



# EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

AND HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT

# INTRODUCTION



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## DOES THIS SOUND LIKE YOUR STUDENT?

- Loses track of time and has difficulty remembering commitments
- Completes assignments but forgets to turn them in
- Gets overwhelmed with schoolwork and does not know where to start
- Has difficulty transitioning from one situation or task to another
- Makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty staying organized and keeping track of personal items

## DOES THIS SOUND LIKE YOUR STUDENT?

- Struggles to make decisions
- Needs many reminders to get something completed
- Inconsistent in academic performance
- Procrastinates and avoids school work
- Low self-confidence and easily frustrated
- Perfectionist who spends hours and hours on work and constantly stressed
- Quickly shuts down when things get challenging

# OPENING ACTIVITY



## ACTIVITY

- Open your booklet and grab a pen
- Think of some things you would like to learn today
- You are going to write 3-4 lines about what you hope to get out of today's PD!
- You have 5 minutes to write!
- Does this sound manageable?
- Only one catch....



## HANDWRITING: DISCUSSION

- What was that experience like for you?
- What strategies did you use to try and make it more manageable for you?
- What thoughts did you have about this task?



## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

- In charge of helping you get things done
- Control attention and behavior
- Serve a "command and control" function
- "Conductor" of all cognitive skills





# Executive Functioning Skills

## The Ultimate Guide



Planning



Time Management



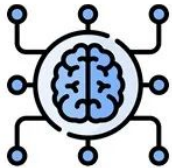
Metacognition



Self-Control



Working Memory



Flexibility



Attention



Organization



Task Initiation



Perseverance

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS HELP

- Manage life tasks
- Plan and organize activities
- Sustain attention
- Persist to complete a task
- Manage emotions
- Monitor thoughts
- Regulate behavior



## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS HELP

- Select and achieve goals
- Develop solutions to problems
- Create a picture of a goal
- Help you develop a path to that goal
- Collect the resources you need along the way
- Remember the picture of the goal



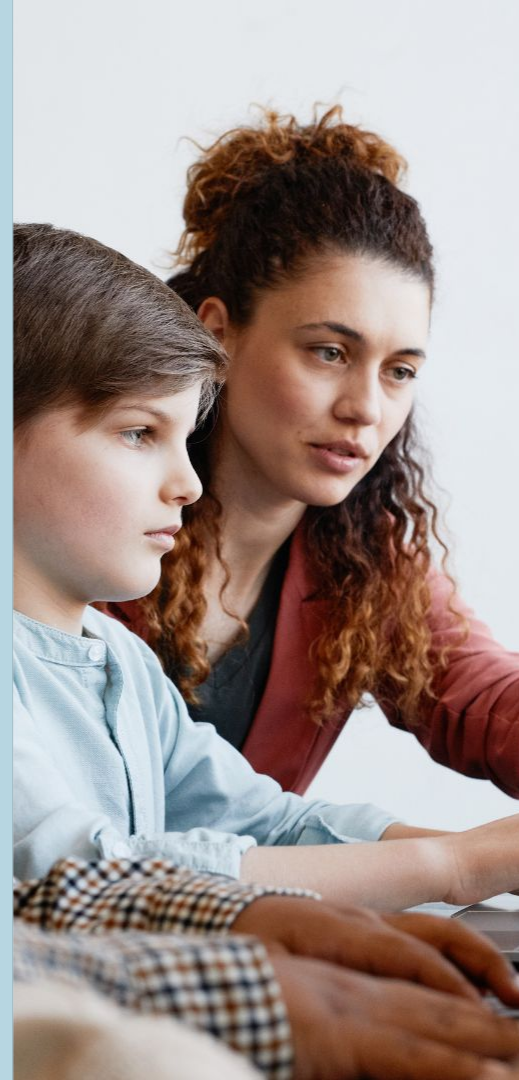
## EXAMPLE OF THE EF PROCESS

1. Analyze a task. Figure out what needs to be done.
2. Plan how to handle the task.
3. Get organized. Break down the plan into a series of steps.
4. Figure out how much time is needed to carry out the plan, and set aside the time.
5. Make adjustments as needed.
6. Finish the task in the time allotted.



## ISSUES WITH EF MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO:

- Make plans
- Finish work on time
- Keep track of time
- Analyze thoughts
- Organize thoughts and things
- Follow through with tasks



## WHAT AFFECTS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?

- Genes & Environment (Nature AND Nurture)
- Stress
- Poor Sleep
- Poor Nutrition
- Distracting Environments
- Alcohol/Drugs
- Depression and Anxiety
- ADHD
- Trauma



## TWO CATEGORIES OF SKILLS

- Thinking Skills
- Doing Skills



## THINKING SKILLS

- Select and achieve goals
- Develop solutions to problems
- Create a picture of a goal
- Help you develop a path to that goal
- Collect the resources you need along the way
- Remember the picture of the goal





## THINKING SKILLS INCLUDE

- Planning
- Organization
- Time management
- Working memory
- Metacognition



## DOING SKILLS

- Enable you to do what you need to do
- Accomplish the tasks you set
- Persist until the goal is achieved



## DOING SKILLS INCLUDE

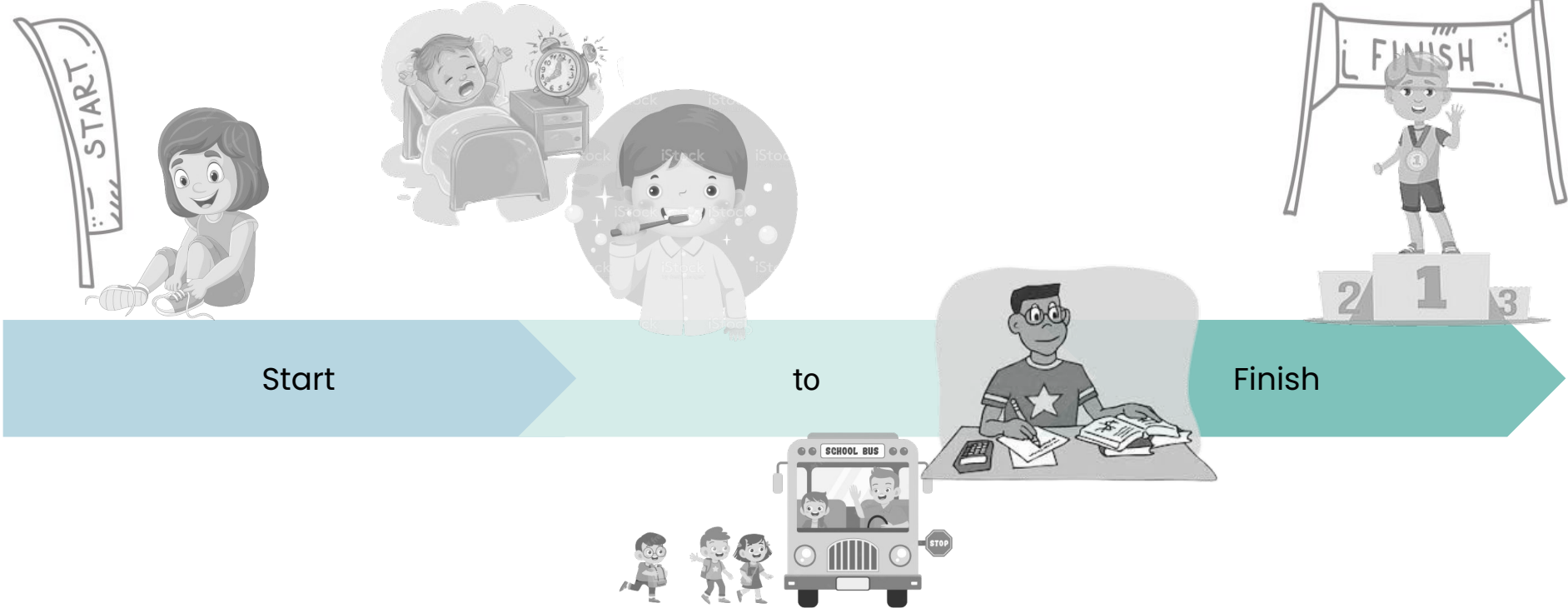
- Response inhibition
- Emotional control
- Sustained attention
- Task initiation
- Goal-directed persistence
- Flexibility



# A PARENT'S ROLE

## A PARENT'S ROLE

- Assess skills; Help them identify strengths and weaknesses
- Emphasis on skills, not just grades
- Stress management
- Getting the right kind of support
- Conversations and communication
- Implement strategies to support the development of EF skills
- Provide structure and help with planning
- Help them set realistic goals
- Allow them opportunities to build resilience; model resilience
- Growth mindset

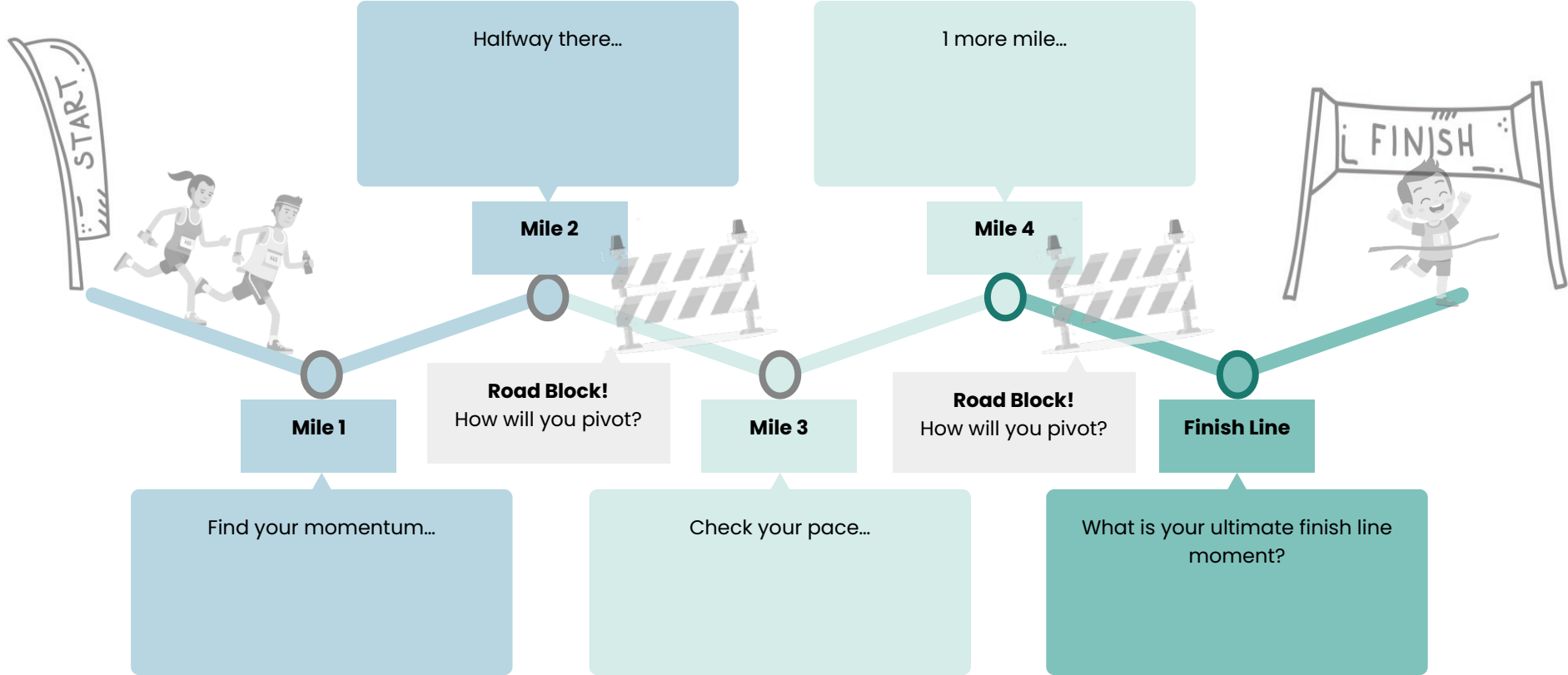


Start

to

Finish

**The Goal Setting Marathon:**  
Visualizing Your Starting Point



## The Goal Setting Marathon: Finding your Pace

# WORKING MEMORY

- The driver of time management, organization and problem solving
- Allows us to work with information without losing track of what we're doing
- The retention of a small amount of information in a readily accessible form
- Plays a big role in how we process, use and remember information on a daily basis



# ISSUES WITH WORKING MEMORY

- Difficulty following multi-step instructions
- Miss details in instructions
- Difficulty staying engaged in class; easily distracted
- Make mistakes in writing & counting
- Fail to self-correct work
- Challenges with multi-step math and reading problems
- Daydreaming
- Stops working because they've lost track of what they're doing (or forgets what's been asked of them while doing it!)
- Loses & forgets items often





# TIME MANAGEMENT

- The ability to use time productively and efficiently
- Planning how to divide your time
- Understanding how long something will take
- Completing tasks within the allotted time



## ISSUES WITH TIME MANAGEMENT

- Not completing tasks within the given time
- Rushing through tasks
- Missing deadlines or turning in assignments late
- Procrastinating
- Underestimating how long things will take
- Unsure of how to prioritize competing tasks



# TASK INITIATION

- "Getting started"
- The ability to begin a project in an efficient and timely manner, without procrastination
- Starting something even when you find it boring or difficult
- Initiate & independently start a task



# ISSUES WITH TASK INITIATION

- Needs multiple reminders to start a task
- Delays assignments and tasks until deadline approaches, then rushes to finish
- Struggles to ignore distractions and begin assigned work
- Frequent requests for help, even when capable of starting work



# FLEXIBLE THINKING

- Allows you to adjust to the unexpected
- Change from one activity or task to another
- Students with “rigid” thinking don’t roll with the punches
- Helps us deal with uncertainty & solve problems
- Coping skills, people’s ability to contemplate different perspectives and opinions and to consider multiple solutions
- Ability to contemplate different perspectives and opinions and to consider multiple solutions

# ISSUES WITH FLEXIBLE THINKING

- Perfectionism & Rigidity
- Give up before they even try something (inability to persist)
- Not accepting of other people's ideas
- Insisting on the same point over and over
- Repeating mistakes, unwilling to problem solve
- Unsettled when plans change or routines shift
- Difficulty taking on new tasks
- Frustrated when things go wrong or not as planned



## **GOAL- DIRECTED PERSISTENCE**

- Ability to have a goal and follow through until its completion
- maintaining the stamina to move towards a goal and utilizing adaptive and problem solving skills
- Not deterred by outside distractions
- Known as “stick-to-itiveness”
- Set an attainable goal & sustain attention and effort toward that goal
- Resiliency & Self-Advocacy
- Overcoming boredom and disinterest to continue toward a goal or completed task
- Requires ability to be resilient and be a strong self-advocate

## **ISSUES WITH GOAL- DIRECTED PERSISTENCE**

- Work not being completed on time or at all
- Often overwhelmed and frustrated with inconsistent performance
- Does not advocate for needs
- Struggles to stay focused and manage competing interests
- Can look like a lack of motivation or “lazy”
- Sets unrealistic or unclear goals



# STRATEGIES & TOOLS

- Focus on SIV (Strengths, Interests, Values)- Purpose!
- Increased autonomy/independence (The Power of Choice)
- Clear goals and rewards; more tangible rewards, more often
- Planning for barriers
- Model resiliency & allow for opportunities for struggle
- Create a safe space for discussion & mistakes
- Firm but flexible boundaries (not fear-based, growth based)
- Encourage effort and process; teach positive self-talk

# STRATEGIES & TOOLS

- Break down tasks & then break it down even smaller
- Provide a checklist
- Timers can cue the “start function”
- Reframe their difficulties as “initiation” rather than “unmotivated”
- Landing pad (crate or basket) or virtual landing pad
- Communication book
- Change the Channel Technique
- Stress relieving strategies (mindfulness)

## DAILY CHECKLIST

<u>Task</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
Make Bed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Take Medicine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Attend School		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Complete Homework			<input type="checkbox"/>		
House Chores	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brush Teeth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**LIFESOLVED**  
**ROUTINE CHECKLIST**

**Directions:** Consider the action items/tasks that you need to complete in the morning (before work/school). Try to put these action items/tasks in sequence. Then, think about how long this action item/task takes you to complete. Next, add a time schedule. Finally, add an emoji to represent each action item/task.

**Morning Routine Checklist**

Action Item/Task	How long does this take?	Time	Emoji
Wake Up	15 min	6:15AM	☀️
Brush Teeth and Wash Face	10 min	6:20AM	🪥
Get Dressed	10 min	6:30AM	👚
Make Bed and Pick Up Clothes	5 min	6:40AM	🛏️
Eat Breakfast	15 min	6:45AM	🍳
Put Lunch + Water Bottle in Backpack	5 min	7:00AM	🍷
Put on Coat and Backpack	5 min	7:05AM	🎒
Walk Out Door and Go to Car	5 min	7:10AM	🚗

# LIFESOLVED AFTER SCHOOL CHECKLIST

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



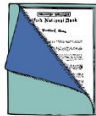
I had a snack and am ready to start



Check school portal and write down homework



Complete homework



Press "submit" for all computer assignments; put papers away in folders



Pack up backpack and put in landing zone

Project/Task	Reason for Procrastination (Difficult, Unclear, Scary, Tedious)	One Small Action I Can Take...
<i>Ex. Do my Q1 book report.</i>	Tedious - I don't like to read so this is boring.	★ <i>Choose a book.</i>
<i>Ex. Study for AP World History Exam.</i>	Difficult - the material is hard and I can't find the time.	★ <i>Gather my materials (notes, textbook, documents)</i>

**Step 2:** Time to reflect! Respond to the prompts below and consider your procrastination type.

1. Are there reasons for your avoidance that are listed several times?
2. Are there types of tasks that you tend to avoid?
3. What type of procrastinator are you? Explain your thoughts.
  - Perfectionist ○ Worrier ○ Over-doer ○ Dreamer ○ Crisis-maker ○ Defier

**Step 3:** Let's return back to our chart in the activity above and take a look at the last column. Record *one small action I can take...* to avoid procrastination for each listed project/task.

# BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Consider what you say to yourself when you *reach a barrier to success*. Then, use flexible thinking to determine possible solutions to the challenge and what you might say to yourself instead to help stay motivated.

*Take a look at your Marathon Activity to brainstorm any barriers to success that could get in the way of reaching your goals.*

Barrier to Success	Possible Solutions	Self-Talk/Response
<i>Ex. I can't complete my math HW because I left my calculator at school.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Download a free calculator app on my phone</li> <li>- Call a friend to borrow their calculator</li> <li>- Start with my English HW while I calm down</li> </ul>	<i>I can complete my math HW by downloading a free calculator app on my phone. I will set a reminder in my phone for tomorrow so that I do not forget my calculator again.</i>
<i>Ex. I can't call a doctor for my cold after work because I don't have one.</i>	-	
	-	

## PARENT/STUDENT COMMUNICATION CONTRACT

I

*This document is intended to be used as a tool to help facilitate communication and support between students and parents. We encourage students and parents to take time to think about each of the questions independently before filling this out together, in conversation.*

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### Goals

**Student Goals:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Parent Goals:**

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- 

### Expectations & Responsibilities

**Agreed upon expectations:**

- Example: Lacey will be responsible for independently applying her own eye medication daily & manage doctor's appointments
- Example: Lacey will maintain a minimum of 3.5 GPA during the fall semester
- 
- 

I (student) expect to make the following responsibilities/decisions/choices independently:

- 
- 
- 

I (parent/guardians) expect my student to seek my input on the following responsibilities/choices:

- - 
  -
-



# COMMUNICATION CONTRACT

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- 1.
- 2.
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### Parent Goals:

- 1.
  - 2.
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-

# COMMUNICATION CONTRACT

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- 
- 
- 

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- - 
  -
-

# COMMUNICATION CONTRACT

## Advocacy, Resource & Communication Plan

### **Student:**

- When I am feeling overwhelmed I will \_\_\_\_\_
- When I did not receive an outcome (e.g. grade) I wanted, I will \_\_\_\_\_
- When I don't understand what my homework assignment is I will \_\_\_\_\_
- When I feel like I'm stuck on an assignment or don't know how to get started I will \_\_\_\_\_
- When I miss a class or I am absent from school I will \_\_\_\_\_
- When I need to email a teacher but I am nervous or don't know what to say I will \_\_\_\_\_
- When my assignment is due but I don't feel confident with my work I will \_\_\_\_\_

# SERVICES

## Student Programs:

- 1-1 coaching
- Group Programs
- Parent Coaching
- LAUNCH (Young Adults)

## Adult Programs:

- 1-1 Coaching
- Adult Group Program

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**Questions?**