

“Best Evidence-Based Techniques for Managing Procrastination, Willpower, Self-Regulation and Productivity”

David Nowell, PhD

Learning Objectives

- **Identify developmental expectations for attaining executive function milestones**
- **Define “brain plasticity” and relate it to counseling and academic goals**
- **Discuss self-regulation as the cornerstone executive function**
- **Describe how “boredom susceptibility” interferes with learning and efficiency**
- **Discuss how multi-tasking may actually be bad for the brain**
- **Relate the concept of “attention residue” to multi-tasking**

Program Outline

- **Self-regulation of what? Supporting our clients in their self-directed management of arousal, motivation, time and emotions**
 - Understanding the role of executive functioning in self-regulation
 - What skills will children need in order to be a “healthy, high-functioning 26 year old”, and who teaches those skills?
 - What strategies can supervisors and managers use to maximize motivation and efficacy?
 - Learn how to use a simple Gmail extension to facilitate between-session contact and motivational support with your clients
- **Distinguishing “normal” from problematic motivational challenges in the clinic and classroom**
 - How does depression impact task initiation and follow-through?
 - Is it the ADHD or the substance abuse impacting motivation?
 - How common are specific learning disorders among students with ADHD, and how do these features impact academics differently?
 - ADHD or Bipolar disorder? Learn an easy but powerful mnemonic device for “teasing out” the clinical impact of these two dysregulation disorders.
- **Identifying probable executive function disorders in the clinical interview**
 - Features of the skillful mental status examination which rapidly and effectively pinpoint executive weaknesses
 - Learn a “client-centred, curious, compassionate, and non-judgmental” approach to evaluation and intervention which you can implement the very next day after our workshop

- **“Ego depletion” - If willpower is a limited resource, how do we support clients and students in making the best of theirs?**
 - Deactivate “rehearsal loops” to preserve mental energy
 - Learn how rules actually preserve willpower and energy
 - Why does Mark Zuckerberg only wear gray T-shirts?
 - What is a “launching pad” and how can my clients set one up in their home?
 - “Choice architecture” to support clients following up on key goals
- **How malleable is the brain? What are the limits of neuroplasticity? How can our clients maximize these possibilities?**
 - Using “habit stacking” to hack well-established patterns and quickly establish new healthy or efficient practices
- **Waiting until the last minute – how does that work? And what can we do when that stops working?**
 - How perceived scarcity and slack impact decision-making and motivation
 - Facilitate your clients identifying their “One Thing” – what one decision or choice or phone call would create the biggest shift for you right now?
 - Identifying your client’s time horizon
 - Distraction delay training: Metacognition for mastering on-task performance
 - Establish hard edges in your schedule: Setting limits, recognizing boundaries, and saying no to non-crucial activities and commitments
- **Understanding the “Marshmallow Test” and other key research on self-control**
- **Screen time, green time, and immediate gratification: How technology and nature shape the brain**
 - Is technology increasing the incidence of problematic inattention?
 - What are the brain benefits of video games and other screen technologies?
- **How YOLO and FOMO* are killing millennials’ capacity for deep happiness – and why the rest of us are at risk as well.**
- **Supporting our clients as they learn to take their attention away from what they do not want and direct attention on what they do wish to experience.**
 - If your client experiences difficulty getting started, the first step is too hard: Understanding and managing task initiation
 - Dissertations, blogging, and report-writing: Coaching clients on getting it done efficiently and painlessly

- **Help clients identify their “dopamine window” – that 4-5 hour morning burst when we are most effective and efficient**
 - The most important 10 minutes of your day: A positive psychology approach to time management
 - What’s on your schedule today that you’ll remember one year from now?
 - Smartphone notifications, email, and other digital clutter: Conquering distractions at work
- **Introducing your clients to the Pomodoro Technique**
 - What is “attention residue” and how can we minimize its detrimental impact on cognition?
 - When is multi-tasking desirable, and when is it disadvantageous?
- **Facilitate an explicit self-talk strategy to help clients minimize time-wasting distractions and dramatically increase on-task activity**
- **“Don’t reward them with stuff” – practical guidance around charts and behavioral plans**
 - Learn the 3 crucial questions for parents to consider as they take up their role as family “brain coaches”

*YOLO = “you only live once,” and FOMO = “fear of missing out”