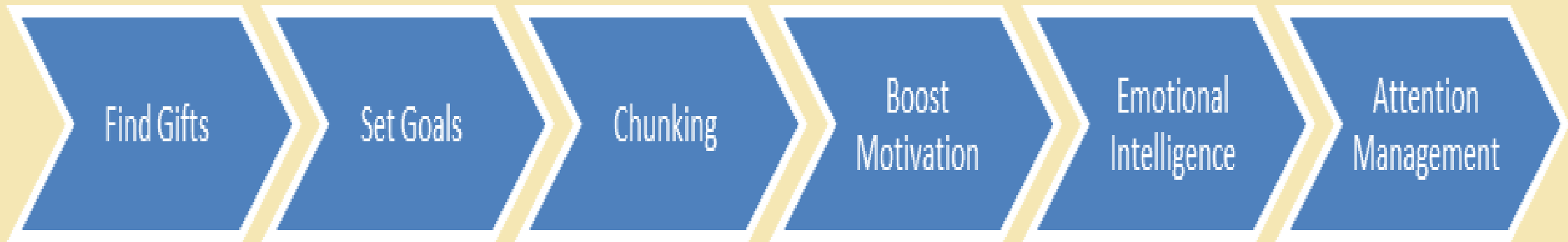


# Six Super Skills:

**Building Executive Functioning to Dream It and Do It**

**Dr. Lara Honos-Webb**





- **Neurodiversity**

Brain differences are real, one theory “nomadic gene” for ADHD, may be a trait in a minority of the population.

- **Neuroplasticity**

Your brain is strengthening the neural pathways that get used most. Neurons that fire together wire together. Not using synapses, weakens them.

# Executive Functioning

**An umbrella term which includes many interrelated functions that allow you to control your thoughts, feelings and behavior.**

- 1) Attention Span,
- 2) Planning and Organization,
- 3) Emotional Regulation,
- 4) Flexible Thinking and
- 5) Impulse Control.

# Super Skill: Find Gifts

- **Interests** such as sports or helping children
- **Talents** such as Math or Leadership
- **Personality leanings** such as thinking or feeling
- **Values** such as hard work, relationships, autonomy, or integrity

- Creativity
- Empathy
- Emotional Sensitivity
- Exuberance
- Nature Smart



## **The Gifts of ADHD**



Not following  
directions is  
the same  
thing as  
wanting to  
shape your  
environment  
rather than  
being  
shaped by it.

- Leadership,
- Creativity
- Innovation.

# How to Find Gifts

- **What Successes did you have this week?**
- **What are the three biggest successes in your life?**
- **List three adjectives that summarize your pattern of success.**
- **Write out 5 interests that you have.**
- **Ask questions “Can you tell me about a time you were helpful this week?”**

# Assessment

- **Clifton Strength Finder**
  - Empathy, Strategic, Deliberative, Futuristic
- **Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator.** Don't think of these tests as predicting your future – they can't do that!
- **Values in Action Inventory of Strengths**
  - Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman




# Benefits of Goal Setting

The goal

- directs activity,
- it increases motivation,
- it gives you a purpose,
- all which makes you focus more.
- **Goals essentially redirect your attention to a positive outcome rather than the resistance you feel in the moment.**

# Goals Set Priorities

- Know what to say no to
- Avoid distractions
- Goals are a great tool for managing impulsive behavior.



**Self-Talk Strategy: “Think of your goal before picking up cell phone.”**

# Types of Goals

- **School and Vocational Goals**
  - Grades are a measure of learning not the purpose of education
- **Relationships**
- **Health and Fitness**
- **Bucket List**
- **Mission Statement**

# SMART Goals

- **S – Specific**
- **M – Measurable**
- **A – Attainable**
- **R – Relevant**
- **T – Time Bound**



## **Double your chance of success: Write that goal down!**

- **70% of those who wrote down their goals reported progress in goal achievement**

**compared to**

- **35% who didn't write down their goals.**
- **Send weekly progress reports to people you made a public commitment to.**



Super Skill -Chunking  
**The Power of Stepping Stones**

## Breaking Big Projects into Small Steps

- ***I consistently say to myself***, “Okay, Jim, today is the day that you start a pattern of working on your senior project for one hour. Then you can do another hour tomorrow, and another the next day, and another the day after that, so that by the end of the week, you’ll have compiled 3-5 hours of work.” ***(helpful self-talk)***
- Yet, for some reason, I can never seem to push myself to sit down and work. ***I tell myself*** that I can do the same amount of work all in one sitting on the weekend, and that I can just watch Netflix tonight instead. ***(unhelpful self-talk)***

## Self-Talk Solutions

- **“I can just write for ten minutes and at least I will see some progress, I might enjoy Netflix more without the guilty feeling of the senior project hanging over my head.”**
- **“How good will I feel when I have put in a small amount of time.”**
- **“What’s the smallest amount of time I am willing to put in now?”**
- **“Do I really want to let my resistance win again?”**



# One Thing at a Time

- **Multitasking**
  - slows you down
  - increases the likelihood of mistakes.
  - multitasking over a long period of time can diminish working memory.
- **Texting while driving increases the risk of an accident 23 times.**

# One Day at A Time

- ***“Anyone can carry his burden, however heavy, until nightfall. Anyone can do his work, however hard, for one day. Anyone can live sweetly, patiently, lovingly, purely, until the sun goes down. And this is all that life really means.”***

***Robert Louis Stevenson***

# CASE STUDY: Great Gatsby

- The Trick of Task Initiation
- Social Support
- Rewards

**The moral of this story is that one simple strategy for success in school is to start on an assignment when you get the assignment.**



# **Super Skill: Boost Motivation**

# Why Procrastination is So Tempting

- *“If I have to finished a term paper by one month from now, am I going to get started on it early and finish it early, eliminating it from my mind to worry about for the next 29 days? Or am I going to procrastinate up until the very last minute until it absolutely HAS to be done. Me, I’m 100% a procrastinator. I wait until I absolutely have to do something to do it. Why? Because if I don’t HAVE to, then why should I? Is there something wrong with this philosophy? Ehhhh more likely than not.”*
- **Look for The Costs Of Procrastination**
- **Focus on Benefits Of Completion**

# Feel the Resistance and Do It Anyway

- **“I can do hard things”**
- **“I will review my goal list as a reminder of how important this is to me and that time is limited.”**
- **“Progress Not Perfection”**
- **“What reward can I give myself if I do this?”**

# How Can I make this more fun?

*“I like scheduled fitness classes that I pay more for, but at least tend to procrastinate less about, because:*

- *They’re communal classes and I am “in the trenches” with other people*
- *Bonding through hardship, making friends*
- *I paid for that class, so if I miss it, that’s money down the drain”*

# Tools for Motivational Enhancement

Miller and Rollnick

- **Develop Discrepancy**
  - create discrepancy between procrastination and what you really want for yourself
- **Support Self-Efficacy (task specific confidence)**
  - List past successes
- **Roll with Resistance**
- “it’s up to you” “you’re the one in charge”
- **Express Empathy**
  - Express self-compassion, get around the you're only good enough if you get all A's. in many clients I work with just graduating is the goal and it's a hard one.





# Super Skill: Emotional Regulation

# Over-controlled vs. Under-controlled

The two main strategies for emotional regulation are

- 1) **increasing emotional expression for the over-controlled** (leads to psychosomatic and relationship issues)
- 2) **controlling intense emotions that interfere with executive functioning.** (emotions interfere with attention and planning)



# Self-Soothing

for over-controlled emotion

- **I feel angry that**
- **I feel sad that**
- **I feel anxious that**
- **I feel guilty that**
- **I feel happy that**
- **I feel grateful that**
- **I feel excited that**
- **I feel secure that**

*The Pathway by Laurel Mellin*



For the under-controlled, emotions interfere with attention and planning

- **Substitute your upsetting feelings, remember a time when you felt valued and appreciated.**
- **Turn the Channel. When you do this, you forcefully drag your mind away from negative emotion. For example a “Happy photo file”**
- **Challenge distorted thoughts.**



# Super Skill: The Science of Attention Management

# Radical Idea: Attention can be improved by lifestyle choices

- **Interest**
- **Sleep**
- **Stress Management**
- **Exercise**
- **Time in Nature**
- **Attention restoration – naps, breaks, focus doses**
- **Happiness**
- **Limit technology**

# Interest – By Definition is Attention

- Noun: the state of wanting to know or learn about something or someone.
- synonyms: **attentiveness, undivided attention,** absorption, engrossment, heed, regard, notice, scrutiny
- Verb: excite the curiosity or **attention** of (someone).

# Time in Nature

- So many studies have shown positive results that, in one review of the literature, which was published in Psychological Science in 2008, Marc Berman and coauthors describe time in nature as:

***“a therapy that had no known side effects, [is] readily available, and could improve your cognitive functioning at zero cost. . . Many have suspected that nature can promote improved cognitive functioning and overall well-being, and these effects have recently been documented.”***



# Sleep

- ***“Sleep deprivation negatively impacts our mood, our ability to focus, and our ability to access higher-level cognitive functions. The combination of these factors is what we generally refer to as mental performance.”***
- <http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/consequences/sleep-performance-and-public-safety>

# Exercise

- Research suggests there are benefits to even just 10 to 15 minutes of moderate exercise.
- One study showed that 10 minutes of bouncing a ball improved the attention span of teenagers



# Power Nap

- A power nap is one of the top brain hacks for refreshing yourself and restoring your attention.
- research supports the power of a 10- to 20-minute nap to increase productivity.

# Stress Management

- Deep Breathing
- Mindfulness
- Rest
- There's an APP for that!
  - Calm
  - Headspace
  - Moodnotes

# Happiness

- **People with a calling orientation work harder and longer, find work more rewarding than if they see work as a job or career.**

Wrzesniewski, A. et al. (1997). Jobs, Careers, and callings: People's relation to their work. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31, 21-33.

# Limit Technology

- **Put your phone on sleep mode** when you need to focus on a task.
- **Leave your phone in a different room** while working
- **Turn off e-mail notifications**
- If something does distract you, ask yourself, **“Can come back to that when I finish what I am doing?”** If so, jot it down.

# Take it to the Next Level

- Turn the Super Skills into Habits
- Reach the Goal, Keep the Habits
- Visual Reminders
- Vision Board
- Index Cards



# Six Super Skills: Building Executive Functioning to Dream It and Do It.

**Find Gifts**

**Goal Setting**

**Chunking**

**Boost Motivation**

**Emotional Intelligence**

**The Science of Attention  
Management**