What is Task Initiation?



What is Task Initiation? **Task initiation** is a skill that is important for children throughout development in school as well as in personal endeavors. Task initiation is described as the ability to independently begin a task.

Although children and adolescents who struggle with this skill may have some difficulty getting started and seeing a task to completion, this does not mean that they necessarily lack the skills necessary to actually complete the task once prompted or encouraged. For example, a child who has a hard time getting himself to start cleaning his room, or finish this task in a timely manner may do a great job organizing his belongings, even though this task requires prompting and reinforcements to get him to this point. At school, an individual who has difficulty with initiation may appear to lack motivation to do his or her schoolwork or homework.

Task initiation is identified as the "initiation of activity" by Gioia, Isquith, and Guy (2001) as well as by Anderson et al. (2002). Neuropsychological assessment for task initiation includes the Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figures Test. Sustained attention is measured effectively by the Conners' Continuous Performance Test and the Auditory Attention Subtest of the NEPSY-II. Task persistence is often measured by one's performance on certain tasks such as the Block Design Subtest

of the WISC-IV and the Animal Sorting Subtest of the NEPSY-II, where ongoing effort contributes to overall performance.

The Executive Skills Questionnaire has three scales to assess focus. The task initiation scale measures how one gets started on tasks. The sustained attention scale measures the capacity to sustain one's attention and to not be distracted. The task persistence scale measures grit and sustained effort. The BRIEF has a scale called Initiate which measures the capacity to get started on tasks. The Brown ADD Scales have 3 scales that tap into Focus; the Organizing and Activating for Work Scale (taps into task initiation), the Sustaining Attention and Concentration Scale taps into sustaining attention, and the Sustaining Energy and Effort scale (taps into the concept of task persistence).

To Learn More About Task Initiation, Please Visit the Following Links:

LearningWorks For Kids: The premier resource for executive function information, offering a detailed explanation of task initiation, tips for parents, and activities to improve this skill.

CollegeBoard: A compilation of tips on how to build and maintain children's positive study habits.

Family Education: Author provides descriptions of the different types of procrastination that children can use and tips for parents dealing with each of these types of procrastinators.

PBS: An interactive site that allows children to learn

techniques to assess and improve their time management skills.

GreatSchools: This article addresses four simple yet key components of helping a child to manage procrastination tendencies.

Organized Home: This article explains the concept of a family launch pad, which seeks to assist family members in getting their days started on the right foot.

Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Education / CC BY 2.0