

# What Is Executive Dysfunction?

*Practical guidance for understanding what may be happening underneath behavior and helping families move forward.*

Executive functions are brain-based skills that help us manage ourselves in order to accomplish goals. They help turn “I need to do this” into “I did it.”

Executive dysfunction describes difficulty effectively using these skills. It can affect everyday routines, schoolwork, relationships, emotional regulation, and independence.

## Executive Functions Can Include

Executive-function skills include impulse control, working memory, emotional regulation, organization, planning and prioritizing, task initiation, self-monitoring, cognitive flexibility, and time management.

A child struggling in these areas may appear forgetful, disorganized, unmotivated, emotional, inconsistent, or dependent on reminders. Those visible behaviors may be the surface of a deeper skill difficulty.

## Skills Can Be Supported

Executive-function challenges do not mean expectations disappear. They mean adults become more thoughtful about how children reach those expectations.

**At Ethos Shoreline, we often think in terms of Awareness → Regulation → Planning → Follow Through → Family Alignment. When families identify the actual skill causing difficulty, they can stop fighting the wrong battle.**

### ETHOS SHORELINE REFLECTION

**Which executive-function skill seems to be creating the biggest bottleneck for my child right now?**

**Related Ethos Shoreline pathway: Chaos to Consistency™**

## A Note for Parents

Behavior makes more sense when we understand what is happening underneath it. Ethos Shoreline resources are designed to help families build practical structure while protecting connection, responsibility, and belonging.

**Educational Disclaimer:** This resource is for general educational purposes and is not a substitute for individualized mental-health, medical, educational, or emergency services. Consider consulting an appropriately qualified professional when concerns are persistent, worsening, affecting daily functioning, or creating safety concerns.