

Leading with Strengths to Manage Executive Function Challenges

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What is the Value of Leading with Strengths?



Examples of Strengths of Neurodivergent Students

- Giftedness
- Out of the box, creative thinking.
- Hard-working with the ability to hyperfocus and "get the job done".
- High level of empathy and sensitivity for others, which can also be challenging.
- Kind and accepting.
- Curious and drawn to learning topics of interest.

Using A Strengths-Based Coaching Approach

It can be used:

- As an awareness tool for a student to understand their natural strengths that come to the table even when they don't try.
- Often you can frame this as a question, "How can you use your strength of _____ to move forward with _____?"
- As an acknowledgement of their effort and capabilities as they move forward into action with accountability.

Strength Spotting

Strength Spotting is the act of recognizing and identifying the strengths that a person may possess, through a process of observation.

Be on the lookout for:

Rising inflection

Rapid speech

Better posture

Wide eyes, raised eyebrows

Smiling and laughing

Increased hand gestures

Increased use of metaphors

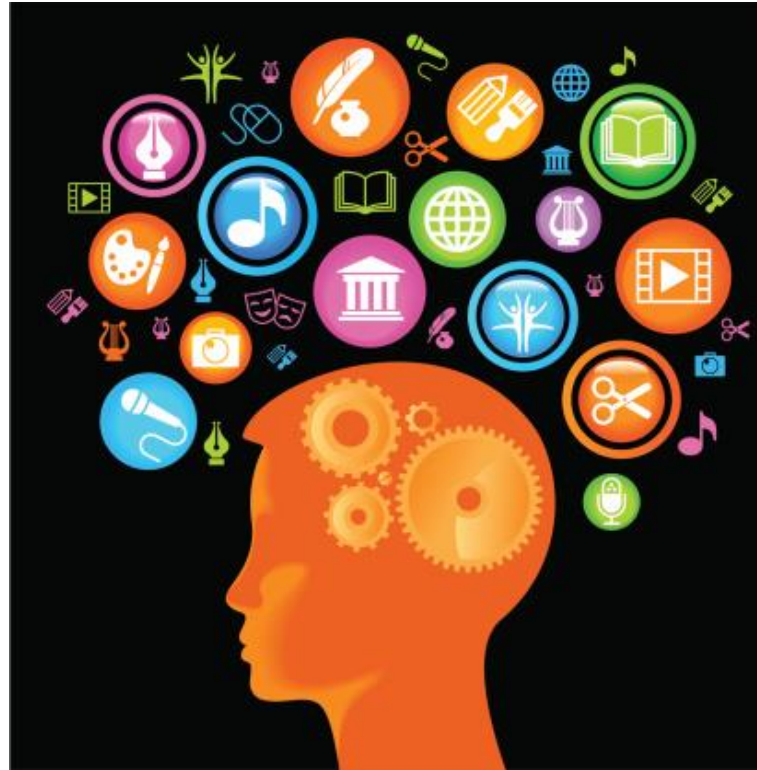
More fluent speech

Strength Spotting Tool

One-on-One exercise with a student (10 minutes)

- Ask the student to share a story of when they were at their best. Use open-ended questions to learn more about that story. Listen actively.
- What strengths do you identify in their story?
- After you listen, share with them a strength by stating: What I know about you is, you are [strength].
- Pause and allow the student to process this and respond.
- Give the student a list of the strengths or ask them to write them.

Coaching Strategies for Organizational/EF Challenges



Where to Start...

- Ask what has worked in the past – in school & at home.
- Be curious – how does the challenge impact the student?
- Assign buddies with complementary strengths.
- Create structure and routines beneficial to all students.
- Repeatedly model strategies and behaviors. Enlist parents to model as well.

Getting “Stuck”

- What thoughts come up when you can't get started?
- When you got stuck in the past, what helped you get unstuck?
- Acknowledge a strength – What I know is that you are very creative. How can you use that strength to help you get unstuck?
- For perfectionism and fear of failure –
 - What would good enough look like?
 - Imagine what would it be like to finish the assignment?
 - What is the benefit of turning in the assignment? i.e., the reward of passing grade or parents not nagging.

Disorganization/Clutter

- “What strategies do you use to find your assignments?” Be curious and acknowledge their strength/method before recommending changes, which may be uncomfortable.
- Use humor – “Wow, you have a few sandwiches in your backpack. I am guessing that lunch is not your favorite subject!?”
- Discuss what the student notices first – objects, color, random search. This helps identify how to help with sorting and organizing.
- Introduce a 15-minute pickup for decluttering

Time management

- Monitor and log time spent to increase awareness
- Discuss hyperfocus and time blindness/passage of time issues.
- Timers can help with awareness. Limit to 15-30 minutes to allow students to equate actual time with their progress. What do they notice?
- Use body doubles to mirror pace and time spent
- Use a planner to block homework and study times.
 - Set a timer to limit time spent and allow for a quick stretch/refresh
 - Insert subjects into each block with the option to swap subjects based on energy and priority.



Resources

<https://www.jstcoachtraining.com/recommended-books/>

<https://www.jstcoachtraining.com/recommended-websites/>