

Rachel Bailey 

AND

THE STUDYPRO

# How Executive Function Skills Improve School Success

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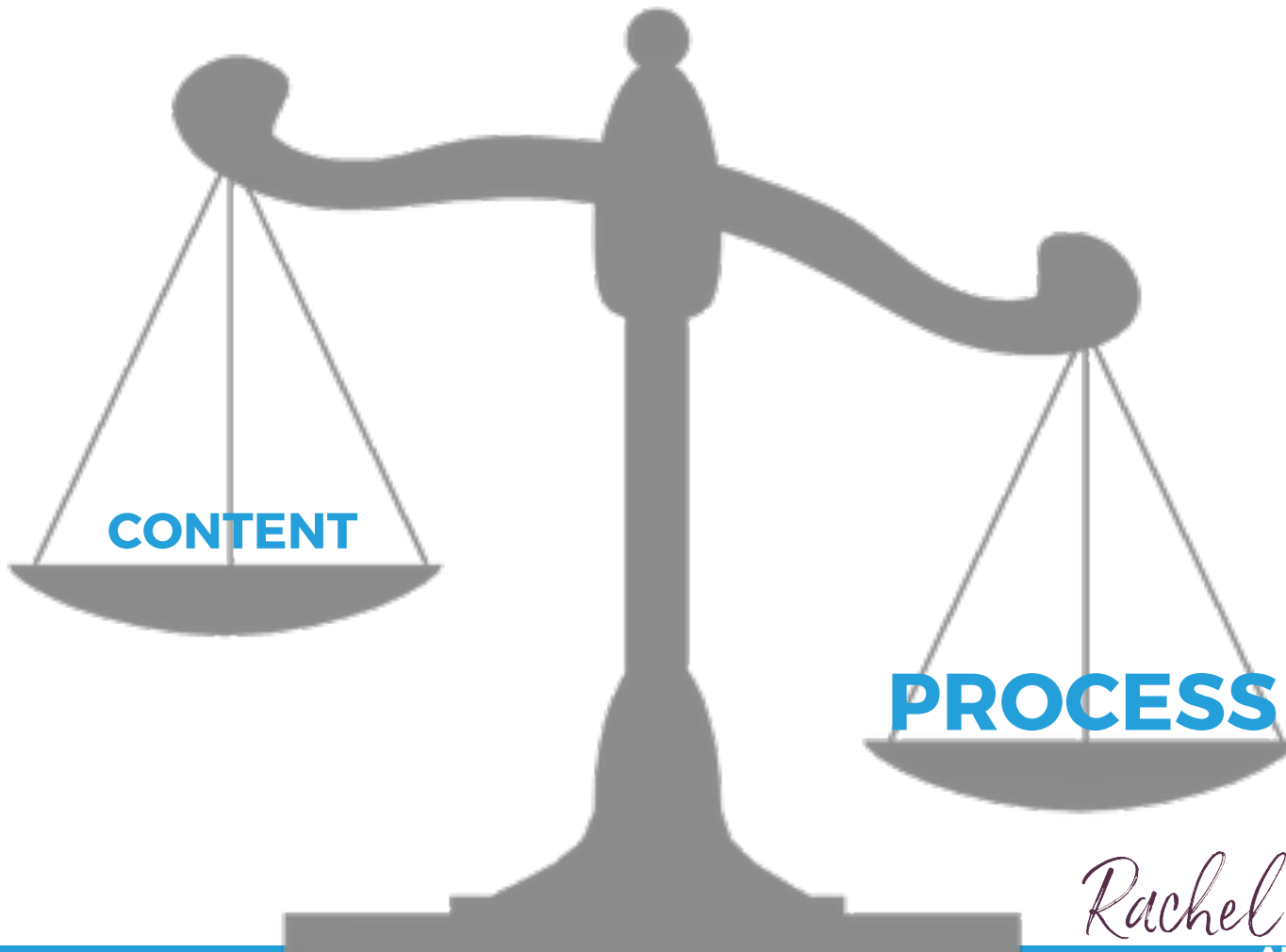
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# WHY ARE WE HERE?

1. How **Executive Function and Study Skills** contribute to your child's success (or struggles) in school
2. Why most typical parent approaches to help students **don't work**
3. How to more **effectively communicate** with your student to help :
  - reduce resistance and
  - “grow the seeds” of effective study strategies

# What happens when?



# WHAT EXACTLY ARE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS?



# What are Executive Functions?

- Executive functions are the “self-management system of the brain”
- Having strong EF skills helps you get what you want to get done.

**INHIBITION INITIATION**  
**SHIFTING EMOTIONAL CONTROL**  
**WORKING MEMORY**  
**PLANNING & ORGANIZATION**  
**MATERIALS ORGANIZATION**  
**SELF-MONITORING**

EF-BRIEF's clinical scales (Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function)

# Do any of these look familiar?

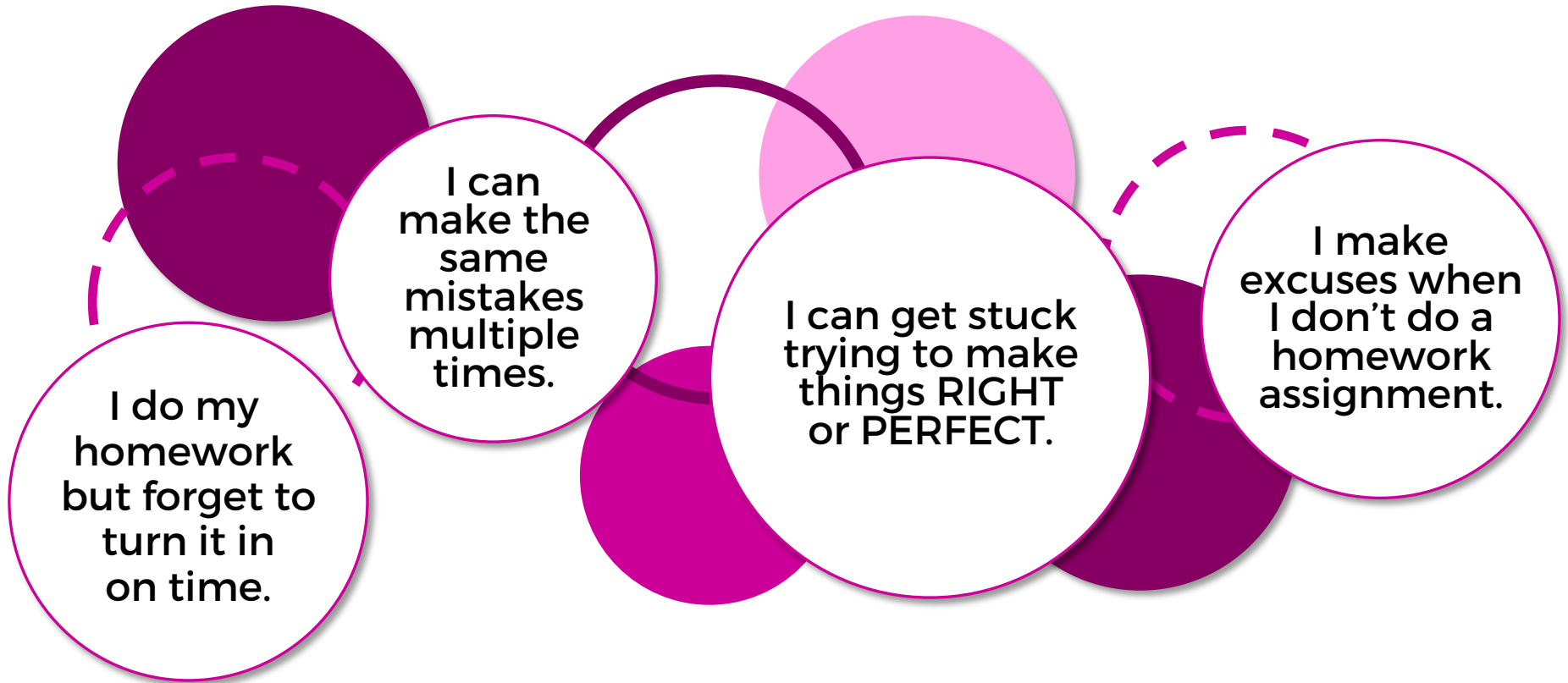
I might know what to do, but I procrastinate.

It is hard to stop one thing and switch to something else.

When I am stuck or frustrated, I have a hard time doing anything.

I wait until the last minute for long-term assignments.

# Or these....???

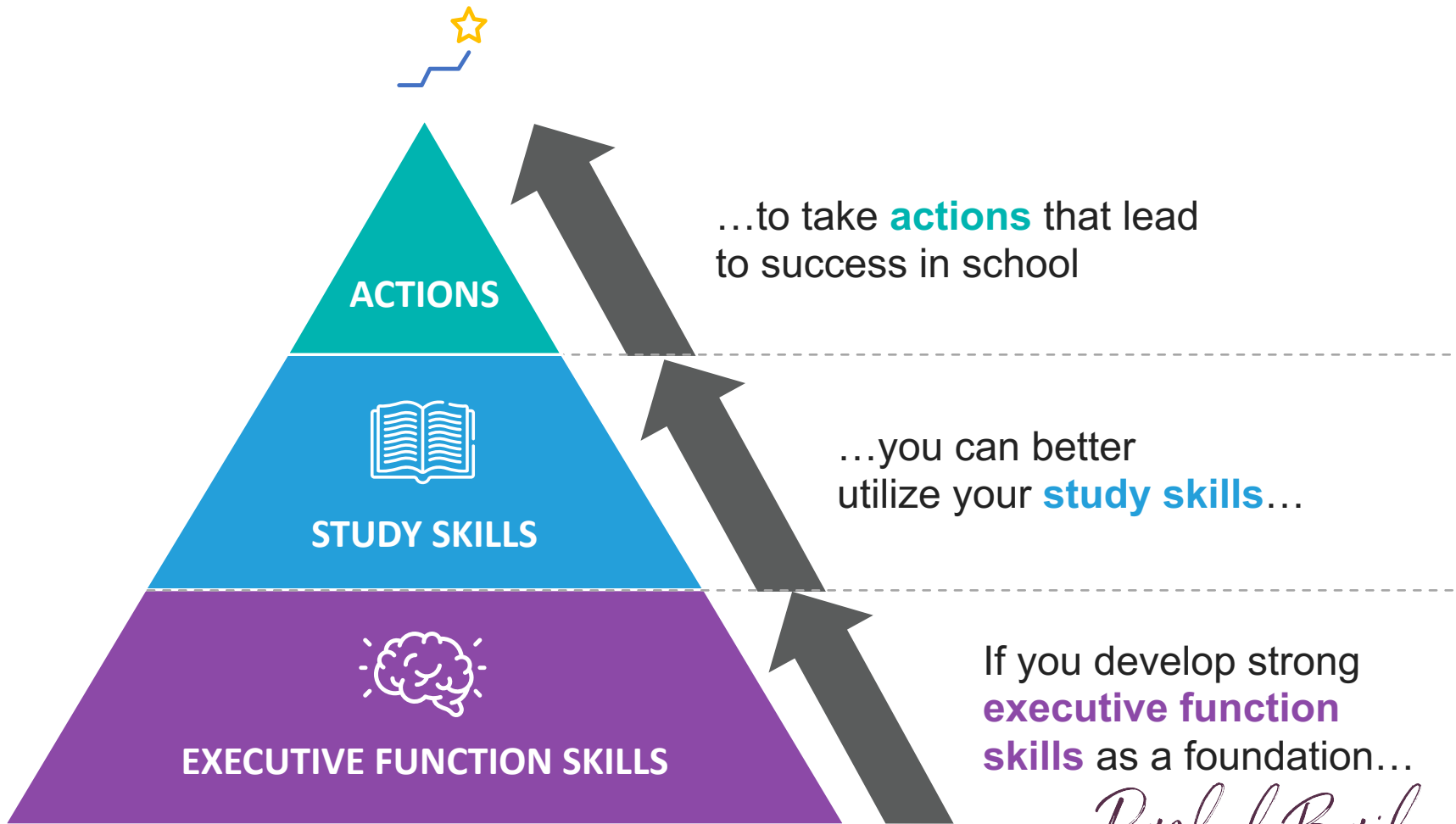


# What are Study Skills?

- Study skills are tactics and strategies that improve how students acquire, retain, recall, and apply information.



# Executive Functions are the Foundation



# RECOGNIZING MISSING EF SKILLS MATTERS

- It's tempting to think:
  - They are lazy
  - They just need to be able to chunk their work
  - They aren't motivated
  - They are wasting time
  - They don't care about the quality of their work
    - They rush through work
    - They make careless / repeated errors

**It is only by identifying  
the underlying cause  
for a challenge can we  
apply the *\*right\**  
approach**

In most cases the “why” is due to the need for a skill

How Parents Can Help:

HOW CAN THIS  
AWARENESS ALLOW US TO  
REMOVE BARRIERS FOR  
OUR STUDENTS?

# The “Need Behind the Behavior”

Challenges	Possible Missing Skills	What it is NOT
<b>Missing Work</b>	<b>Planning</b> (I knew what to do but I didn't do it); <b>Emotional Control</b> (avoidance, perfectionism) <b>Initiation</b> (I don't know how to get started) <b>Working Memory</b> (My teachers are posted in so many different places and I can't keep track)	Lack of motivation Laziness



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<b>Low Test Scores</b>	<b>Self-Monitoring</b> (Not checking work before turning in, missing parts of directions) <b>Inhibition</b> (Rushing through to get to a preferred activity) <b>Emotional Control</b> (anxiety) <b>Shifting</b> (moving on to the next problem/section) <b>Study Skills</b> (note-taking, active study, test-taking strategies)	Lack of motivation Not Trying

# The “Need Behind the Behavior”

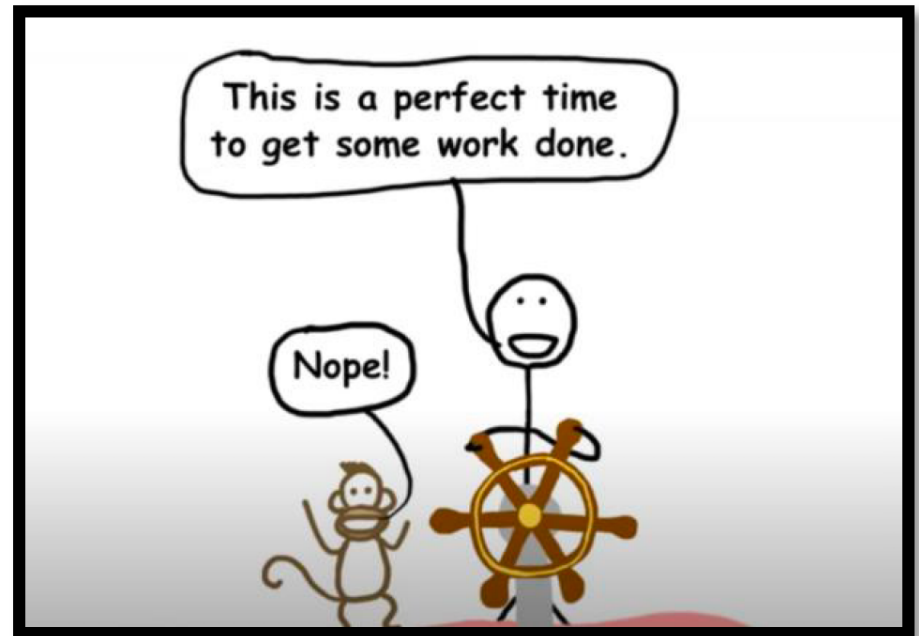
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<b>Not Paying Attention in Class</b>	<b>Inhibition</b> (Inability to ignore distractions such as phone, chats, other homework, etc.) <b>Shifting</b> (Moving from a preferred to a non-preferred activity) <b>Working Memory</b> (Tracking multiple directions given simultaneously)	Lack of motivation or caring, Disrespect to teacher

# How Parents Can Help:

## EXAMPLE OF HOW TO REMOVE BARRIERS FOR OUR STUDENTS

# COMMON BARRIERS TO STARTING

- ☐ I don't know what I have to do.
- ☐ It's not due for a few days / week.
- ☐ I think it will take a long time to finish.
- ☐ I don't know how to do it.
- ☐ I don't have the materials I need.
- ☐ I don't feel like it / don't feel motivation.
- ☐ It's only worth a few points.
- ☐ It's worth such a big part of my grade, it's overwhelming.
- ☐ It seems harder than I feel like doing or think I can do.



**THE SOLUTION:**  
**1) MAKE A PLAN**  
**2) BUILD “ON—RAMPS”**

# Just knowing the DUE DATE doesn't help you start...

## KEYS TO PLANNING

1. IDENTIFYING THE SPECIFICS OF THE ASSIGNMENT (VS. "MATH HOMEWORK")
2. PREVIEW THE ASSIGNMENT (REDUCES THE BARRIERS)
3. ALTERNATE EASY/HARD ("EASY" vs. STRESSFUL)

**THE STUDYPRO**  
PLAN YOUR WORK | WORK YOUR PLAN

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time I Have: \_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNMENT (BE SPECIFIC!)	DUE DATE	TIME ESTIMATE	ORDER*	START TIME	END TIME	WHAT'S LEFT?
HISTORY/SS:						
MATH:						
SCIENCE:						
ENGLISH:						
FOREIGN LANGUAGE:						
OTHER:						
OTHER:						

Total Time I Need: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Homework Success Plan**

- 1 Look online **and** in your planner.
- 2 Write down all work that is due tomorrow **and** "chunks" of work that are due in the future.
- 3 \*Start with something easy to warm your brain up. Then move to something more challenging. Repeat.
- 4 Take breaks every 20 - 40 mins (depending on age).
- 5 Do something (even small) from every assignment with a due date.
- 6 Transfer the "What's Left" column from today's sheet to tomorrow's.

DOWNLOAD AT:

<https://thestudypro.com/remote-coached-homework-center/>

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# Building On-Ramps

## BUILD ON-RAMPS:

## GET STARTED IN EVEN A SMALL WAY

### ON-RAMP EXAMPLES

- **English / History Assignment**
  - Topic Exploration
  - Ideas Diagram
  - Rewording Questions for Clarity
  - Identify where to connect with the Q
    - Chunking into Steps
- **Math / Science Assignment**
  - Preview the assignment
  - Watch a video on the topic
  - Do only the odd questions
  - Draw a picture or create clues to define/connect

How Parents Can Help:

**BUT WHAT IF  
YOUR KIDS ARE  
RESITANT?**



# How It Usually Goes

Student doesn't turn in homework AGAIN

We yell and punish: "No cell phone / no time with friends until..."  
(You didn't realize it was a missing skill and not a "behavior" issue!)

We calm down and try to make a plan with them.  
**They resist and become disrespectful.**

We email the teachers, the counselors.  
**They shut down more.**

Our relationship is negatively impacted  
**and they listen less.**

# Here's Why: The Yuck Factor

## The Principle

### **In a good place:**

Positive behavior  
aligned with our values

### **In “Yuck”:**

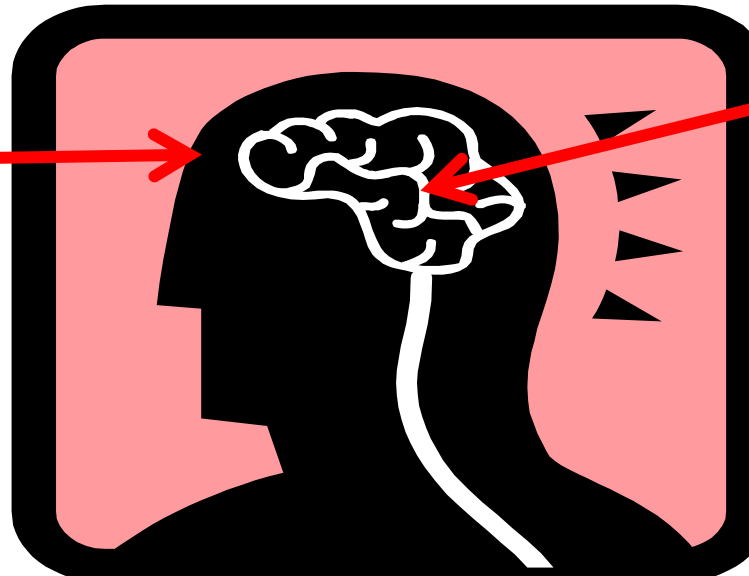
Negative behavior,  
moods, and attitudes

For now, think of this  
in terms of yourself

# The Brain on Yuck

***Positive, mature***  
**part of the brain:**  
**PREFRONTAL CORTEX:**

EF skills!  
Impulse control  
Values  
Problem solving  
Emotional regulation



**"Yuck" --**

Hunger, sleepiness,  
disappointment,  
frustration,  
annoyance, anger,  
helplessness



**Alarm / Fight or  
Flight Response**

Impulsive  
Can't regulate  
Self-centered  
Irrational  
See only confirming  
data

# Yuck Behavior

Negative behavior, moods, attitudes  
**are symptoms of Yuck.**

## Yuck turned out

Yelling  
Disrespect  
Blame  
Controlling

## Yuck turned in

Negative self-talk  
Anxiety  
Low motivation / avoidance

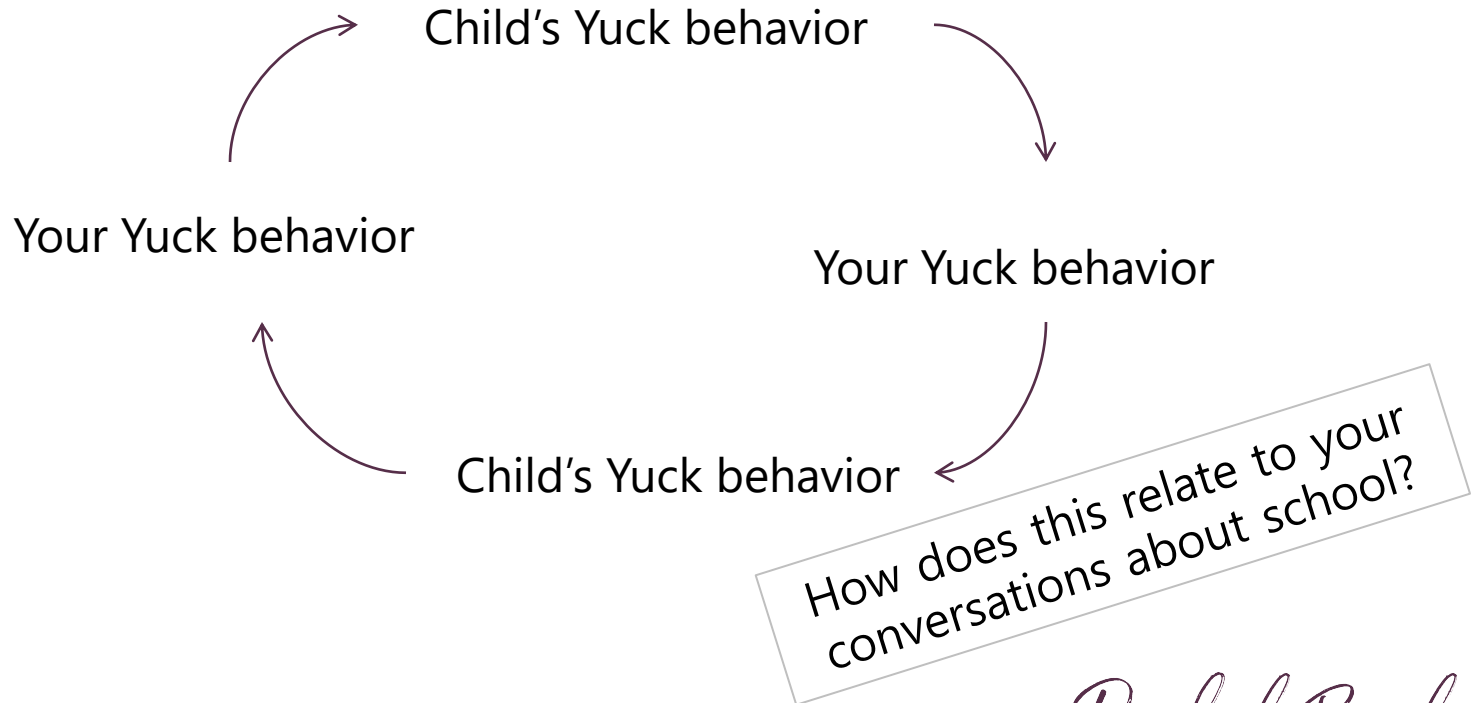
## Yuck numbed

Alcohol  
Sugar  
Electronics

What do you do when you're in Yuck?  
What does your child do?

# The Cycle of Yuck

What we usually do  
**Keeps us stuck.**



# A Proactive Strategy to Be Firm & Address Yuck

**The Joint Problem-Solving Strategy:** You and your child against the problem, not you against them

1. State the expectation

Short & sweet: "You'll be taking a class at The StudyPro."

2. Ask what it's like for them. Listen. **Care.**

"How will that affect you?"  
"Why don't you want to?"

3. Make a plan together based on Steps 1 and 2.  
(They may need help with some skills!)

"Since... let's figure out how to..."

4. Have them identify the "consequence."

"What do you think should happen if you don't follow the plan?"

5. Choose a time to revisit.

# A Proactive Strategy to Be Firm & Address Yuck

**The Joint Problem-Solving Strategy:** You and your child against the problem, not you against them

For a resource that includes these steps  
+ **“What should I do if...?”**

email

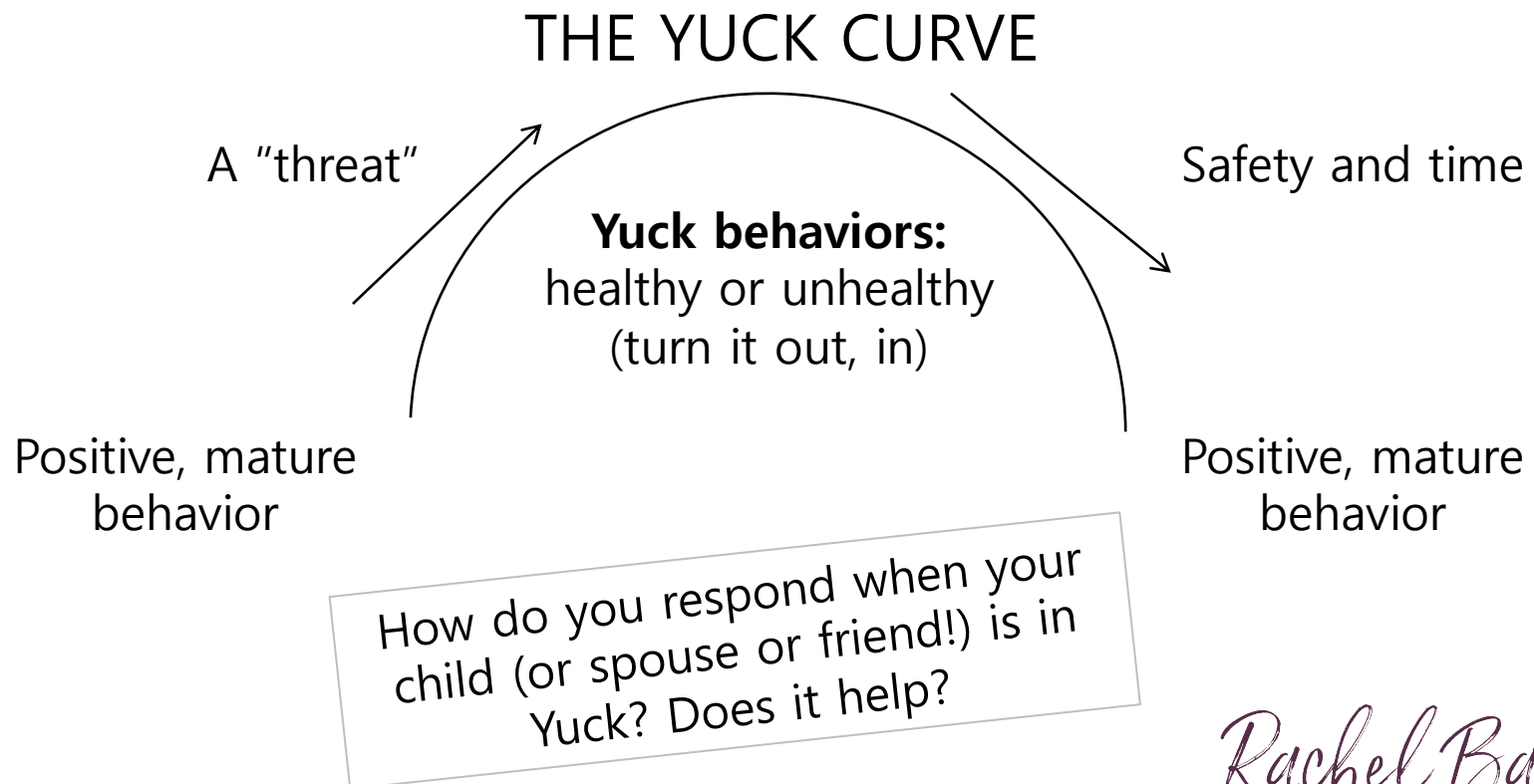
[info@Rachel-Bailey.com](mailto:info@Rachel-Bailey.com)

Subject: JPS

work for you.

# Handling Yuck in the Moment

**It is ineffective to engage with Yuck.**





# “Watering the Seeds” Can Reduce Yuck

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**These are examples of “deposits”**

## HOW PARENTS CAN “WATER THE SEEDS”

## POSITIVE REMINDERS AND REFLECTIONS

Avoid the “gotchas” or implication of the negative.

- Instead of “Do you have homework tonight?”

Try saying ....

“What is the first thing you could get started with tonight that would be easy to get off your plate?”

“Have you found Quizlet or notecards to be more effective for you?”

- Instead of “Did you study for your test yet?”

Try saying....

“Did you find anything interesting about the periodic table when you were studying?” “I always wanted to how to read a periodic table...I’d love to see your hard work there!”

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## HOW PARENTS CAN “WATER THE SEEDS”

## FOCUS ON USE OF STRATEGIES

Praise for specific use of EF skills / strategies.

- Instead of “Wow, you got an A!”

Try saying...

” Wow, what worked there?”

” How did you study?”

- Instead of “That’s awesome you finished that!”

Try saying...

“That must feel so great...what helped get over that hurdle?”

More examples:

“I love how you <set a timer>, <did your homework at the dining room table>, <got started so quickly after school>, <studied over time>, <chunked up that work>...”.

# Rachel Bailey

- Individual and Group Programs
  - Parenting Academy
  - Workshops

[www.Rachel-Bailey.com](http://www.Rachel-Bailey.com)

## THE STUDYPRO

- Executive Function Coaching
- Study Skills and Strategies Course  
**Limit 6 students/course**

### March/Apr Courses:

- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades
- 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades
- 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades
- Remote Homework Center
  - Writing Coaching

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“The seeds we plant,  
the seeds we water,  
the seeds we tend to,  
Are the ones that  
*bloom.*”

*Lisa A. McCrohan*

