

Glossary - Cognitive Processing & Autism

Executive Functioning is a term used to describe the many tasks our brains perform that are necessary to think, act, and solve problems. Executive functioning includes tasks that help us learn new information, remember and retrieve the information we've learned in the past, and use this information to solve problems of everyday life.

Working Memory is the part of short-term memory concerned with immediate perceptual and linguistic processing. It is the ability to temporarily hold and manipulate information for cognitive tasks performed in daily life

- Working Memory holds information for a few seconds – it is temporary.
- Working Memory can hold only five to seven items at a time – it has a small capacity.
- Working memory holds and manipulates information.
- Working memory depends on the control of attention and mental effort.

Sensory Differences

Sensory information includes things you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. **Sensory overload** occurs when one or more of the body's senses experiences overstimulation from the environment.

Signs of sensory processing challenges:

- Hypersensitivity to sensory input
- Oversensitivity to sounds, sights, textures, flavours, smells and other sensory input
- Difficulty focusing due to competing sensory input
- Inadequate multisensory integration processing when attempting to provide appropriate responses to the demands of the environment.

Theory of Mind

- Understanding another's perspective
- Understanding emotions
- Predicting behaviour
- Understanding intentions of others
- Imagining how others think, feel and react

Context

- Context is understanding the different variables that can relate to the situations, tasks or stimuli
- Context is required to adapt learning to different situations or environments
- Contextual sensitivity is crucial for social interaction, communication and flexibility in thoughts and behaviour
- Context is required to predict and make sense of the world. The brain will guess more often without context. The autistic brain can lack fast implicit guessing.

Central Coherence

- Getting the point or gist of things
- Pulling information from different sources to establish a greater understanding
- Seeing the 'bigger picture'

A lack of central coherence can result in misinterpretation of situations and communication

Glossary - Cognitive Processing & Autism (cont.)

Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum is the social information that everyone is expected to know without it being taught. These workplace social rules are assumed to be known and understood. The hidden curriculum can be confusing to autistic individuals.

Adaptive behaviour is the collection of social and practical skills learned by people to enable them to function in their everyday lives. Adaptive behaviour enables people to adjust to different types of situations or environments. Adaptive behaviour skills are mostly social and can be improved to change unconstructive tendencies into more constructive tendencies. Social behaviour can change and develop when expectations are clear.