting aside my own personal opinions and biases."