

Executive Functioning: The big 3 in the early years

In early childhood, we begin to see the **building blocks of executive functioning the skills that help children manage their thoughts, feelings and actions**. We call the three most foundational of these skills 'The Big 3'. Understanding and supporting these early skills helps children succeed in play, routines and learning. Here are a few reminders to help young children's brains grow with the big 3!

working memory

Break it down – Sometimes less information is MORE!
Show it – Visuals help kids remember what to do
Say it again – Some children need gentle repeats.



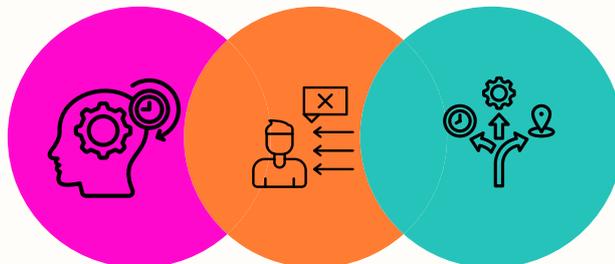
Inhibitory control

Pause together – Remember that big feelings make it hard to stop & think.
Practice waiting – Games like 'Red Light, Green Light' help build self-control. Remember to praise!
Keep it calm – Children borrow our regulation when theirs is wobbly.

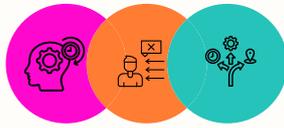


Cognitive flexibility

Plans change – Help children shift gears with simple visual supports.
New isn't easy – Some children need extra time to adjust – less words often have more meaning!
Different ways are okay – Show that there's more than one "right" way.



**The big 3 need your support:
 adjust the environment, not the expectations**



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working memory

Reflect

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Adjust

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