

# PRESENTATION FLOW

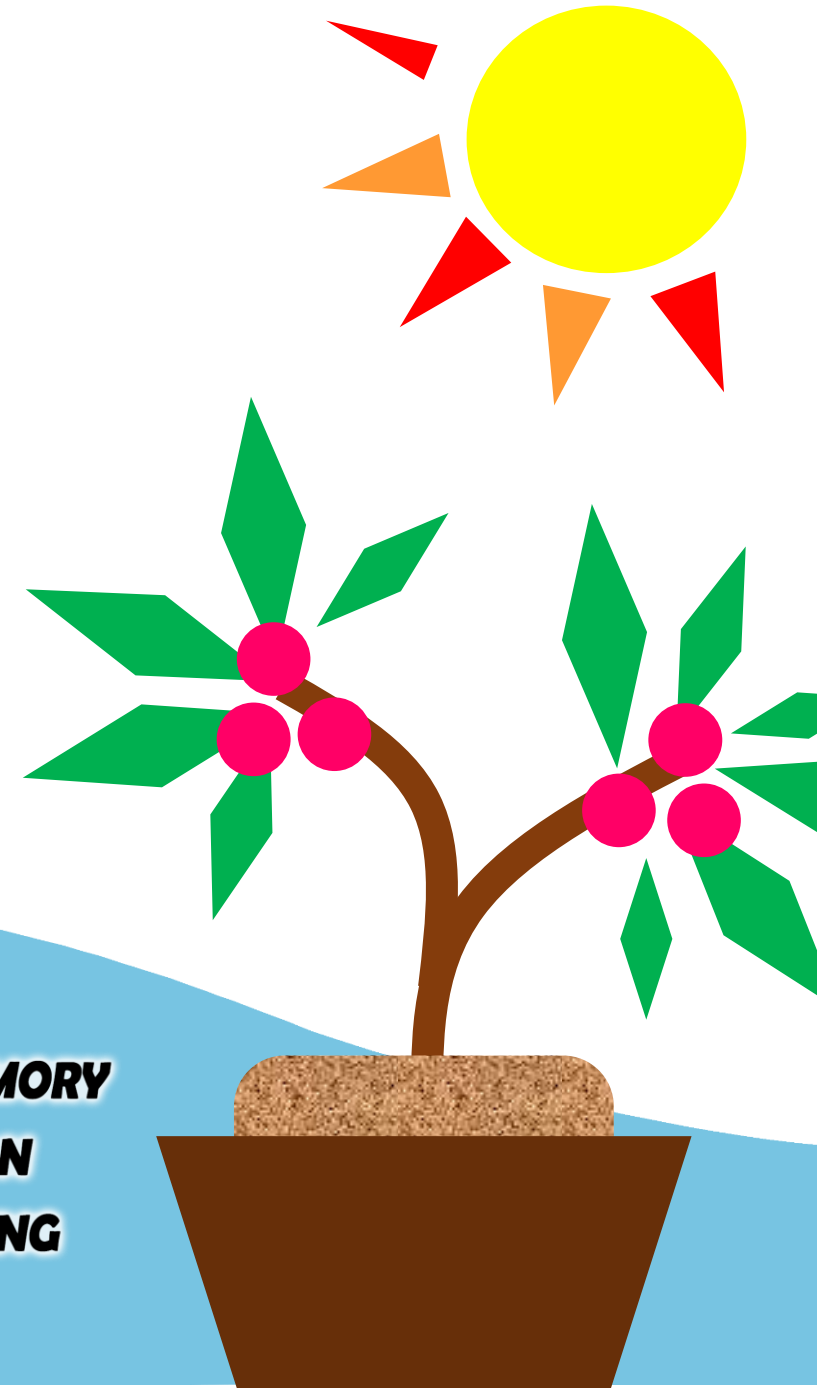
**PART 1: Why This “Equip Parents Series”**

**PART 2: The What & Why of Executive Functions**

**PART 3: Activities, Challenges & Tasks to Strengthen Key Executive Functions**

**PART 4: Working with Crest**

**ORGANISATION**  
**GOAL SETTING WORKING MEMORY**  
**PLANNING & PRIORITISATION**  
**IMPULSE CONTROL SELF-MONITORING**  
**COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY**



# RETREAT

- Derive from the concept of a **religious/spiritual retreat**
- To break **away from day to day routines**
- Step back to reflect and remind about the **bigger picture/purpose**
- Align and motivate the team to **move forward together**

# RETREAT

IN THE CONTEXT OF 2020

- The globalised world has 'retreated' and returned back to their **own national boundaries**... with Singapore as one of the countries.
- Crest Staff are also retreated back to our **own school compound** for many events like Teachers' Day Dinner & Staff Retreat today.

# RETREAT 2020/21

# TACTICAL RETREAT 2020/21

A **tactical retreat** is a type of military operation, generally meaning that to consolidate forces, to occupy ground that is more easily defended or force the enemy to overextend to secure a decisive victory.

- Re-group/Re-organise
- Re-strategize our plan
- Re-turn to battle

# RETREAT 2020/21

Remind to give attention to or medical care; try to heal or cure.

- Covid-19 is **affecting our relationships** with other people in our communities, our families, our homes and our workplaces.
- Millions of us have **lost some or all of our normal ways of seeing others** and ourselves as we try to **keep each other and ourselves safe**.
- A time for **peace and understanding** and **extra patience**, both with each other and also ourselves.
- **Listen** and **let yourself be listened to**... and most importantly, listen to your loved ones... to their feelings and their needs...

# RETREATED INTO THE OWN HOMES

1. Moving back into a smaller physical space instead of travelling around Singapore or beyond Singapore.
2. Going to a defensive position to re-strategize before going back to fight all the challenges.
3. Reminder to treat ourselves and our family members better.

# **HOME** as an Ideal Space to Strengthen Teenagers' **Executive Functions**

Parents Engagement Activity

13 August 2021

1800 ~ 1930



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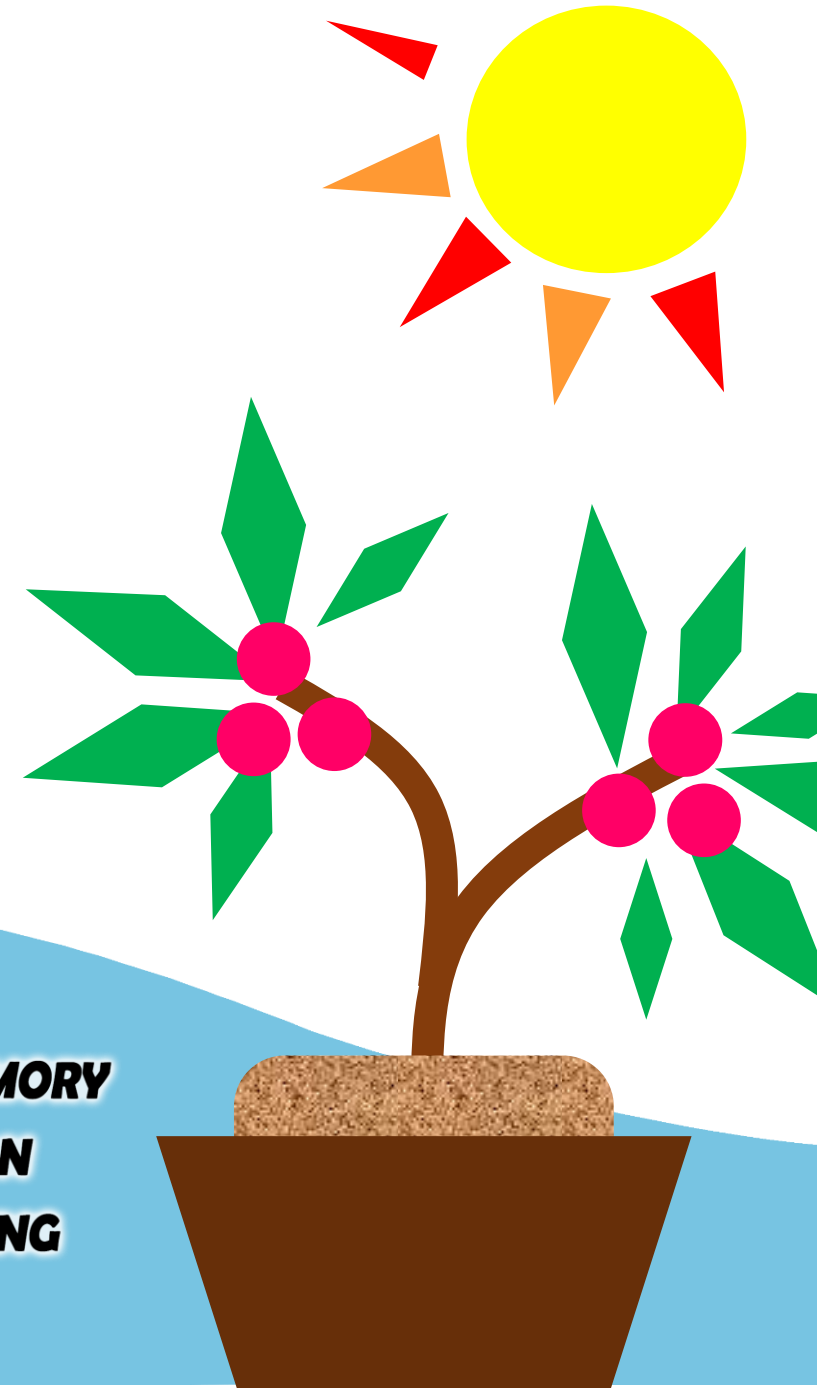
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**LET'S THINK OF HOW WE EAT A BREAD FROM A SMALL PLASTIC BAG OR AN ICE CREAM LIKE THIS?**

**WHAT ARE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS?**

# **SUPPORT OUR ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIFE (ADL)**

**PLANNING**

**ORGANISATION**

**TIME  
MANAGEMENT**

**INHIBITION**

**WORKING  
MEMORY**

**SUSTAINED  
ATTENTION**

**TASK  
SWITCHING**

**FLEXIBILITY**

*Based On A True Event...*

**THE DAY I MISSED MY FLIGHT**

# **WHY DO WE NEED TO HAVE STRONG EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS?**

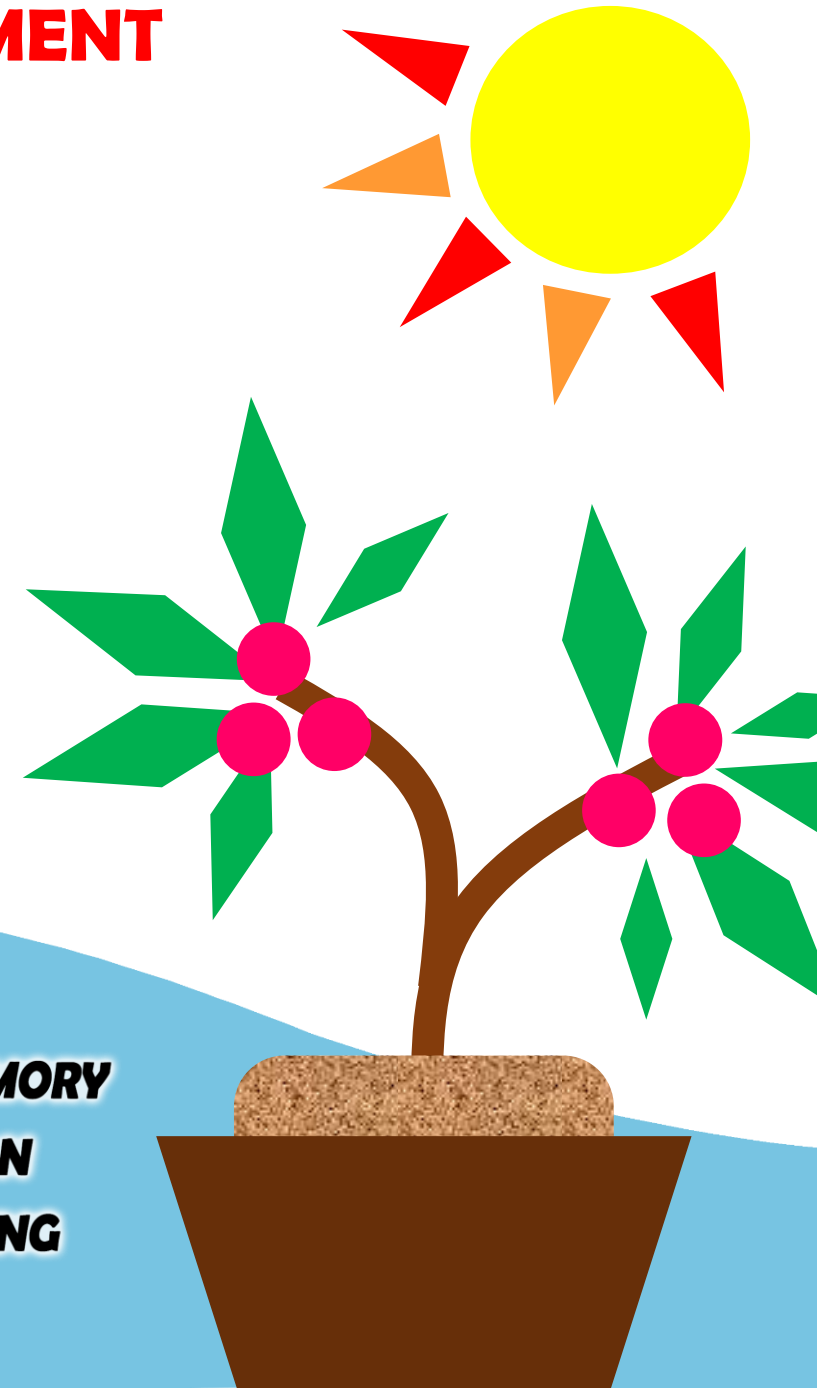
- Situations that involve planning or decision making
- Situations that involve error correction or trouble shooting
- Situations where responses are not well-rehearsed or contain novel sequences of actions
- Dangerous or technically difficult situations
- Situations that require overcoming strong habitual response or resisting temptation

- *EF are the mental processes that enable us to plan, organize, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully.*
- *EF is the ability to manage the total behaviour at different scenarios of our daily lives.*
- *Any weakness in EF will cause a downward spiral in our behaviour and emotions.*

# DESIGNING AN **EXPLICITLY PRO-EF ENVIRONMENT** IN THE COMFORT OF THE **HOMES**

Home is an important space for EF to be strengthened. Parents is encouraged to be conscious and deliberate in creating opportunities involving EF-reinforcing Activities, Challenges & Tasks, especially during long weekends or term breaks for the children to learn.

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# **WHY IS THE TERM EXECUTIVE FUNCTION GAINING ATTENTION IN RECENT YEARS?**

Because there is a growing concern over teenagers lacking in executive functions to face the complex adult world.



# **Environment-Induced Executive Dysfunction**

## **Lifestyle Changes e.g. Prolonged Interaction with(in) Technology within Family Units**

- Absence of immersion into real-world scenarios, possibly leading to limited development of one's EF.
- The real-world is a school of hard-knocks leading to the shaping of EF.
- Internet-borne culture of instant gratification

# **Environment-Induced Executive Dysfunction**

- **Childhood Experiences**

- Limited attention given to children due to need to work hard during phases of the earlier childhood.
- Childhood trauma due to sudden death of family members, parents separation etc.

# **Cognitive Disability-Induced Executive Dysfunction**

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** – Problems with emotional regulation lead to inappropriate outbursts.
- **Autism** – for instance some of them pay attention to minor details, but have trouble seeing how these details fit into a bigger picture.
- And others such as **Attention Deficit Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder**

# IS MY CHILD WEAK IN EF?

There is a professional toolkit to assess your child but the school is not using it yet. We are still doing by observations for patterns through our everyday interactions with them. You may use a simple questionnaire to determine your child's EF ability in this [link](#) (page 4).

# WHAT IF MY CHILD IS WEAK IN EF?

It is never too late to strengthen the child's EF. At least you are here to understand it better and in fact, you are here at the right time.

# CAN EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS BE TRAINED IN TEENAGE YEARS?

The development of pre-frontal cortex is most significant during adolescent years (which is where your child is at now).

**THE ABILITY TO USE OUR  
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS IS  
LARGELY CONTROLLED BY THE  
PART OF OUR BRAIN CALLED  
PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX.**

# **PRESENTATION FLOW**

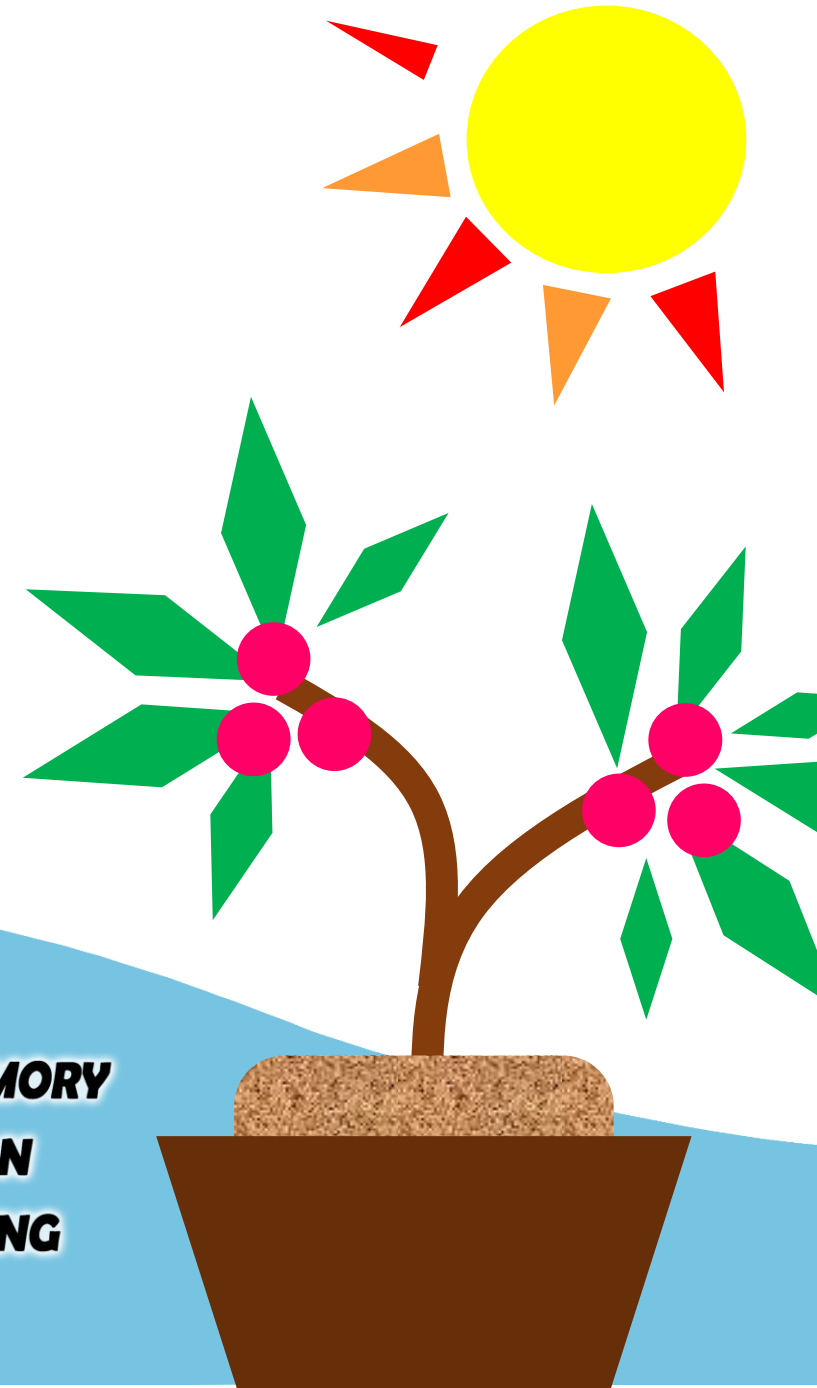
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# OBSERVATIONS IN CREST SECONDARY SCHOOL

- Wednesday has always been the most challenging day of the week to get our students to settle down for lessons since years ago. (Guess why?)
- Doors and false walls have 'holes' in them (No... It isn't termites)
- Students losing Ezlink cards, misplacing wallets and even laptops, forgetting to bring homework (We always use the word "forgetfulness" but that isn't a helpful way to resolve anything).

# THE THREE BELIEFS

## Teachers & Parents to Be **Positive & Hopeful**

- We have to believe that **all children want to succeed** and **suspend judgement**.
- We have to understand that **many students' behavioural issues or inability to perform** are attributed to executive dysfunctions / weak EF (due to adverse home environment or cognitive disability).
- We have to believe that the **students' EF competencies** can be **acquired** and in-turn translating into **positive behavioural patterns** and **performance excellence**.



# BASIC PRINCIPLES OF STRENGTHENING EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

**Cue / Prompt:** The cue triggers your brain to initiate a behaviour. (e.g. can be nagging, can be role modelling, calendar alarm prompt, task list)

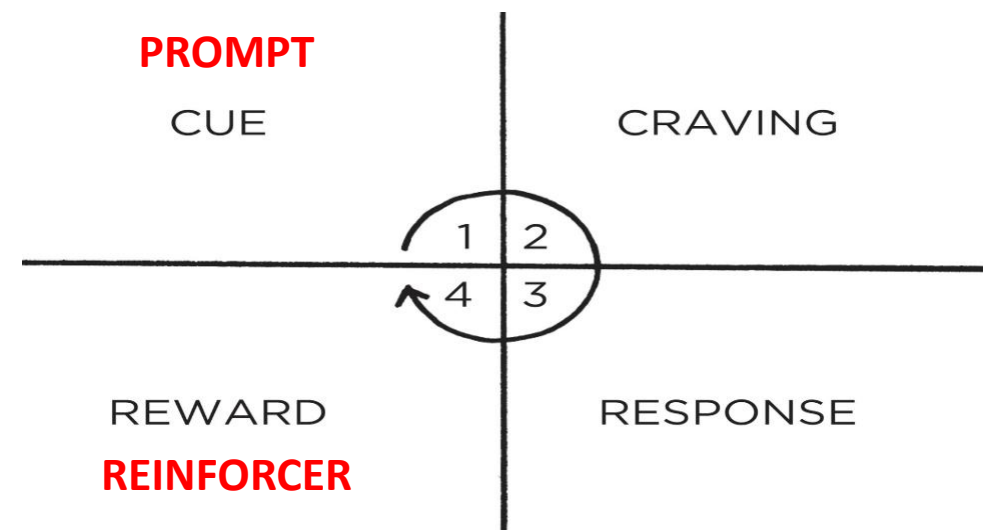
**Craving:** The motivational force to cause someone to take action. Without some sort of motivation or desire, there is no reason to act.

**Response:** This is the actual habit you perform, which can take the form of a thought or an action. If a particular action requires more physical or mental effort than you are willing to expend, then you won't do it.

**Reward / Reinforcer:** The purpose of reward is to satisfy your craving and contentment. Rewards also teach us which actions are worth remembering in the future. Your brain is a reward detector. It closes the feedback loop and complete the habit cycle. (E.g. Praises, freedom to go out and play – must be something the child like)

## FOUR STEP PATTERN IS THE BACKBONE OF HABIT

*Taken from Atomic Habit by James Clear*



# INHIBITORY CONTROL

- The ability to inhibit or control impulsive (or automatic) responses, and create responses by using attention and reasoning
- Inhibition or inhibitory control **blocks behaviors and stops inappropriate automatic reactions**, changing one response for a better, more thought-out response adapted to the situation.

# **STRENGTHENING THE CHILD'S POWER OVER THE "SPACE"**

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Viktor E. Frankl, a neurologist, psychologist and Holocaust survivor

**Trigger / Stimulus**

HOW TO USE  
THIS SPACE?

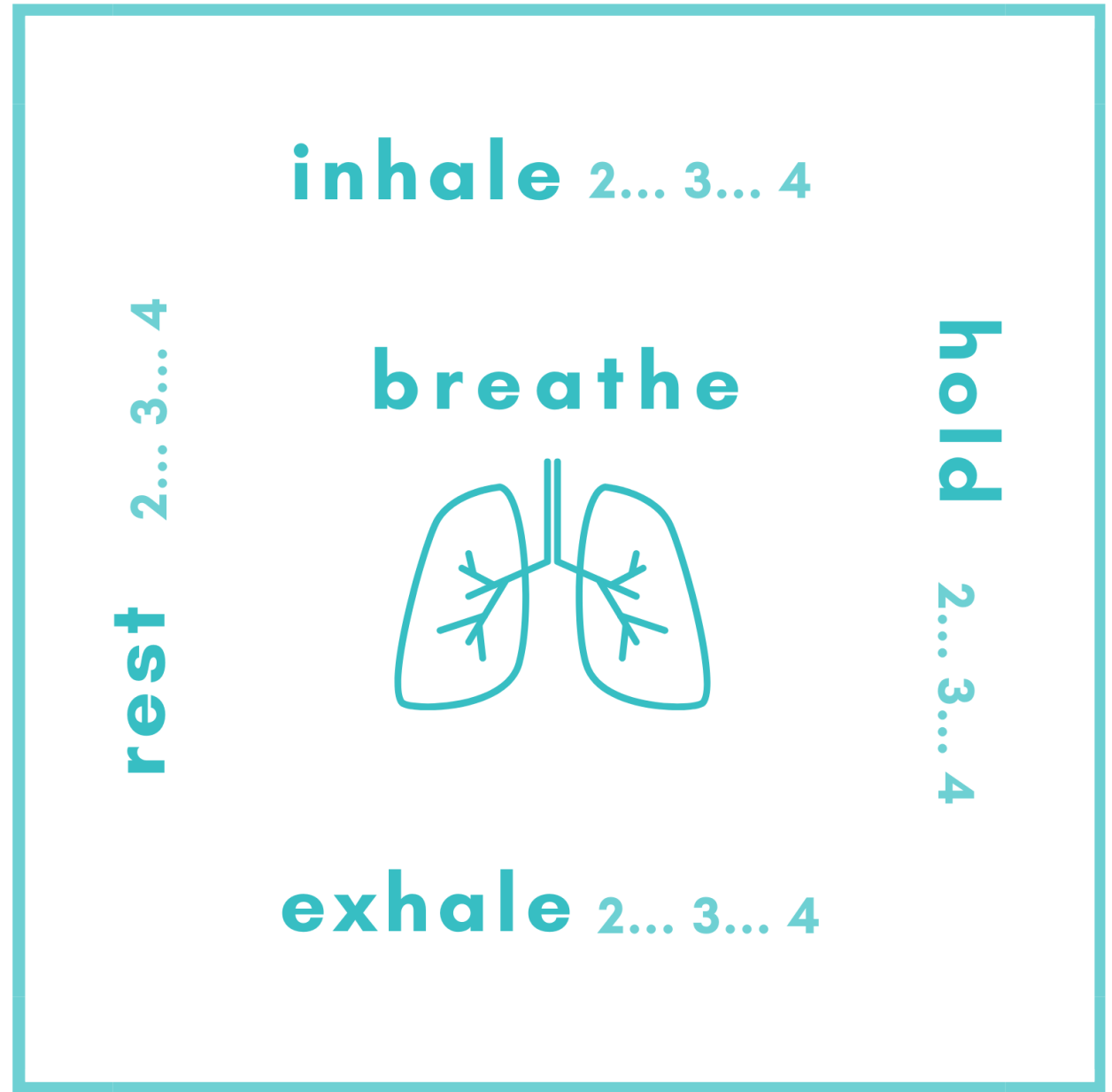
**+/- Response**

Peer Regulation is vital. Often, when you are impulsive, you are just impulsive. You will not know what you should and should not do.

Get child to listen to the emotions after calming down.

# SQUARE BREATHING

<https://blog.zencare.co/square-breathing/>



# 'TURN-BASED' PHYSICAL GAMES

Those more traditional physical games have a way of training for **inhibitory control** as there is no short cut to taking turns and waiting for your turn.

\*Take note of your child's expressions & emotions when its not their turn or when they are losing\*

# TASK SHIFTING

- The ability to respond quickly when switching from one task to another (sometimes unexpectedly)
- Children who lacks the ability to task shift or switch often leads to emotional outburst.

# ORIGAMI SUPPORTS THE STRENGTHENING OF EF IN MANY WAYS

- To fold a piece of paper into a bird, one needs to identify the material, have a goal or an image of the end product, and then take the correct steps needed to implement what is in one's mind. It also prepares one to switch task especially from play to work by calming them down.
- Today, Japanese children usually must learn origami while they are in kindergarten or elementary school. Why do you think so?



# **PLANNING & ORGANISATION**

- The ability to think forward and get things in order to complete a challenging task or many tasks.
- With students equipped with own laptops, guide them on how to create folders & sub-folders to store their files.

When teaching children about organising space, give them a personal space of their own which they can have autonomy and choice to decide what to throw away, what and how to pack and organise them properly etc. Often, students feedback that they do not have their own personal spaces to learn about organisation as there are only shared spaces.

| Morning Routine<br>Alarm: ___ AM |      | Mon. |   | Tue. |   | Wed. |   | Thu. |   | Fri. |   | Sat. |   | Sun. |   |
|----------------------------------|------|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|
| Time                             | Task | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P |
|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
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|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
| <b>Afternoon Routine</b>         |      | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P |
|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
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|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
| <b>Evening Routine</b>           |      | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P | L    | P |
|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
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|                                  |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
| <b>Earned</b>                    |      |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |

L = Leamer / P = Parent

Total =

Leaming places a checkmark in the box once completed. Parent fills out the "P" boxes with one of the following: initials, N/A, or X

Parent initials = Parent agrees    N/A = Parent didn't require    X = Leamer didn't do it

# **HOW DOES FIXING IKEA FURNITURE HELPS WITH EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS?**

What are the alternatives? Lego building blocks?

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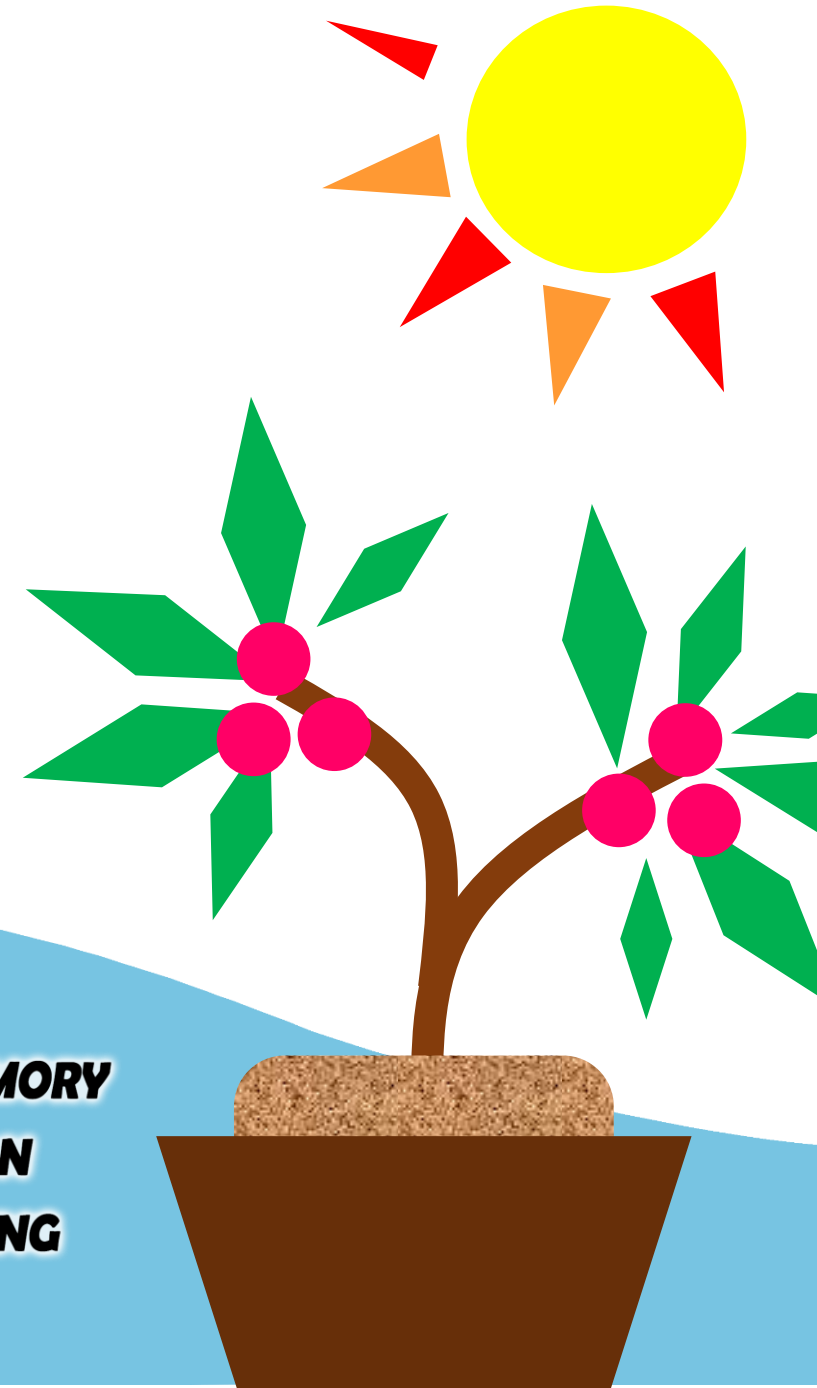
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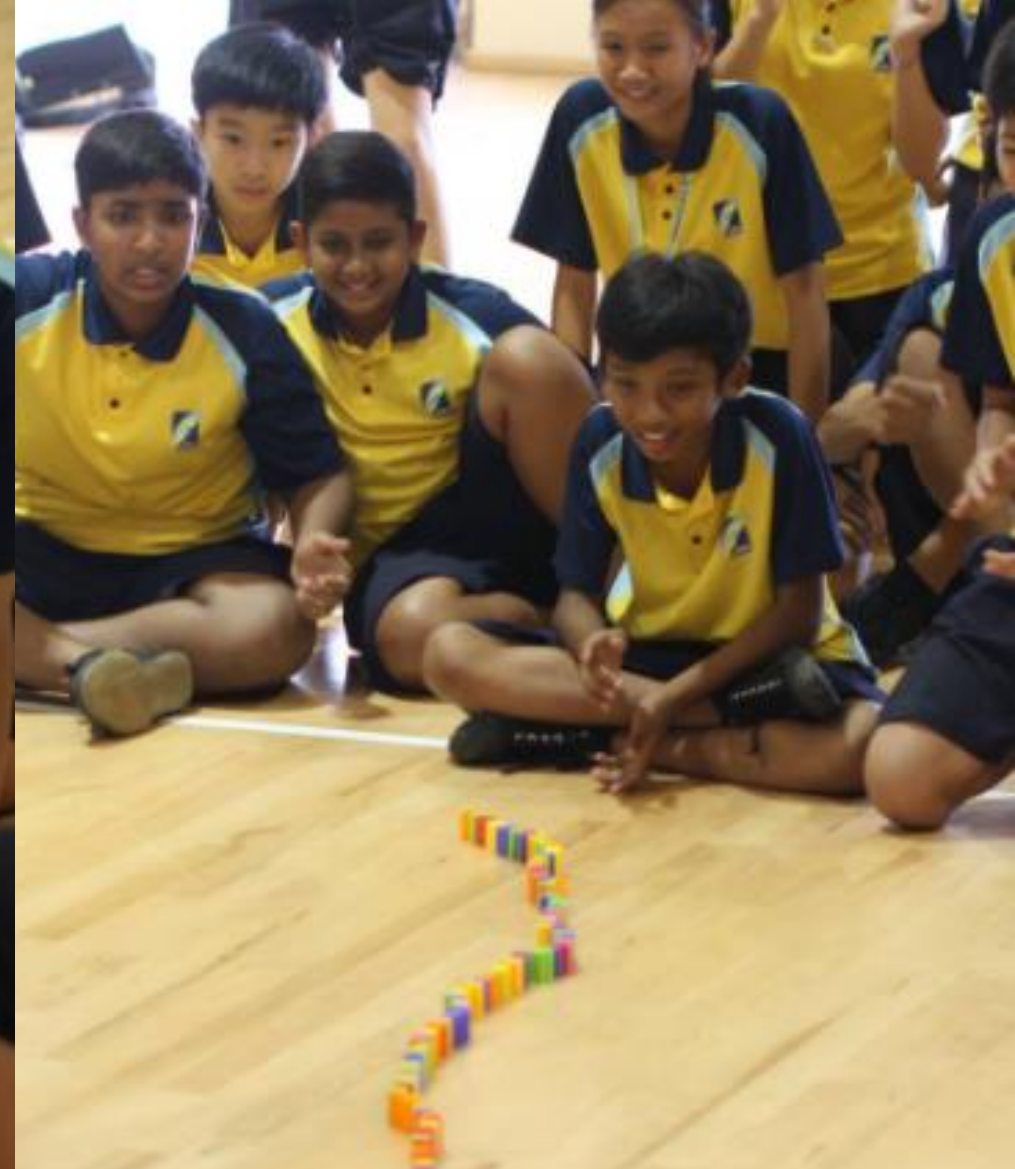
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**WHAT HAVE WE  
BEEN DOING?**

# HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER?

- Consciously Reinforcing Executive Functions in School & At Home through Meaningful Activities, Challenges & Tasks
- Believe in the Children and Understand that They Always Want to Succeed
- Identifying Weaknesses in Executive Functions of Child and Establish Communication Between Parents & Form Teachers to Provide Collaborative Support