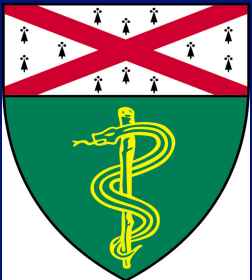


Smart, but Stuck: Emotions in Teens & Adults with ADHD

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Overview

For Those with ADHD:

1. What emotions motivate avoidance of important tasks?
2. Why do emotions often disrupt social interactions?
3. How do family dynamics impact emotions?
4. How can teens/adults get unstuck?

Old & New Understandings of ADHD?

- ◆ **Old:** behavior problems & not listening
- ◆ **New:** developmental impairment of brain's management system: EF
- ◆ Aspects of brain's EF don't come online in usual time frame.
- ◆ And don't work consistently

Executive Functions

- ◆ Wide range of **central control processes** of the brain
- ◆ **Connect, prioritize, and integrate** cognitive functions—moment by moment
- ◆ Like conductor of a symphony orchestra

“Will you do it and, if so, how and when?”

(Lezak, 2004)

Will you do it?

Motivation/Activation

How will you do it?

Planning/Organizing

When?

Timing/Remembering

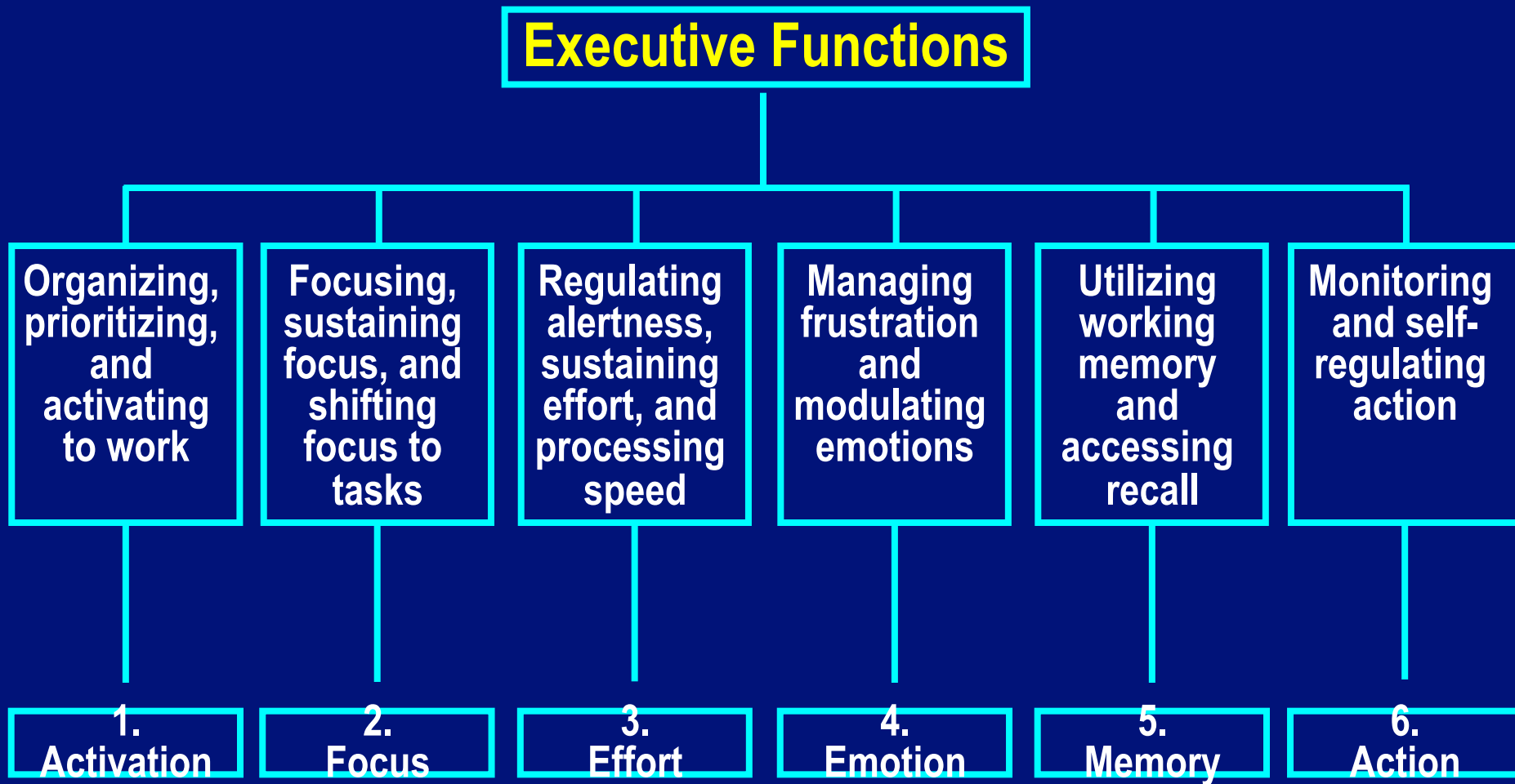
Brown's Model of Executive Functions Impaired in ADHD

Symptom Characteristics

- ◆ **Dimensional, not “all-or-nothing”**
 - Everyone sometimes has some impairments in these functions; in ADHD, it is a chronic, severe impairment
- ◆ **Situational variability: “If I’m interested”**
 - Most persons with ADHD have a few activities where ADHD impairments are absent

ADHD looks like a willpower problem, but it isn't!

Brown's Model of Executive Functions Impaired in ADHD



Brown TE. Manual for Attention Deficit Disorder Scales for Children and Adolescents; 2001.

A Working Definition of ADHD

(TEBrown, 2013)

- ◆ a complex syndrome of
- ◆ developmental impairments of executive functions,
- ◆ the self-management system of the brain,
- ◆ a system of mostly unconscious operations.
- ◆ These impairments are situationally-specific,
- ◆ chronic, and significantly interfere with functioning in many aspects of daily life.

Executive Functions are complex and operate in dynamic, integrated ways

For example, EF of “focus”

- Does not mean
 - as in holding the camera still to take a photo of an unmoving object
- Does mean
 - as in focusing on the task of driving a car

Assessment for ADHD should consider possible problems with emotion

- ◆ DSM diagnostic criteria for ADHD do not include any symptoms of problems in regulating emotions
- ◆ But, researchers and clinicians report chronic problems in emotional regulation are characteristic of many with ADHD
- ◆ **Regulating emotion is a core aspect of ADHD!**

Brown ADD Scale-Cluster 4

Managing Frustration and Modulating Emotions

Emotion takes over too much of thinking or feeling...Like a computer virus in the mind. Can't push emotion to "back of mind" and get on with what needs to be done.

-frustration -anger -hurt feelings
---worry -wanting -discouragement
---sadness

Problems with Emotions in ADHD

- ◆ not only with brakes: **controlling negative emotions**, e.g. anger, frustration
- ◆ also with ignition: **activating positive emotions**, e.g. interest, motivation

Eric

20 year-old university student

“I’m in a great university where I want to do well, but I just can’t get myself motivated to do the work. I did really well in high school; now my grades have tanked. I’ve been spending too much time hanging out with my girlfriend and smoking weed. I’ve tried some ADHD meds, but they make me too jittery.”

Eric

- ◆ Loss of structure
- ◆ Does she really want me?
- ◆ Weed: abstinence vs harm-reduction
- ◆ Immediate vs Delayed Rewards

Lisa

16 year-old high school student

“Other kids don’t seem to get my jokes and aren’t interested in what I am. I try to make friends, but no one ever calls me back when I call them. I try to talk with my parents about it, but my dad doesn’t understand kids and my mom is always yelling at me. ADHD meds help me do schoolwork, but they don’t help with social stuff.

Lisa

- ◆ Triangles and Polarization
- ◆ Rebound
- ◆ Learning social cues
- ◆ New context
- ◆ Cutting and rejection

Mike

21 year-old university student

“My Dad always said I’m **smart, but just lazy; maybe he’s right**. I got put on academic probation, now I have to drop out. I’m always spacing out and can’t get started on anything until the last minute. I **tried my friend’s ADHD med; it helped a lot**, but my dad doesn’t want me evaluated for ADHD; **he says meds are like steroids**.

Mike

- ◆ Social anxiety
- ◆ Family skepticism
- ◆ Possible Selves
- ◆ Hidden concerns
- ◆ Sexuality
- ◆ Unacknowledged burdens

Sarah

50 year-old homemaker & mother

“I’ve been married 25 years, have 3 great kids, and had a decent career as a journalist, but I just got fired because I couldn’t prioritize and keep up with my work. Since menopause I’ve had trouble keeping track of things and getting work done. It’s been getting worse. I’m scared I may be getting Alzheimers.”

Sarah

- ◆ Empty nest & re-entry
- ◆ Fears of dementia
- ◆ Estrogen and executive functions
- ◆ Demoralization
- ◆ Medications

Sue

14 year-old high school student

“Until I got into middle school I always got good grades and never got into trouble. Now everybody thinks I’m hopeless because I dress Goth and don’t do much homework. My parents and teachers look down on me just because of the friends I hang out with. They don’t really know me or my friends!”

Sue

- ◆ Reciprocal confrontations
- ◆ Documenting abilities
- ◆ Validating for accommodations
- ◆ Frustrations, hope and reassurance
- ◆ Risks of micro-managing

James

20 year-old college student

“If I don’t finish four papers this month, I’m going to be put on probation at school. I just can’t get myself to finish. I’ve had this problem a long time, now it’s worse than ever. I’ve done the research for most of my papers, but I can’t get past the 1st paragraph in any one of them. I’m stuck!”

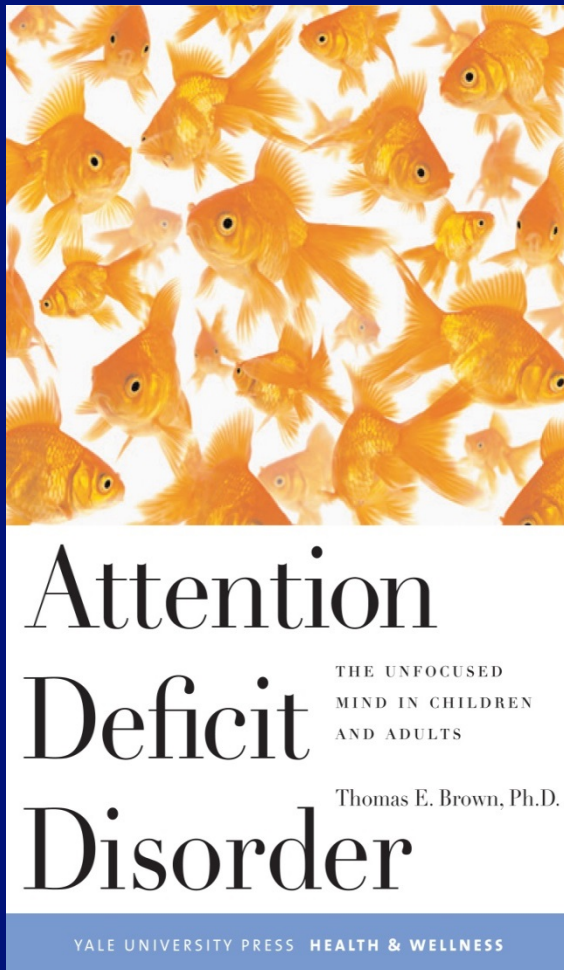
James

- ◆ Reassurance and denial
- ◆ Writing papers and EF
- ◆ Immobilization by perfectionism
- ◆ Functions of Internet gaming addiction
- ◆ Becoming a licensed driver

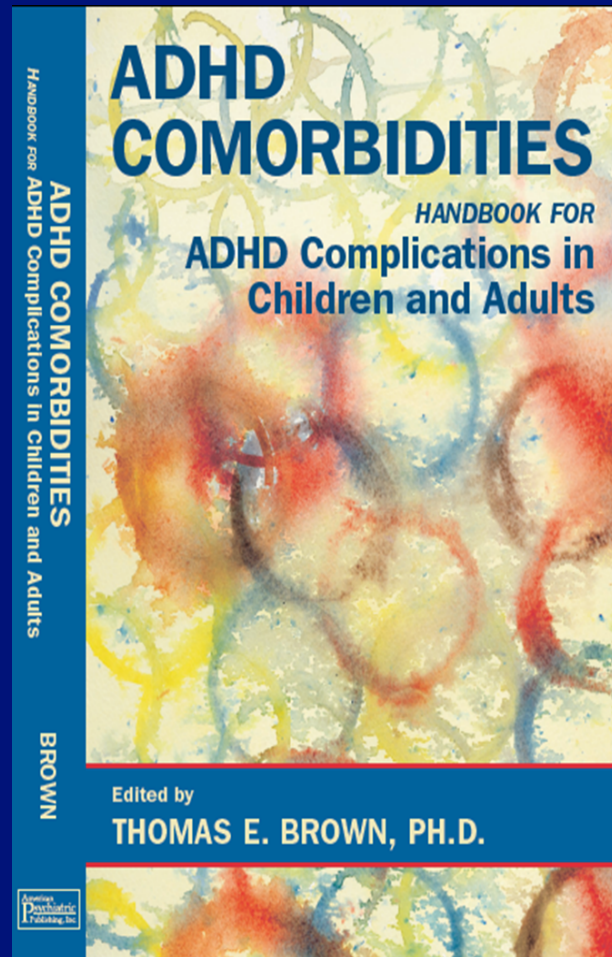
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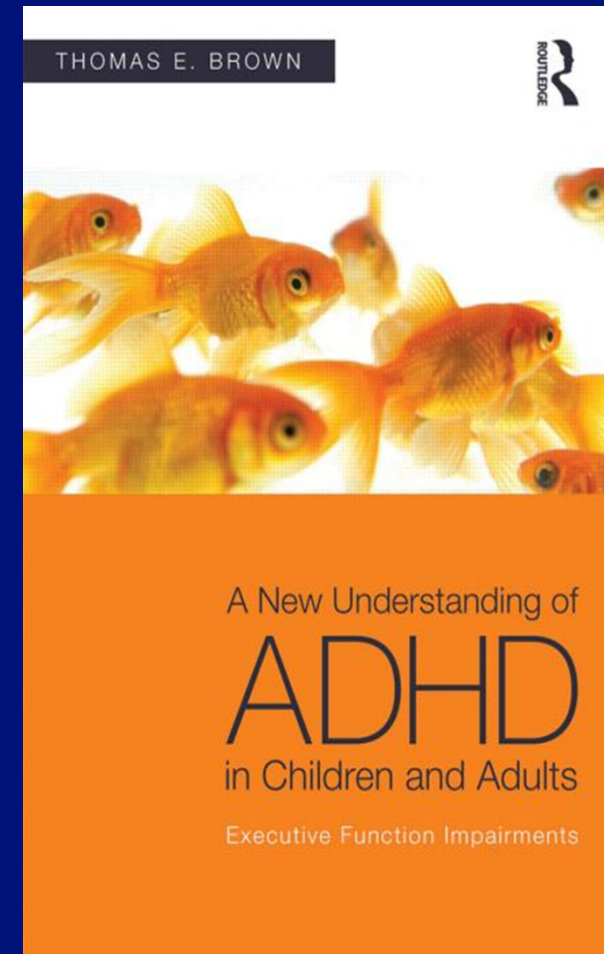
2005



2009



2013



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