

# ***A Workbook to Make Unstuck and On Target a Way of Life:***

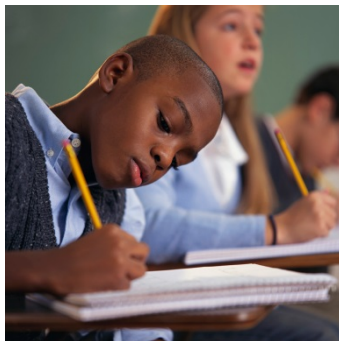


## ***Your Guide to Executive Functioning!***



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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

Welcome to *A Workbook to Make Unstuck and On Target a Way of Life: Your Guide to Executive Functioning!*

## THIS WORKBOOK IS A RESOURCE FOR YOU!

If you are a mom, dad, stepparent, aunt, uncle, grandparent, foster parent, or any other relative or friend of the family of a child who is in *Unstuck and On Target (UOT)* classes – this workbook is for you!

Our goal is to help you and your child get the most out of **UOT**.  
This workbook will help you do that!

### WHY?

Loving and caring adults are key members **of the UOT team!** We know that if we are all doing and saying the same things at home, at school, and with others, we can make a big difference. The more you know about **UOT**, the more you will be able to spend enjoyable time with your family rather than dealing with your child's difficulties! We have tips to offer that can make life better for you and for your child without having to use punishments.



### WHAT MAKES UNSTUCK and ON TARGET SPECIAL?

Many children have trouble with **executive functioning**. UOT is special because it helps the child and family learn how to improve this very important skill.

# What will we learn in UOT?

Unstuck and On Target is specially designed to help with:

- Improving flexibility, planning and organization
- Helping children calm down when they get upset
- Reducing stress at home for both parents and children

## What kind of problems will we focus on?

AT SCHOOL we will focus on: moving from one activity to another, staying on task, completing work, remaining calm when frustrated, and following directions.

AT HOME we will focus on: starting or finishing homework, following directions, controlling behavior when frustrated, and staying calm when plans change.

## What will we not focus on?

We will not focus on teaching schoolwork skills like spelling, math or reading, BUT kids may do better in school because they are learning flexibility, planning and organizational skills.



# Executive Functioning: What is it?

**Executive functioning** is a term used to describe skills that help people control their behavior and reach their goals. Each person's brain controls how well these skills operate. These skills are important because they help us manage all of our life activities. Executive functioning helps us to keep track of time, decide whether or not an idea is good or bad, change our minds if we get new information, handle more than one thing at a time, know when to ask for help, and know how to use that help when we get it!



## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS: FLEXIBILITY, PLANNING, & ORGANIZATION

Our brains are always at work as we go through our day. Our brains help us to manage our daily activities.

In this chapter we will meet a girl named Andrea and see how she tries to use the executive functioning skills of ***flexibility, planning, and organization.***

## A Story You Might Recognize... Andrea's Day

*Andrea is 8 years old and has a hard time with executive functioning. Andrea needs a lot of help to get up in the morning. She is running late today, and she puts on a blouse and skirt that do not match. When there are no bananas for breakfast, Andrea has a tantrum. She refuses to eat the strawberries that her mother offers, and blames her brothers for eating all the bananas (Problems with **Flexibility**) Andrea's mom, Lorraine, struggles to get Andrea to focus on breakfast, but it gets too late and they have to skip the meal.*

*Now Andrea needs to get her school materials ready. Andrea has a book bag, but her homework isn't in it (Problems with **Planning** and **Organization**). She searches the apartment for her homework and stuffs it into the bag. When she arrives in her classroom, she complains loudly to her classmates about her brothers (Problems with **Flexibility**), and doesn't notice that everyone else is listening to the teacher. Her teacher gives her a warning look.*

*The day has just begun and Andrea is already tired.*



**Flexibility, planning, and organization are three skills that are important parts of executive functioning.**  
The next few pages will teach you more about these skills.



## **Now let's focus on what Andrea's mother, Lorraine, might do.**

*When Lorraine woke up this morning, she decided to get up, take a shower and get dressed. When she went to get a banana to eat with her cereal they were all gone! Even though she had just bought bananas the day before, she did not yell at the children for taking all of the bananas – she just used strawberries instead (**Flexibility**).*

*Once the kids had left for school, Lorraine packed her bag with her book and assignment for her night class to make sure it was ready to go when she had to leave later on that day (**Planning and Organization**). Knowing that there would be rush hour traffic on her way to class, Lorraine planned to leave early (**Planning**), but ended up getting stuck in traffic anyway due to an accident on her route. Instead of getting angry, Lorraine decided to take a detour (**Flexibility**). She finally arrived at class just as everyone was sitting down for the lecture, and quietly took out her book and assignment so she did not disturb her classmates and the teacher.*

On a day to day basis, we rarely stop and name each step we are taking. It feels automatic, and yet for our children these steps are not automatic yet. Just think of all of the actions we take and decisions we make in any given day, or even an hour. It can be overwhelming and certainly there are times in which we feel that our own **flexibility, planning** or **organization** is poor.

For some children, this is a constant challenge that makes life very hard them and for you. It exhausts them, makes them feel badly about themselves, and can make them withdrawn and angry and not want to interact with teachers and friends. Children may spend a great deal of time and energy feeling **STUCK** and **OFF TARGET**.

**BUT THERE IS HOPE!** Even children who have a hard time with executive functioning can learn to be flexible and stay unstuck. With effort, patience and tools from UOT, children can learn to be flexible, create goals, plan to achieve the goals, stay focused on those goals, and complete the goals. This is the focus of UOT- to improve children's **executive functioning**.

# The BIG Three: Flexibility, Planning, and Organization

UOT focuses on *flexibility*, *planning* and *organization*. If our children can do well in these three areas, they will have a better chance for success in school, joy with friends, and happiness at home.

## FLEXIBILITY

**shifting from one activity to another, accepting a different way of seeing or doing things, and going with the flow when unexpected things happen**

Things do not always go as we hope or plan. At times like these, we have to adapt to these changes, even if it is not exactly what we wanted. It is hard for inflexible people to accept unexpected changes, stop arguing, and accept rules they disagree with.

## PLANNING

**developing, carrying out, and modifying a plan of action**

Many times we have a plan for our activities, such as getting ready for school or work in the morning, getting homework done, cleaning the house or taking care of the yard, or bigger projects like planning a birthday party or family reunion. People with planning problems often fail to complete tasks that have more than one step.

## ORGANIZATION

**keeping track of materials, understanding the main point, seeing the big picture, and knowing what is the top priority at any given time**

Some people have trouble managing a lot of information at once. They can do very well with step-by-step tasks, but get overwhelmed when they have to do big projects or get things done without someone helping them. They have trouble knowing what is important to focus on and are easily distracted.

# How does UOT help?

*Unstuck and On Target* teaches these three primary skills:

## 1. FLEXIBILITY

how to handle unexpected events and unwanted demands more easily



## 2. PLANNING: MAKING AND CHECKING PLANS

how to plan the necessary steps to accomplish a goal or task and monitor that work



## 3. ORGANIZATION: GOAL SETTING

how to see the "big picture," make long term goals, and avoid distractions along the way





# How does UOT work?

*Unstuck and On Target* uses these four specific teaching methods:

## **1. UOT VOCABULARY**

**Memorizing and repeatedly using a set of key words or phrases**

Your child needs to hear the same words and phrases over and over before he will be able to use them to change his behavior. See the Glossary of UOT Vocabulary on page 69 for these key words.

## **2. TEACHING BY DOING**

**Using the vocabulary and showing the behavior that they are learning**

When children see a role model doing what they are doing, they will pick up the skills more easily.

## **3. MAKING IT FUN**

**Playing games, doing interactive activities, and taking time to laugh**

We all learn better and teach better when we are having fun.

## **4. VISUALS**

**Providing reminders that children can see for themselves rather than constantly being told what to do**

You can help by putting the UOT magnet up in your home.



# How does UOT work at school?

Over 20 sessions, your child will meet with a teacher and a small group of other children who are working on executive functioning, too. In each session, your child will be involved in different types of fun activities to help understand what each of the UOT vocabulary words means, when to use these words, and how to use them.

Teachers will make it fun, give pictures, and use the phrases themselves.

In fact, everyone in school will be encouraged to use the same vocabulary in the same way to help your child see that all of us use these same steps as we make decisions.

(At least that is what we are *trying* to do – none of us are perfect, but we can all do our best!)



# Your Job...

## Learn the UOT Vocabulary and Use It

There will be times when your child needs to be more flexible, and you will be your child's best teacher by showing how you can be flexible when you get frustrated or disappointed. Remember how Lorraine responded when there weren't any bananas? She didn't complain or throw a fit – she just ate strawberries instead.

Let your child see that you all are using the same skills in your day to day life. Use the right vocabulary for the right situations. The more you use the vocabulary, the easier it will be for your child to learn when and how to use these words.

**Remember: This is an investment.**

It is hard work to teach these skills, but doing so will save time in the long run and help your child to grow up to be happy and independent in the future!

## Change the Environment

There are many times when it is important that we change the environment to make it easier for children to be successful so they don't get overloaded. That may mean making sure a room is quiet, bringing headphones, giving your child breaks from homework, writing down directions so your child doesn't have to keep track of them, letting your child do homework and then eat dinner, etc.

Children who feel overloaded or overwhelmed find it more difficult to learn anything and will keep having the same problem behaviors. Chapter 6 of this book, *Tips for Reducing Stress in Your Child and in Your Home*, will give you lots of ideas about how to make things easier on your child and yourself.



## Help With the UOT Homework

As with other assignments at school, you will be asked to help your child at home to understand and practice the UOT vocabulary. Each week home practice sheets will be sent home from school. They are also provided in this workbook, so you can see how the UOT school work links to what you do at home. The next two pages are the first two Home Practice sheets.



## Share How UOT Helps You, Too

If **flexibility**, **planning**, or **organization** are hard for you, talk with your child about that. Talk about how you have had to learn how to adapt.

Show your child how you cope with your grown up responsibilities. Do you make lists? Do you ever get stuck when things don't go your way? How do you remember things, do you have a special trick?

You do not have to be perfect. Try to let your child help you with flexibility and planning. Kids love to learn by teaching a skill to an adult.

When you fail, that is okay! Say so and promise to do better next time.

And don't forget to celebrate the successes that both you and your child have as you build these new skills – this is hard work, and both you and your child deserve to be recognized for doing it!

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 1

**Dear Parents:**

**Your child had their first group meeting of Unstuck and On Target today. Unstuck and On Target will teach your child to be more flexible, set goals and make plans. We will be meeting almost every week this school year. We will be having fun in group, but also working on new skills. Your child will need some extra help from you to be able to use these skills at home. Every week we meet, you will get a Home Practice sheet like this one so you can help your child use the Unstuck and On Target vocabulary and skills at home. It will help if you treat Home Practices as fun and positive activities.**

**I'm really looking forward to working with you and your child this year. Please let me know if you have any questions.**

**Sincerely,**

---

**Your child's group leader**

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of today's group:** Your child helped create a Code of Conduct today, and the group played a game to get to know each other. The whole group is working together to earn a prize.

**What you can do at home:**

1. Ask your child to tell you about his/her group.
  - Can your child remember any of the group members' names?
  - Anything they like or share in common?
  - Anyone they'd like to see outside of group?
2. Help your child practice good behavior.
  - For example, say to your child:
    - *"Thank you for listening."*
    - *"You worked really hard on that!"*
    - *"Great job following directions!"*

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 2

Your child had their second session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Summary:** Your child learned today about setting goals and making plans. Your child learned how to use a simple phrase (or routine) called Goal, Why, Plan, Do, Check (GWPDC). Your child will come back to this topic again in their 15<sup>th</sup> session.

Here's an example of how GWPDC might be used at home:

**GOAL:** To eat together as a family once this weekend.

**WHY:** We are hungry and actually enjoy talking to each other once in a while. 😊

**PLAN:**

1. See if we can find a time that works
2. Figure out what we want to eat and what's in the fridge
3. One of us sets the table
4. One of us cooks
5. One of us cleans up

**DO:** Follow the plan (Let's eat!)

**CHECK:** How did it go? Do we need a different plan?

**What you can do at home:**

1. Help your child see what it is like setting goals and making plans by being a model. Say your plans and goals out loud.
  - For example:
    - "My **goal** is for us to get to \_\_\_\_\_ on time."  
(church/school/Scouts/practice/Grandma's)
    - "Well, this isn't how I **planned** it"
    - "My **goal** is to make it to Back to School Night this year. I **plan** to leave work early."
    - "My **plan** to go to the grocery store tonight is still possible."





# What's Next?

One of the first things your child will work on in school is learning how to calm down when he gets upset. The next chapter explains how you can help him practice calming down. After that, the next three chapters go into more depth with the UOT approach to **FLEXIBILITY, PLANNING** and **ORGANIZATION**.

The final chapter gives times on how to make life less stressful at home for you and your child, so you both have the energy and time to learn UOT and make these new habits last.

★ Although improved Executive Functioning will play a key role in helping your children overcome their difficulties, it cannot fix everything. ★

We nevertheless believe that you and your child will greatly benefit from UOT.

## THANK YOU FOR JOINING THIS JOURNEY!



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# Chapter 2:

## Managing Difficult Feelings

When kids with executive functioning problems get stuck or overwhelmed, it can take them a long time to calm down. There are lots of ways to help children cope with bad feelings and to calm down. These “coping strategies,” or ways to handle bad feelings, are important for your child to know. She is being taught about feelings and coping at school, so all you have to do is help her use what she has learned at home. Here are some things you can do to help.

**Talk about your own feelings and connect how you feel with what you do.** See Home Practice 3.

**Use situations in TV shows, movies, comic books, etc. to point out and name feelings and how people deal with these feelings.**

For example, “That boy looked really upset and then he took those deep breaths and looked a lot calmer.”

**Pay attention to the peaceful/happy times.**

Help your child name positive feelings during happy times that are peaceful and non-stressful.

**Sometimes you need to wait out your child’s storm.**

Come back after she is calm and talk about what helped her calm down. Your flexibility and patience will set a good example!



“Photo of Harry and School Friends” by Beth Kanter is licensed under CC BY 2.0 / Cropped from original

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 3

Your child had their third session of Unstuck and On Target today.

**Session Summary:** Your child learned today about how thoughts, feelings and actions are connected. We also worked on figuring out how strong your feelings are. If your child can identify the emotion they are feeling and how strong it is, he/she can make better choices about what to do next.



**What you can do at home:**

1. Identify your own feelings in front of your child at least once a day. For example:
  - “I felt so **proud** of you today.”
  - “I feel **happy** when I get to talk to Aunt Nina. She always makes me laugh.”
  - “I feel **sad** sometimes when I miss Grandma.”
2. Try to use a variety of feelings, like:
  - Happy
  - Frustrated
  - Blah
  - Sad
  - Worried
  - Disappointed
  - Proud
3. Try to connect your thoughts, feelings and actions. Or, you can do this while watching TV or reading with your child about the characters:
  - “When I **think** you might hurt yourself, I **feel** scared and I yell.”
  - “He **thought** his Mom was **mad** at him, so he was **scared** and he hid from her.”
  - “When I saw you eat all of your dinner, I **felt** **happy** and I decided we should have dessert.”

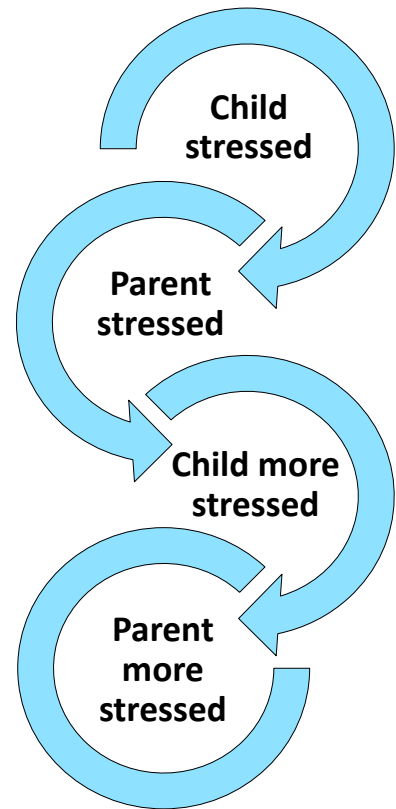
# Managing Difficult Feelings

## **Make something special for calming.**

Like a calming kit that has the coping cards your child made at school and other things that help like squish balls, crayons, and comic books. Praise your child for using coping strategies.

## **If you mess up, lose your temper or don't follow-through on a plan, forgive and be patient with yourself.**

We aren't perfect and showing forgiveness of yourself helps your child forgive his own mistakes.



## **Discover and use your own coping strategies too.**

Chances are pretty good that when your child needs a coping strategy you need one too. Just like a cold, stress is contagious. Being calm is also contagious. Try to develop tricks that can help you to stay calm when your child is upset. Does taking 5 deep breaths help? Does handling worry beads or a trinket calm you down? What about picturing a time when your child made you really happy? Talk to your child about how you cope.

See Home Practice 4.

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 4

Your child had their fourth session of Unstuck and On Target today.

**Session Summary:** Your child learned today about how to calm down when feeling upset, disappointed or frustrated. Your child made coping strategy cards to use as reminders to try to do things to calm down.

## What you can do at home:

1. Identify your own coping strategies in front of your child a couple of times this week. For example:
  - *“I am frustrated that this isn’t working today! I’m going to **ask for help.**”*
  - *“I am disappointed we aren’t going to get to do that today. I’m going to **take a deep breath, and think about how fun it will be to do it tomorrow.**”*
2. Take a look at your child’s coping strategy cards. These are reminders for things your child can do to calm down. Ask your child which strategy they think will work the best. You can also remind your child to bring the cards to situations/places that trigger meltdowns.
  - *“Sometimes you get frustrated in the grocery store. How about bringing your **coping cards** with you and trying some of the strategies?”*
  - Reward your child anytime he or she tries a coping strategy.
3. Your child is going to teach you to try a deep breathing script (see below). It should only take a few minutes, and you might be surprised how helpful it is.

## Deep Breathing Script

Focus on your stomach, and imagine a small balloon inside. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, imagining the balloon getting slowly bigger. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then slowly breathe out through your mouth, imagining the balloon gently getting smaller. Repeat five or more times.





# Chapter 3:

## Teaching Your Child to be More Flexible

### OVERVIEW

**In this chapter, you will learn...**

- *What is flexible thinking?*
- *Why is flexible thinking important?*
- *The key vocabulary for improving flexible thinking including:*
  - *“Be Flexible”*
  - *“Stuck and Unstuck”*
  - *“Plan A / Plan B”*
  - *“Compromise”*
  - *“Big Deal / Little Deal”*
  - *“Choice / No Choice”*
- *How to make being flexible fun*



### **A Story You Might Recognize... Michael's Inflexibility**

*Michael is 8 years old. He is a very energetic and curious boy who is great at math. He also gets frustrated very easily. He likes to know the plan for the day, and when plans change he gets very upset. When he is playing with other kids he likes to make the rules and can get very angry when other children don't agree with his rules. He does not like to read and tries to avoid homework that involves reading. He has a difficult time with sharing and he tends to be bossy, and other children get annoyed with him. He has a lot of tantrums and meltdowns and his mother and grandmother feel that these episodes are very difficult to control.*

# What is Flexible Thinking and Why is Being Flexible Important?

- Physical flexibility allows us to bend and stretch our bodies without breaking.
- **Flexible thinking** allows children to think of a new solution to a problem and to keep their cool when things don't go the way we planned.
- Flexible thinking also helps children to compromise when they can't have exactly what they want.
- For many children, developing flexible thinking helps with making friends, learning in school, and getting along in the family.
- As children become more flexible, they will get better at handling stress or disappointment, and they won't have to depend on you so much to solve problems.

## *Children who struggle with mental flexibility may struggle with...*

- Changes in plans
- Rules they disagree with
- Challenges that they were not expecting
- Having to compromise or negotiate
- Trying a new skill
- Working on things that are difficult for them





# “Be Flexible”



***Being flexible*** means you can change your ideas, do something different than what you thought you would do, think about something differently, and keep an open mind.

Home Practice 5 tells you a game you can play to help your child with being flexible.

When children are flexible, they will have many choices. You can use phrases like:

- ***“Let’s think of a way we can **be flexible** in case our first plan doesn’t work out.”***
- ***“You can’t always get what you want so you need to **be flexible**.”***
- ***“You can **be flexible**, you’ve done it before.”***
- ***“When you shared your game, you were **being flexible**, and it worked!”***



This icon represents the **“Flexible”** vocabulary!

Whenever you see it, there’s a good opportunity to help your child recognize the benefits of being flexible in challenging or unexpected situations!



# Some Examples of How to Use “Be Flexible”

## When Something Has to Wait

You could say, “I was really hoping to clean up the house this morning, but we don’t have time before we have to leave to go to school. Instead of getting upset about it, I am going to *be flexible* and do it later today.”

## Playing With a Friend

When a child wants to draw, but her friend wants to play outside, you could say, “How can you *be flexible* and still reach your goal of having fun with your friend?”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Wants to Take a Favorite Toy to School but it is Against the Rules

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 5

Your child had their fifth session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Your child learned today about how flexible objects are stronger, and learned that sometimes it is better to be flexible.

## What you can do at home:

1. This week's home practice is easy. Just try to use the word "flexible" as often as you can. Identify flexible objects, and point out times when flexible is better or stronger. For example:
  - *"It's a good thing this rubber band is **flexible**, or it would have broken!"*
  - *"Wouldn't this be faster if it were **flexible**?"*
2. If you'd like to do more, see who can think of the most flexible things/Superheroes/substances, or play "I Spy" Something Flexible the next time you are waiting in line, in the car or on the bus.

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 6

Your child had their sixth session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Do you remember playing with Silly Putty when you were a kid? In group today, your child learned the story behind silly putty, which was thrown away as useless by the man who created it as an alternative to rubber when it didn't work for that purpose. Someone else came along with an open mind and figured out a way to make it into a toy, showing students that they can also be flexible with their minds and make good things happen.

## What you can do at home:

1. Being flexible is not just about bending; it is also about:
  - changing an idea,
  - considering new information,
  - accepting an unexpected change or event or
  - changing what you are doing.
2. Distinguish between *flexibility* and *giving in*.
  - “Being **flexible** helps me get some of what I want.”
3. Notice times when you or your child were flexible and good things happened. For example:
  - “Is there another way to solve this problem? There’s more than one way to get the right answer.”
  - “When you did \_\_\_\_\_, I could tell that you were being **flexible**, and it worked!”
  - “Thank you for being **flexible** with \_\_\_\_\_, it made things much easier.”
4. Talk about times when someone on TV, in the news, or in a book was flexible and good things happened. For example:
  - “Did you notice how he was **flexible**, and could still get what he wanted?”
  - “What if she hadn’t been **flexible** then, what would have happened?”

# “Stuck and Unstuck”



Being **stuck** is when you feel you only have one choice of action. Doing the same thing over and over again is unlikely to solve the problem and is likely to make you feel bad. You have to do something different to get **unstuck**.

Think of the last time your car got stuck in the snow or mud. Pressing on the gas harder only got you more stuck. In the same way, your child will often have to do something different to get unstuck. **You can use phrases like:**

- *“Are you **stuck**? How can you get **unstuck**?”*
- *“I am **stuck**! Can you help me get **unstuck**?”*
- *“When you are **stuck** your only have one option- to be **stuck**. That is no fun!”*
- *“Your face and your voice tell me that you’re feeling **stuck**. I want to help. Let’s think of something that we can do to help you get **unstuck**.”*
- *“I saw you getting **stuck**, and then you got **unstuck**. Great job!”*



This icon represents the “**Stuck**” vocabulary! Whenever you see it, there’s a good opportunity to help your child recognize being “stuck” on something and think of ways to get “unstuck!”



# Some Examples of How to Use “Stuck and Unstuck”

## Playing a Game

Your child wants to go first in a board game, but someone else rolled the higher number. You could ask, “Are you **stuck**? How can you **be flexible** and still reach your goal of having fun in the game?” Help your child understand that she might go first the next round, which is better than having to stop the game.

## Bad Traffic

During a traffic jam you mention that you are feeling **stuck** and ask your child to help you get **unstuck**. Or talk out loud about how to get unstuck by taking a different way home. Or take advantage of being stuck in traffic as an opportunity to play a word game, listen to music, or make up a story.

## Write Your Own: Your Child Can’t Find His Favorite Pair of Shoes

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 7

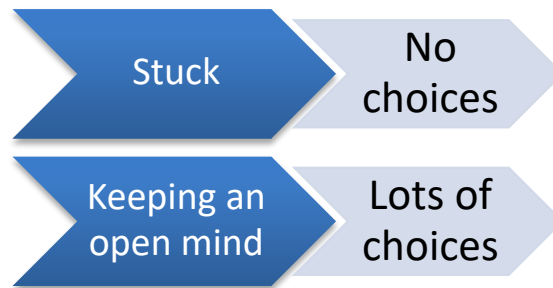
Your child had their seventh session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** You child learned that when we are *flexible*, we never actually get *stuck* because we always have a choice. People who are flexible *keep an open mind*.

**What you can do at home:**

1. Remind your child that when he or she is *stuck* on something that can't happen, there are no choices at all, but when he or she keeps an *open mind*, there are lots of choices:



2. Distinguish between *keeping an open mind* and *giving in*.
  - “I always have more choices when I **keep an open mind**. Having more choices is not the same as giving in.”
3. Identify times when you, characters in books or people on TV were *stuck* or didn't *keep an open mind* and bad things happened. For example:
  - “I got really **stuck** on having our favorite pasta for dinner tonight, so I went to two different stores looking for noodles because we were out. Now dinner is late. What would have happened if I had **kept an open mind**?”
  - “I've never eaten that before, and I think I won't like it. Should I **keep an open mind** and give it a try?”



# “Plan A / Plan B”

A/B

**Plan A** is the way you want to do something. But, Plan A will not always work out. So you will need a **Plan B**!

The phrase “Plan A/Plan B” is used to communicate that it is normal that things don’t go exactly as you plan, and sometimes it is important to switch plans. Using Plan A/Plan B helps children understand that it is not their fault when something goes wrong or doesn’t go in the way they expected. Having a Plan B allows your child to keep an open mind, maintain choices, avoid getting stuck, and accomplish goals.

You can use phrases like:

- *“What’s your **Plan A**? Do you have a **Plan B**, so we can accomplish our goal?”*
- *“Can you help me come up with a **Plan B**?”*
- *“Your **Plan A** isn’t working, you need a **Plan B**.”*
- *“You used your **Plan B**! You were being flexible!”*
- *“I love that you have a **Plan A** and a **Plan B**. That’s great planning.”*

A/B

This icon represents the “Plan A/Plan B” vocabulary! Whenever you see it, there’s a good opportunity to help your child recognize that if the first plan doesn’t work, there are other options (Plans B, C, D, etc.) available!



# Some Examples of How to Use “Plan A / Plan B”

## Breakfast

You could say, “There is no milk for my cereal this morning and I am getting **stuck**. I guess it’s time for me to come up with a **Plan B** and make toast for breakfast. It’s not what I wanted the most, but I will get some breakfast that way and I won’t have to sit here being mad and hungry. I’ll buy milk at the store today so I can have cereal tomorrow.”

## When You Make a Mistake While Doing a Chore or Errand

If you take the bus all the way to the bank before realizing that you left the check that you need to deposit on the kitchen table, you could say, “Let’s **be flexible** and come up with a **Plan B**.” Help the child see your mistake as an “opportunity” for a different solution. “Since we’re here, why don’t we stop by the library and get a book to look at on the way home on the bus.”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Wants to Play Basketball, but all of the Courts at the Playground are Taken

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 8

Your child had their eighth session of Unstuck and On Target today.

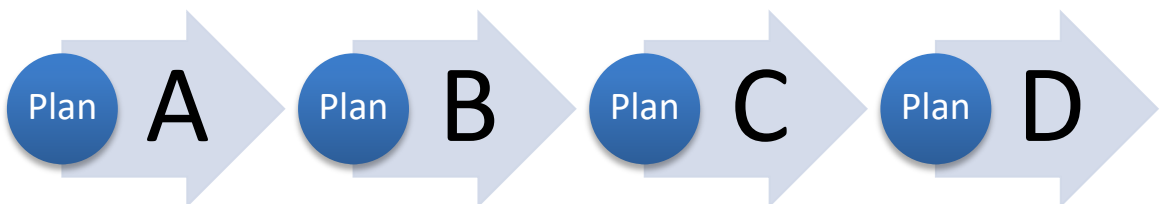


**A/B**

**Session Summary:** Your child learned a new vocabulary word today, *Plan A/Plan B*. It is a powerful word that can help when something has not gone according to plan. Instead of blaming others or him or herself for the failure, your child can recognize that the plan itself was the problem and now there is an opportunity to make a new plan, or even multiple new plans. There are many plans and options (*Plans B, C, D, etc.*) when things don't go according to plan.

## What you can try at home:

- The next time you have to come up with a *Plan B*, share your thoughts with your child out loud. For example:
  - “*I planned to wear my red sweater today, but it is in the wash. I chose this one for my Plan B.*”
- Ask your child to help you come up with a *Plan B* when you can:
  - “*This milk is spoiled. I need a Plan B for breakfast! What should my Plan B be?*”
- Praise your child for *keeping an open mind*, being *flexible*, or coming up with a *Plan B*.
  - “*I love the way you **kept an open mind** and came up with a **Plan B!***”
  - “*You were **SO flexible**, you came up with a **Plan C!***”
- If you'd like to do more, try the “Plan Z” game.
  - Come up with a situation, and then take turns coming up with new, funny and increasingly outrageous plans. For example:
    - (you) Plan A: Have pizza for dinner
    - (your child) Plan B: Have spaghetti for dinner
    - (you) Plan C: Skip dinner, and keep the house awake all night with my rumbling stomach
    - (your child) Plan D: Eat dinner in our pajamas in bed
    - (you) Plan E: Sneak into our neighbor's house and eat their dinner
    - (your child) Plan F: Eat everything in the fridge for dinner
    - (you) Plan G: Eat dinner upside down
    - And so on, for as long as you can keep it up....
  - They don't have to be good plans, the point is to really show how many choices we have when we *keep an open mind* and don't get *stuck* with our *Plan A*.



# “Compromise”



**Compromise** means that two people each give up part of what they want so that they can reach an agreement. It does not mean giving up all of what you want.

It is important when using this word with a child that you make sure you are proposing a true compromise in which you both get part of what you want.

You can use phrases like:

- *“Let’s **compromise**. You go first, but then it will be my turn.”*
- *“We can **compromise** so we both get some of what we want.”*
- *“What’s a good **compromise**?”*
- *“Thank you for **compromising** with your friend. You both got part of what you wanted and were able to keep having a good time.”*



This icon represents the “**Compromise**” vocabulary! Whenever you see it, there’s a good opportunity to help your child learn strategies for negotiating with others so both people get part of what they want!



# Some Examples of How to Use “Compromise”

## Playing with Friends

When a child wants to play tag, but his friend wants to play with Legos, you could say, “Can you **compromise** and play freeze tag first and then Legos? Then you will both get what you want in the end, which is better than not getting what you want at all.”

## When a Child Doesn’t Want to do Something

You could say, “You look **stuck** right now. My **Plan A** was to have you clean up the living room and help me cook for Grandma’s dinner tonight. Can we make a **compromise**? How about you clean up, but I do the cooking?”

## Write Your Own: When Your Child Wants a Birthday Present That is Out of Your Budget

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 9

Your child had their ninth session of Unstuck and On Target today.

A/B



**Session Summary:** Your child learned that if people *compromise* when they want different things, then they each get something that they want, and something is better than nothing. Your child learned three ways to *compromise* today:

**Each person gets part:**

•Since we both have different ideas, we will combine our ideas so we each get part of what we want.

For example:

•Your child wants to play catch, but his friend wants to play on the slide. They could play catch on the slide.

**Pick something new:**

•Since we both have different ideas, we will pick something new that we both like.

For example:

•They both like hide and seek, so they decide to play that instead.

**Take turns:**

•Since we both have different ideas, we will take turns with our ideas- we will do your idea, then my idea.

For example:

•First they play on the slide, then they play catch.

**What you can try at home:**

1. Try to come to a reasonable *compromise* with your child.
  - “I need to go to the grocery and the drug store. I know you don’t like going to the grocery or the drug store. I can compromise, though. If you are good in the grocery, we will skip the drug store and I’ll play a game with you when we get home. How does that sound?”
2. Praise your child for keeping an open mind, being flexible, coming up with a Plan B, or *compromising*.
  - “You and Sami did a great job **compromising** today.”
  - “Sometimes our **Plan B** needs to be a **compromise**. Can you think of a compromise so you can both get some of what you want?”



# “Big Deal/Little Deal”

D/d

Teaching children to tell the difference between situations that are very important (the “***Big Deals***”) vs. situations that are much less important (the “***little deals***”) can help them cope and make better decisions.

When a child feels that something is a “big deal,” you can help that child to figure out how to make it into a “little deal.” Don’t tell the child that something is a little deal-- **instead you can say:**

- “Does this feel like a ***Big Deal*** or a ***little deal***?”
- “How can you turn this ***Big Deal*** into a ***little deal***?”
- “I could tell that it felt like a ***Big Deal*** to you, but you stayed calm and worked to make it a ***little deal***. You’re such a terrific problem solver!”
- “Great job turning a ***Big Deal*** into a ***little deal***.”

D/d

This icon represents the “**Big Deal/Little Deal**” vocabulary! Whenever you see it, there’s a good opportunity to help your child learn to distinguish what is important from what is not important!



# Some Examples of How to Use “Big Deal / Little Deal”

## Accidents

After a child spills something, you could say, “At first when that drink spilled, I felt like it was a really **Big Deal**, but then I realized I could make it a **little deal** by mopping it up and you helped clean it up. Now I feel much better. Thanks.”

## When a Child has to be Interrupted Before Finishing Something

You could say, “Can you **be flexible** and stop that even though you aren’t finished?” If yes, then praise flexibility, if no, then say, “I can see that getting interrupted like this is a **Big Deal**, but you need to stop now so we can go to church. Could we make this a **little deal** by putting your game in a safe place, so you can finish it as soon as we get back?”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Can’t Find a Homework Assignment

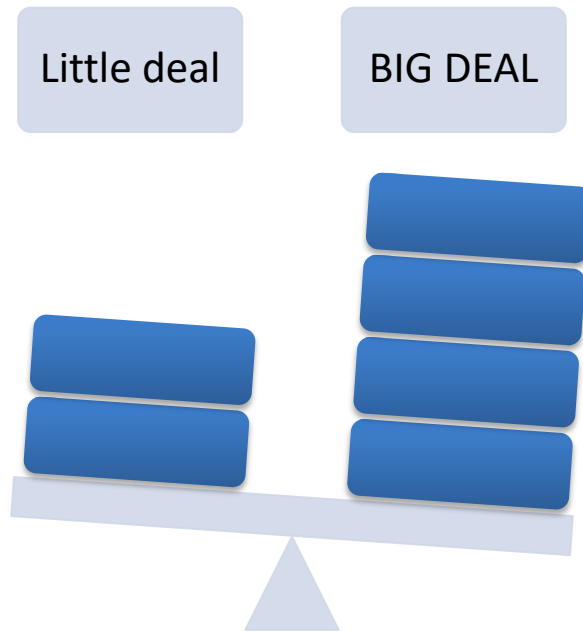
You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 10

Your child had their tenth session of Unstuck and On Target today.

**D/d**

**Session Summary:** Your child learned about the difference between a Big Deal and a Little Deal today in group. A **BIG DEAL** is a large problem, takes a long time to fix and usually takes a lot of people to solve. A little deal is something that is a small problem, can be fixed quickly and doesn't take many people to solve.



## What you can try at home:

1. Keep in mind that whether or not something is a **Big Deal** is very personal!
  - Just because something is a **Big Deal** to you, does not automatically mean that it will be a **Big Deal** to your child.
    - i. For example, it might be a **Big Deal** to you for the family to go to church together, but it is a **Little Deal** for your child. Or maybe it is the other way around.
    - ii. Maybe it is a **Big Deal** for your child that they are always on time, but you feel like being 5 minutes late is no **Big Deal**. Or maybe it is the other way around.
2. Don't tell your child something is not a **Big Deal**. Instead, try saying something like this:
  - *"It is ok if something feels like a **Big Deal**. I'll help you figure out how to turn it into a **Little Deal**."*
  - *"If you have a **Big Deal** problem you can always ask for help. We all need help with a **Big Deal**."*
3. Praise your child for asking for help with a **Big Deal**, or for being able to recognize when something is a **Little Deal**.
  - *"Is this a **Big Deal** or a **Little Deal** to you?"*
  - *"You are right, this does feel like a **Big Deal**. Let's figure out who to ask for help."*

# “Choice/No Choice”

C?

Often children have choices. They can choose from menu options or movies, and can often choose when they will do something. There are other situations when they have no choice. They have to go to school, do homework, and go to the doctor.

Choice or no choice helps children understand when they can negotiate and when they have to just accept something they don't want. It also makes it clear that no choice situations are just the way the world works. Look for "choice" situations, and save “no choice” only for truly no choice situations.

You can use phrases like:

- *“Is this a **choice** or **no choice** situation?”*
- *“Even though I don't want to do it, this is a **no choice** for me.”*
- *“You have a **choice** here...”*
- *“This is a **no choice** situation because...”*
- *“There will be a **no choice** situation today (explain the no choice situation). Let's make a plan for how we will face our **no choice** situation.”*

C?

This icon represents the “**Choice/ No Choice**” vocabulary! Whenever you see it, there's a good opportunity to help children identify what is possible and what cannot be changed!



# Some Examples of How to Use “Choice / No Choice”

## Going to the Doctor

On the day of a doctor’s appointment, you could say, “I wish this were a **choice** situation, but it is a **no choice** because you need to visit the doctor to make sure you are healthy and strong. Let’s make a plan for how we will face our **no choice** situation.”

## Planning Dinner

You could say, “You have a **choice**, do you want peas or beans with dinner?”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Hasn’t Completed her Homework

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

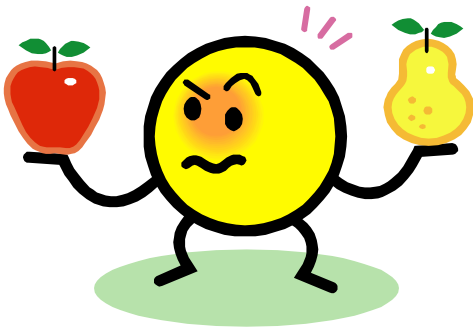
# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 11

Your child had their eleventh session of Unstuck and On Target today.

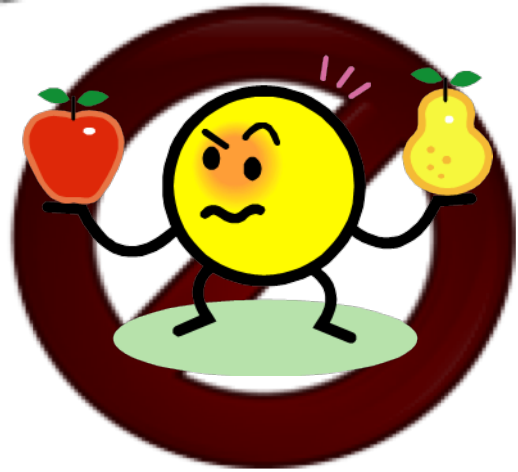
A/B

C?

**Session Summary:** Your child learned about the difference between having a choice and having no choice. A choice is possible when there is more than one way to solve a problem. A “No Choice” situation occurs when there is only one possible way to do something



**Choice**



**No Choice**

**What you can try at home:**

1. Use “**No Choice**” sparingly! Things that are **No Choice** situations are usually a matter of law or safety. Remember that bad choices are still choices. Some examples of **No Choice** situations are:
  - Attending school
  - Getting vaccinations
  - Paying taxes
  - Needing to sleep every day
2. Most of the time we all have **choices**, and there is more than one way to solve a problem. Try to focus on **choices** most of the time. For example, you might say:
  - “*We still have many **choices** here, should we come up with a Plan B?*”
  - “*This is definitely not a **No Choice** situation. Let’s look at our **choices**.*”
3. If your child is having a hard time in a **No Choice** situation, try saying something like:
  - “*If it is a **No Choice** situation, there are no other options, and I just have to go with it.*”
  - “*Getting stuck can make a situation more difficult, so going along with it is better for me. What do you think?*”



# Keep it Positive and Make it Fun!

Don't forget to have fun with **flexibility** and do everything in your power to keep it positive. Here are some suggestions:



**Praise whenever your child uses the flexibility vocabulary.**

You can praise with your words or a thumbs up.

C?

**Point out “Choice” situations:**

*“You have a **choice** here—sneakers or boots?”*



**Praise your child for *being flexible*:**

*“I know you were hoping for pizza, and I love how **flexible** you’re being with the change in plans.”*

C?

A/B

**Once your child knows the vocabulary, ask before giving your opinion:**

D/d

*“Is this **choice** or **no choice**?” “Do you have a **Plan B**?” “Is this a **big deal** or a **little deal**?”*



**Use these vocabulary words to praise and instruct, not criticize.**

Instead of saying: “You are **stuck!**” ask “Are you **stuck**?” or “How can we **be flexible** about this?”

C?

**Make “no choice” a fact of life, not your decision.**

*“You know this is one of those **no choice** situations. I wish I had control over it but I don’t. You’ve got to go to the doctor.”*

C?

**There should always be more “choice” than “no choice” situations.**

Sometimes you can make a “**no choice**” sound like a “**choice**.” Instead of, “You have to eat vegetables at dinner,” say, “Would you like to **choose** carrots or peas?”



**Look for flexibility in others.**

While watching TV together, laugh at the character’s inflexibility or flexibility (but not at the child, of course).



**Find examples of heroes *being flexible*.**

Children often have heroes who they admire (Spiderman, RG III, Beyoncé). Use examples of what this hero does to **be flexible**. Talk about how flexible thinking has helped your own heroes, yourself, or your family members.

## Do you remember Michael from the beginning of this chapter, who has meltdowns when things don't go his way?

*Here are some ways that his mother and grandmother can use this chapter to help him to be more flexible:*

Michael is hoping to go to a restaurant today. His mother knows that they have errands to do and don't have enough time to eat at the restaurant, and she knows that Michael loves their French fries. She says, "Michael, I know your **Plan A** is to eat at the restaurant, but this is a **no choice** situation – we have to go to the store. What is your **Plan B**? Maybe we can get some take out fries and eat them while we do errands? You can **be flexible**, you have done it before."

Michael is playing with his cousins and he is starting to get upset that his younger cousin is playing with his action figures. His grandmother says, "Michael, are you **stuck**? Is it a **Big Deal** or a **little deal** that Jayden is playing with your toys? A **Big Deal**? Okay, how can we turn it into a **little deal**? You want to give him just two action figures to play with? That is a great **compromise**. Great job **being flexible**!"



### SUMMARY

#### **In this chapter, you learned...**

- *What is flexible thinking?*
- *Why is flexible thinking important?*
- *The key vocabulary for improving flexible thinking including:*
  - *"Be Flexible"*
  - *"Stuck and Unstuck"*
  - *"Plan A / Plan B"*
  - *"Compromise"*
  - *"Big Deal / Little Deal"*
  - *"Choice / No Choice"*
- *How to make being flexible fun*

# Try it at Home!

There are three more Home Practices on the next three pages that cover work your child will do at school on handling unexpected things and why being flexible is helpful.

Check these out!

You can also use this space to keep track of your work from this chapter for your next meeting.

## UOT Vocabulary from this Chapter



**“Be Flexible”**



**“Stuck and Unstuck”**



**“Plan A / Plan B”**



**“Compromise”**



**“Big Deal / Little Deal”**



**“Choice / No Choice”**

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# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 12

Your child had their twelfth session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Your child learned how to “**Expect, or Handle, the Unexpected.**” Your child may need very consistent routines and become upset when change occurs or their expectations are violated. Because they like it better when everything goes as they expect it to, it is useful for them to know how to handle unexpected changes.

## What you can try at home:

1. Many of us grown-ups have a hard time **handling the unexpected**, especially if the change includes disappointment. And, we all know a few people who don’t even like nice surprises, like surprise parties in their honor. If this can be a problem for grown-ups, just imagine how hard it is for your child who loves routine. Be understanding with your child; try to keep things according to routine when you can, and gently support your child when something happens that is unexpected.
2. Your child made a list of possible strategies to use to **handle the unexpected**. Some examples of things you can try at home are:
  - **Give warnings!**
    - Tell your child in advance about any upcoming changes
    - Give a 5-minute warning before any shift from one activity to another
    - Give a 10-minute and then a 5-minute warning if your child will have to stop doing something fun (like stop watching TV to go to bed)
    - Sometimes you may need to count down on your fingers, holding them up so your child can see them. Start at 10, with all of your fingers up, and count down slowly until you get to 0.
  - **Be clear!**
    - Allow your child to ask lots of questions to know exactly what will change and what will stay the same
    - Let your child know when the change will be over
    - If there is a good reason for the change, share that with your child
3. Give lots of praise when your child shows that they can **handle the unexpected**. This is really hard work for them!
  - “*You were super flexible when we had to make that change!*”
  - “*You really knew how to **expect the unexpected!** How did you do it!?”*

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 13

Your child had their thirteenth session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Your child learned about how being flexible is helpful to them (they will feel better and get more of what they want when they are flexible). Your child learned that one of the “facts of life” is that what we want is not always possible. Your child then examined how they would feel and what happens when they are flexible versus when they get stuck, when what they want is impossible.

## What you can try at home:

1. Try to use this week’s vocabulary whenever you or your child wants something that is not possible (your favorite shirt is dirty, so it isn’t possible to wear it; someone is already on the swing in the park, so it isn’t possible to use it right now; etc.):
  - *“Sometimes what we want just isn’t possible.”*
  - *“How are we going to **feel** if we get **stuck** on something that isn’t possible?”*
  - *“How are we going to **feel** if we are **flexible** when something we wanted isn’t possible?”*

## 2. Parent self-assessment:

This is a good time to evaluate how much progress you feel you and your child are making in becoming more flexible. Make sure that you are doing everything you can to support these new skills by taking the self-quiz below. Note: If your scores aren’t where you want them or you aren’t seeing much progress in your child, check in with your Unstuck and On Target group leader to figure out how to make things work better.

- ✓ How often do I specifically praise my child for showing good flexibility skills? (Remember, praise should be specific, true and immediate.)
  - Daily
  - Sometimes
  - Never
- ✓ Am I praising more than I correct my child? (Try to praise at least 4 times more often than you correct your child.)
  - I praise more than I correct
  - I praise and correct about the same
  - I correct more than I praise
- ✓ Am I showing my child how to be flexible by being flexible myself? Flexibility is contagious!
  - I am flexible every chance I get
  - I am trying to be more flexible
  - I really need to work on this
- ✓ Am I using the vocabulary often enough?
  - Daily
  - Sometimes
  - Never



# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 14

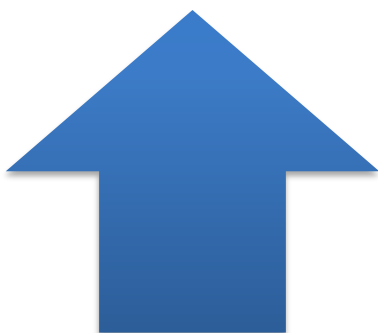
Your child had their fourteenth session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Today, your child learned about how being flexible can help you get more of what you want, such as earning more privileges, having more freedom, earning greater trust from teachers and parents, having kids like them better, and making more choices for themselves. Once they develop a **flexible reputation**, more of these privileges will come to them.

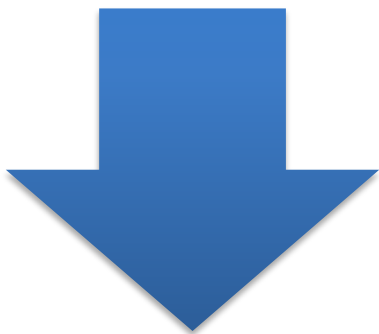
**What you can try at home:**

1. Try to help your child see the benefits of being more **flexible**:



## **Benefits of being flexible:**

- You get more of what they want
- You feel better
- Others give you more choices when you build a “flexible reputation”



## **Costs of being stuck:**

- You get nothing
- You feel bad
- You have fewer choices

# Chapter 4:

## Planning to Achieve Your Goals



### OVERVIEW

***In this chapter, you will learn...***

- *What are goal setting and planning?*
- *Why are goal setting and planning important?*
- *The key vocabulary for improving goal setting and planning called Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check, which breaks tasks down into five parts:*
  - **Goal**
  - **Why**
  - **Plan**
  - **Do**
  - **Check**
- *How to make goal setting and planning fun*

### **A Story You Might Recognize... Mary's Goal**

*Mary is 10 years old. She really wants to do well in school, but she has a difficult time with homework. She often feels overwhelmed when she tries to start her work, and gets distracted a lot. This drives her mother crazy and so it often ends up with her mom yelling and Mary crying or tantruming rather than getting anything done. And when she does manage to finish work, she often forgets to bring it back to her teacher or to turn it in. She feels that she is a bad student and is starting to get very down on herself. Mary's mom is frustrated and doesn't know how to help her to get started, finish the assignments, and turn them in.*

# What are Goal Setting and Planning, and Why are They Important?

- **Goal setting** is the ability to set a goal. Some goals are small (get dressed, make dinner, clean your room) while some are big (graduate from college, become an astronaut, make friends)
- Teaching children to set goals and make realistic plans *increases their ability to:*
  - **follow directions** so you don't have to keep saying the same things over and over
  - **complete a multi-step task** so you don't have to sit with your child in order for him to get anything done
  - Be **active, independent, flexible problem solvers** at school, at home and with friends so your child will have more successes
- *Goal setting will also help to:*
  - **Increase children's self-esteem:** children feel good when they reach their goals.
  - **Make you feel better, too:** by helping your child learn how to stay on target, you will spend less time focused on her activities, which in turn allows you to be on target with your own goals!

This chapter teaches a five-step routine for success with any multi-step task:

## Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check



Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check gives your child a way to break down any task into small, achievable chunks.

The next few pages will explain each of these five steps.



This icon represents the “**Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check**” vocabulary! Whenever you see it, there's a good opportunity to help your child complete a multiple step task!

# “Goal”

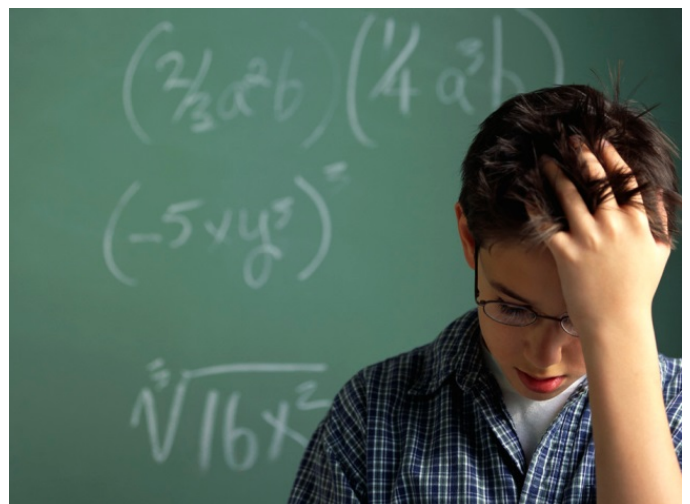


A **goal** is something your child wants or needs to do, knows how to do but wants to do better, or wants to learn to do.

Goals should be specific and meaningful for your child. They can be long term like, “I want to be able to tie my shoes by myself,” or “I want to be a football player.” They can also be short term or smaller, like, “I want to go to the new Pixar movie,” or “I want to invite a friend over for pizza and a game.”

When working on a goal, **you can use phrases like:**

- *“This looks like it's something you should make into a **goal**.”*
- *“I need to set a **goal**.”*
- *“Do you have a **goal**?”*
- *“My **goal** is to.....”*
- *“You did a great job making a **goal**!”*



# Some Examples of How to Use “Goal”

## Doing Homework

You could say, “You said you had a **goal** of getting good grades this year. We better make a plan for getting your homework done so you can reach your **goal**.”

## Playing at Recess

You could say, “Your **goal** is to have a good time playing tag with your friends. Let’s make a plan about what to do when you get tagged and you worry that someone has hit you on purpose.”

## Write Your Own: You Want to Host Your Whole Family for Thanksgiving Dinner

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”



# “Why”



Why the goal is important.

Most of us only work on new skills when we think they will help us in some way. It is important that children know why they have certain goals.

You can use phrases like:

- “**Why** is that goal important?”
- “**Why** did you choose that for your goal?”
- “**Why** do you want to do (activity)?”



# Some Examples of How to Use “Why”

## Bedtime

You could say, “I am setting a **goal** of going to bed by 9pm. **Why?** because I need to get more sleep to feel good.”

## Exercise

You could say, “I am setting a **goal** of going for walk at least three times a week. **Why?** Because I feel better when I get some air.”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Has Set a Goal to Get Into the School Play

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# “Plan”



A **plan** is how your child gets to his or her goal.

Plans need to be specific, and because some plans will not work, your child should always have at least one other plan – Plan B. In fact, you may need many plans. Emphasize that good planning is not about getting it right the first time but about changing the plan when needed. The great thing about plans is that everyone can make one, and failure of a plan is not the failure of a person. When planning, **you can use phrases like:**

- “My **plan** is...”
- “What is your **plan**?”
- “I need a **Plan B.**”
- “This is a big project. You should make a **plan** for how to break it down day by day.
- “You are terrific at making **plans!**”



# Some Examples of How to Use “Plan”

## Cleaning Your Room

You could say, “If your **goal** is to get outside and play with your friends, then you should make a **plan** for getting your room cleaned super fast. Do you want to set a timer and make it a race?”

## Running Errands

You could say, “My **goal** was to finish all my errands today, so I could just relax tomorrow, and my **plan** was to do the grocery shopping, get your prescription filled and pay some bills before dinner, but now it is 5pm and I have only done the first step on my plan, can you help me come up with a **Plan B**?”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Wants to Grow Vegetables for His Grandparents

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 15

Your child had their fifteenth session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Today, your child's Unstuck and on Target group switched topics and started to build new goal setting and planning skills. These new skills will build on the foundation of all of the flexibility skills they have learned so far. They also build on the introduction to goal setting and planning from Lesson 2.

**What you can try at home:**

1. Review the Home Practice 2 about Goal, Why, Plan, Do, Check.
2. Try to help your student see how setting their own **goals** and making **plans** will benefit them:

- *If you set your own goals, you will get more of what you want!*

Goal

• What you want to do

Why

• Why you want to do it

Plan

• How you will do it

3. Your child watched a Pink Panther video in group today called "Think Before You Pink," where Pink Panther makes 12 different plans to cross a busy street.
  - See if you can find this video by searching on the internet and watch the video with your child (it's only 6 minutes long). Talk about how Pink Panther doesn't give up.
  - If your child hits an obstacle, ask him or her, "*What would Pink Panther do right now?*" ("*He'd come up with another plan!*").



# “Do”



Try the plan.

Once your child has identified a goal and a specific plan to reach that goal, it is time to try it out. Carrying out the “**Do**” step is critical. Too often adults help children make their own plans, but then think the hard work is done and the child can do the rest. This almost never works, because it is the “doing” that is often hardest. **You can use phrases like:**

- *“This looks like a great plan! Let’s think about when you can **try it out...**”*
- *“You made a great plan for how to reach your goal. Now **try your plan out.** What is the first step?”*
- *“Okay, I made my plan, now I am going to **try it out.**”*
- *“Now that I have set my goal and made my plan, I am going to **do it.**”*



# Some Examples of How to Use “Do”

## At the Grocery Store

You could say, “My **goal** was to have a nice dinner for Grandma tonight and my **plan** was to make spaghetti and meatballs, Now that I am **doing** it, I can’t find spaghetti noodles. I need a **Plan B**, but I am **stuck**, can you help me think of another kind of pasta we can use?”

## Losing Weight

You could say, “My **goal** was to lose 10 pounds before the holidays, and my **plan** was to lose one pound every week by not eating sweets. But I am not **doing** my plan. I need a **Plan B**.”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Wants to Take a Picnic to the Park

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# “Check”



Stop and think: Did the plan work? Do I need to try a different plan?

Some plans that seem like they will work really well do not. Other times important steps in a plan get missed. That is why it is important for children to learn to **check** the plan to see if it is working and if the goal is being achieved, just like when you check a recipe at the end to see if you remembered everything. When you and your child check a plan, you can help them make any changes that are needed for the next time. **You can use phrases like:**

- *“Let’s **check** the plan. **How did it go?**”*
- *“On a scale of 1- 10 where 1 = did not work, 5 = kind of worked, and 10 = worked great, **how did the plan do?**”*
- *“It looks like some parts of the plan are working but other parts aren’t. **What would you like to change?**”*
- *“Great job **checking** your plan!”*



# Some Examples of How to Use “Check”

## Sharing

You could say, “I see you and Johnny are having trouble sharing the Legos, but I also see there are plenty of Legos for you to both build something. Can you think of a **plan** so you can both get at least part of what you want? Your **goal** is to share the Legos so you can both build something cool. What is a way you can use the Legos that is fair to both of you? ... You can take turns – that is a great idea! How many Legos should you choose at each turn? Let’s make a **Plan B** for if Johnny chooses a Lego that you wanted. Let’s try out your plan!” Later: “Now let’s **check** in, how did your plan work?”

## Homework

You could say, “You had a **goal** of getting an A in math right? Wasn’t part of the **plan** for achieving that goal **doing** your homework? Let’s **check** the online grades and see how your **plan** is working since you’ve been doing your homework.”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Wants to Pack Her Own Lunch to Take to School

You could say, “ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# Keep it Positive and Make it Fun!

Don't forget to have fun with **Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check** and do everything in your power to keep it positive.

Here are some suggestions:

**Don't just use *Goal-Plan-Why-Do-Check* for things that your child does not want to do.**



By using it for fun and easy things, your child will not only learn different ways to apply ***Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check***, but will feel more positive about it, too. For example, you could make a Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check for a fun family outing or a family dinner.

**Use humor in *Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check*:**



*"I like that your **goal** is to have a clean room so you don't get lost in all your stuff."*

**Look for ways that others set *goals* and make *plans*.**



Stories in books and on TV usually have a problem to solve by the end. Talk about the ways that your child's favorite character sets ***goals*** and makes ***plans*** to solve these problems.

**Reward your child for working hard on *Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check*.**



Show your child that ***goal setting*** and ***planning*** are valuable by rewarding them when they have worked hard. Rewards don't have to be toys or games – just give your child the chance to do something he or she really enjoys, especially if it is something you can do together.





**Do you remember Mary from the beginning of this chapter, who struggles to start her homework, and who gets overwhelmed and has tantrums instead of getting her work done?**

*Here is a way that her mother can use this chapter to help her:*

*“I know you want to get your homework done. Let’s write down a **plan** so you show that teacher what you know! What is your **goal**? What is a way you can get your homework started more easily? You can make a list of what you need to do—that’s a great idea! Do you think you should **plan** an order for your assignments, like spelling first, then math? What about study breaks, do you want to **plan** on taking a 15 minute break? Let’s write down and **do** your plan! When you finish each part of the **plan**, you can **check** it off your list.” Then a little while later: “Now let’s **check** in, how did the **plan** work? Did all your homework get done? Is everything **checked** off?”*



## SUMMARY

**In this chapter, you learned...**

- *What are goal setting and planning?*
- *Why are goal setting and planning important?*
- *The key vocabulary for improving goal setting and planning called Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check, which breaks tasks down into five parts:*
  - **Goal**
  - **Why**
  - **Plan**
  - **Do**
  - **Check**
- *How to make goal setting and planning fun*



# Chapter 5: Staying on Target

## OVERVIEW

**In this chapter, you will learn...**

- *What are target goals?*
- *Why are target goals important?*
- *The key vocabulary, which include:*
  - *Target Goal*
  - *Off-Target Distraction*
- *How to make having target goals fun*



"Archery!!" by Camp Pinewood is licensed under CC BY 2.0/ Cropped from original

## **A Story You Might Recognize... Jonathan's Target Goal**

*Jonathan has wanted Carlos to come over to play for weeks. As he got ready for Carlos to come over, Jonathan started to plan all of the things that he wanted to happen when Carlos came over: "First we will go outside and play basketball, then we will play the Mario Kart game on Xbox, then we will have a snack..." All of his plans were very specific. When Carlos arrived, things were going great until Carlos said he would rather play with action figures. The two sat down to play and Jonathan picked up his Ironman action figure, but that was Carlos's favorite superhero as well. They couldn't agree on who got to play with Ironman, and soon Jonathan stormed out of the room.*

# What are Target Goals and Why are They Important?

- Children with executive functioning difficulties often have problems deciding what is most important in a situation, and can easily lose sight of the big picture and become distracted by details.
- Many children need help to tell the difference between the **target goals** that are very important, and **off-target distractions** that can get in the way of the target goal.
- Talking about “target goals” can remind children that the target goal is more important than other, off-target distractions. This will help them to let go of off-target distractions so that they can continue to work towards their target goal.
- As your child starts to use target goals in everyday life, your life will become easier because your child will be better at sticking to goals without you having to constantly remind him of what he should be doing.



This icon represents the “**Target Goal**” vocabulary! Whenever you see it, there’s a good opportunity to talk to your child about goals, how to stay on target, and how to avoid distractions that might get in the way!

In this chapter you will continue to use and build on the language you learned in Chapter 3 with “Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check” by working with children to tell the difference between big, important



**target goals** and smaller, less important **off-target distractions**.

The vocabulary on the following pages will help children choose between two goals in favor of the more important target goal.



# “Target Goal”



A ***target goal*** is something that you want or need to do that is more important than anything else you may want to do at the same time.

It is important to help children select long-term target goals that may take a longer period of time to achieve. Target goals help children identify the most important goal in a given situation. Once a child understands that, he or she will be less likely to get distracted and can stay focused on important activities.

You can use phrases like:

- “My ***target goal*** is to...”
- “Are you ***on target*** right now?”
- “Great job choosing your ***target goal***!”
- “I know you really want to do (activity). If this is your ***target goal***, what are the things you need to do to accomplish this goal?”
- “Way to stay ***on target***!”





# Some Examples of How to Use “Target Goal”

## Shopping Trip

Your child loves to go to the mall to buy new things, but these distractions can get in the way of what you need to do when you take your child shopping. You could say, “What is your **target goal** for this shopping trip? To get new sneakers? We only have a short time and I know you new shoes, so we have to make sure that we don’t get distracted at the other stores. How can we plan our trip so that we stay **on target**?”

## Watching TV With Your Child

Identify when the characters in a show are working toward a **target goal**. For example: SpongeBob’s **target goal** is to make it to The Krabby Patty on time, but his best friend Patrick shows up at his pineapple and wants to hang out, you could ask, “What is SpongeBob’s **target goal**?”

## Write Your Own: Your Child Wants to Finish His Homework by Dinner so He Can Play a Game Before Bedtime.

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

# “Off-Target Distractions”



An ***off-target distraction*** is any other activity that can get in the way of reaching a target goal.

Each day children are working towards one or more target goals and also has smaller goals or desires, or “off-target distractions” that could get in their way. You can help children recognize when something they want is less important than their target goal. Even though the off-target distraction can feel important at that moment, it will take them away from the target goal in the long run. **You can use phrases like:**

- ***“Is that a target goal or an **off-target distraction**?”***
- ***“Oops, I am getting **off-target**.”***
- ***“How about you take a five minute break and then get back to work on your **target goal**?”***



# Some Examples of How to Use “Off-Target Distraction”

## Distractions From Class Work

You could say, “Hmm, you said that you really hope to get all A’s this quarter—that sounds like your **target goal**. Part of your grade includes getting your homework done. Is reading your comic book going to help you reach your **target goal**, or is it **off-target**? Can you think of another time when reading your comic book would not get in the way of your **target goal**?”

## Morning Routine

You could say, “My **target goal** for the morning is getting you to school on time and me to work on time. What could get us **off-target**? I think I might have problems with wanting to stay in bed after my alarm goes off. I think I will keep my eyes on my **target goal** by hitting the snooze only one time.”

## Write Your Own: The Family is Talking Together and Your Child Gets Distracted By Helicopters Flying Over the House

You could say, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 16

Your child had their sixteenth session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Today, your child learned how to check to see how their plan worked. This self-evaluation process is crucial for your child to be successful in reaching his or her own goals.

**What you can try at home:**

1. There are two problems your child may face when trying to reach goals:
  - First, the **plan** may not work. Your child can learn to **check** on how well their plan worked, just like they can double check their work in math, or you check to make sure you have completed all the steps of a recipe. Sometimes parts of a plan might work, important steps might be left out, or a new plan would work better.
    - “Let’s **check** and see how our **plan** worked.”
    - “Do we need to change our **plan**?”
    - “Let’s **check** our **Plan A** and see if we need a **Plan B**.”
  - Second, your child may face **distractors** that tempt them. Once your child gets distracted, it becomes impossible to reach their goal since they aren’t carrying out their plan.
    - “Did we stick to our **plan**, or did we get **distracted**?”
    - “Are we **on target** to reach our **goal**?”
    - “I think we may be getting **distracted** and **off target**. Do we still want to reach our **goal**?”

# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 17 & 18

Your child had their seventeenth session of Unstuck and On Target today. This home practice sheet will count for this session and your child's next session.

**A/B**



**Session Summaries:** Today and in our next session, your child is practicing using different types of Plan B strategies to use when having problems reaching goals. Your child is getting this practice by playing the "Goal, Why, Plan, Do, Check Challenge" in group.

**What you can try at home:**

1. Over the next couple of weeks, encourage your child to use the strategies below any time they are having trouble getting what they want (meeting their goals), and praise them for trying!

## Plan B Strategies

Ask for help

- "Do you need help?"
- "This isn't working, who should we ask for help?"

Compromise

- "What if our Plan B is to compromise?"
- "We can change our goal to compromise so we both get part of what we want."

Resist a  
distractor

- "Can we include this distraction in our plan?"
- "What about reaching our goal first, and then we can be distracted after?"



# Keep it Positive and Make it Fun!

Don't forget to have fun with target goals and do everything in your power to keep it positive. Here are some suggestions:

## Link target goals to your reward system.

- ③ Setting goals is hard work. Staying **on target** and working toward your goals in the face of **distractions** is even harder work. Reward your child for working toward **target goals** and not getting **off-target**.

## Look for **target goals** on TV.

- ③ Notice when the characters are working toward a **target goal**. Point out when an **off-target distraction** happens and how the character responds. Did the character continue working toward her **target goal** or did she get **off-target**?

## Highlight what is going well.

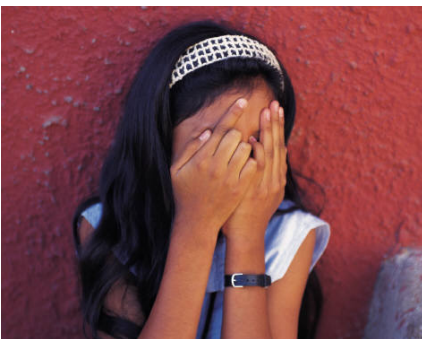
- ③ Praise and encourage your child, and avoid talking about the negatives.

## Link to a hero.

- ③ Use examples of how a child's heroes work toward **target goals** and avoid from **off-target distractions**. *"Superman's target goal is to rescue people from danger. What would happen if Superman decided to stop for a donut?"*

## It doesn't have to be all or nothing.

- ③ We all need to relax sometimes and do things just for fun. Help your child figure out when they can be **off-target**. *"I know you want to watch TV right now but your **target goal** is to get your homework done. How about you watch one show and start your homework in half an hour?"*



## Do you remember Jonathan from the beginning of this chapter, who got frustrated when he was playing with Carlos?

*Here is a way that his mother can use this chapter to help him:*

Jonathan's mother knew his plans for playing with Carlos were very specific – If Carlos had other ideas about what he wanted to do, Jonathan might get very upset. Jonathan's mom asked him if he wanted Carlos to have fun at his house, so he would want to come back another day. Jonathan said yes and they agreed his **target goal** was to have fun with his friend but that he may have different ideas or things he wanted to do when he came over. Jonathan's mom asked him, "Do you think that there are any **distractions** that could get you off your **target goal** of having fun with Carlos? What if he has different ideas about what to do? Let's make a **Plan B** so you can still reach your **target goal** if he has different ideas about what to do." She suggested they make a **Goal, Why, Plan, Do, Check** to help plan the day.



### SUMMARY

**In this chapter, you learned...**

- *What are target goals?*
- *Why are target goals important?*
- *The key vocabulary, which includes:*
  - *Target Goal*
  - *Off-Target Distractions*
- *How to make having target goals fun*

# Try it at Home!

Now you have learned about all the UOT vocabulary that your child is working on at school. The last two Home Practices are on the next pages. They show you how to use the vocabulary all together as well as the magnet that we hope is up on your refrigerator to remind everyone to keep using the vocabulary.

You can also use this space to keep track of your work from this chapter for your next meeting.

## UOT Vocabulary from this Chapter



**“Target Goal”**



**“Off-Target Distractions”**

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# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 19 & 20

Your child had their nineteenth session of Unstuck and On Target today. This home practice sheet will count for this session and your child's next session.

**A/B**



**Session Summaries:** Your child has been working hard to learn how to set goals, make plans, compromise, and create solutions using Unstuck and On Target strategies. Today's lesson began a celebration of all the group has learned and provided practice using all of their new skills to work together in order to plan a special event for session 20.

## What you can try at home:

1. Whenever you can, work in a discussion with your child about planning events. You could talk about events in the news, cultural or sports events, or even talk about a family event or activity.
  - "What was their **goal**?"
  - "How many people had to work together to **plan** this?"
  - "What would have happened if every person had a different idea?"
  - "Do you think any of the people planning this event needed to **ask for help**?"
2. Include your child in the planning of an upcoming event. The more practice your child gets in planning, the better he or she will get over time. If you plan and schedule everything for your child, he or she won't get to practice!
  - Try to set up a social event with your child, like meeting a friend in the park or having cousins over to play. Ask your child to help you plan what they will do together before they come, but be sure to talk about Plan Bs!
  - If you'd like to write it down, below is an example:

**GOAL:** To have fun with my friend.

**WHY:** So my friend will want to come back another day and I like to be a good friend! 😊

**PLAN:**

1. Invite my friend over to play
2. Ask my friend what he wants to do (Do what my friend wants to do first because he is the guest)
3. Suggest we build with Legos
4. Compromise if we need to
5. Have a snack

**DO:** Follow the plan (Let's have fun!)

**CHECK:** How did it go? Did we need a different plan?



# Unstuck and On Target Home Practice 21

Your child had their last session of Unstuck and On Target today.



**Session Summary:** Today was your child's last session of Unstuck and On Target. Hopefully, you've noticed big changes in your child's flexibility, planning and organizing skills and these home practice sheets have helped you think about ways to support your child in using these skills. Thank you for your efforts!

Continue to use the vocabulary and concepts that were covered in all of the sessions. Post the list below as a reminder to use these words daily.

## Unstuck & On Target!

<b>Flexible</b>	When flexible, more good things happen. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"We can be flexible and make a Plan B."</li> <li>"I love how you were flexible."</li> </ul>
<b>Unstuck</b>	Being stuck feels bad. Getting unstuck feels better. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I'm getting stuck on _____. How can I get unstuck?"</li> <li>"Since you got unstuck, now you have more choices."</li> </ul>
<b>Plan A/Plan B</b>	The problem is the plan, not the child. Bad plans just need a Plan B. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"What is our Plan B?"</li> <li>"You always think of great plans."</li> </ul>
<b>Compromise</b>	Both people have to be flexible to compromise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Let's compromise so we both get some of what we want."</li> <li>"Something is better than nothing."</li> </ul>
<b>Big Deal/Little Deal</b>	Do not tell a child his or her big deal is a little deal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"How can we <b>turn</b> this big deal into a little deal? Let's make a plan."</li> </ul>
<b>Choice/No Choice</b>	Remember poor choices are still choices; reserve "No Choice" for taxes, fire drills, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"You have a choice. Let's look at all of your choices."</li> </ul>

Goal What and why?
➔
Plan How do we do it?
➔
Do Try it!
➔
Check How did it go?

Adapted from Fig. 3.1 in *Solving Executive Function Challenges: Simple Ways to Get Kids with Autism Unstuck and on Target* (Kenworthy et al.) © 2011 Brookes Publishing Co. [www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com)



# Chapter 6:

## Tips for Reducing Stress in Your Child and in Your Home

**Are you and your child too stressed out to use UOT vocabulary and routines for flexibility, planning and organization?**

**These tips will give you ideas about tricks that help a lot of parents and kids work together, help kids behave better, and reduce stress!**

Having executive function problems, like inflexibility and disorganization is hard. It is stressful for kids with these problems, and for their parents, too. Learning the UOT vocabulary and routines will definitely help everyone in your house. Most parents also need to learn some tricks for managing their child with executive function problems. Tricks that help everyone relax more and have more fun together.

### OVERVIEW

***In this chapter, you will learn these tips to make the journey easier:***

- *Keep it Positive*
- *Avoid Overload*
- *Break it Down*
- *Talk Less, Write More*
- *Take Care of Yourself First*
- *Think “Can’t” Not “Won’t”*



# Keep it Positive

At times you may feel like you are nagging, or that you and your child are both frustrated because your child isn't listening. Most of us parents feel that we can help our kids behave right by telling them what they are doing wrong and punishing them. But the fact is that telling a child what she is doing *right* works better to get her to behave than telling her what she is doing wrong.

Test this out for yourself. Mark on your right hand every time you praise your child, and mark on your left hand every time you correct your child. Try to give **four praises for every correction**. Do this during homework time. Doesn't it feel better? Does your child behave better than when you don't praise as much?

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Turn off TV when asked	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
In bed by 9pm	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Each ✓ = 15 extra minutes of game time							

## How to praise:

Praise has to be specific and true. Don't tell your child he is the smartest kid in the whole world. Tell him he is doing a great job getting started on his homework.

## Build on strengths.

Make a list of strengths and hang them up for the household to see. Use these strengths as a starting place to learn new things.

# Keep it Positive

## **Be realistic and don't place too much pressure on children.**

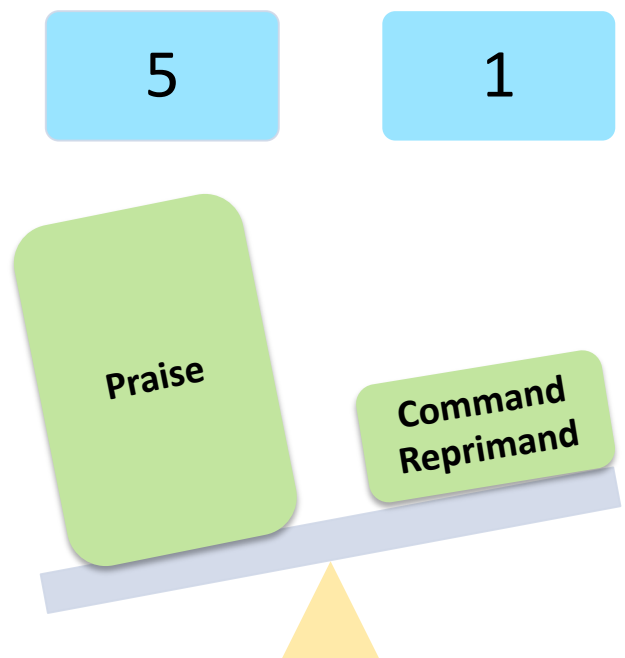
At the same time, show that you expect them to do their best. Knowing you believe in them will help block doubts they may have about themselves. Be sure to have fun together!

## **Develop your own sense of humor.**

Surround yourself with people who can help you laugh and have fun. Watch funny stories. Laugh at yourself. Make jokes. Be silly together. Try to have as much fun as you can. It makes the hard stuff easier.

## **Don't say "don't."**

You will be more successful when you say what you want your child TO DO rather than telling your child what NOT to DO. For example, rather than saying, "Don't grab the toy from your sister," you can say, "Ask your sister to share the toy when she is finished with it. That's it—great job sharing and being flexible!"



## **Pick your battles - success comes in small doses.**

Don't try to fix everything your child does wrong. Choose a couple things at a time. Start with problems you think your child can fix. Make a little chart where you put a star every time your child does one of the things you have asked her to work on. Success in some things will make it easier to have success in other things.

# Avoid Overload

Children with executive functioning problems get overwhelmed easily because they have difficulties handling a lot of information at once. Once they get overwhelmed they are just like the rest of us, they can't think or behave well.

You can help them to not get overwhelmed by trying these ideas.

## **Parents can be detectives to help children to not get overwhelmed.**

You can figure out what situations overwhelm your child, and also what clues she gives when she is feeling that way. Does your child fall apart when she is hungry? Then always carry crackers with you.

## **Avoid situations that ALWAYS seem to overwhelm your child.**

For example, if spending a whole day with extended family always seems to overload your child, then just stay for half the day until he gets a bit older.

## **When you see the warning signs that your child is getting close to overload, DO SOMETHING!**

Choose an action that will help your child calm down BEFORE it becomes a problem.



# Avoid Overload

## **Try to control some things that you know make it hard for your child.**

Maybe it is too much noise, or being hungry, or being with too many people. Maybe your child can't come home from school and start on homework right away. He may need free time to run around first.

## **When you recognize that your child is overwhelmed, the next step is to back off until your child gets calmer.**

No more correcting or coaching, just give your child a chance to cool down. Talking to your child won't help. Let her go to a quiet place to calm down.



## **Give your child a break.**

We all need to take breaks. Your child does too. Having executive functioning problems makes school a stressful experience. Give your child time and space to be comfortable without having to “work” at learning new behaviors.

## **When your child is overloaded, be understanding.**

Understand that some things will just be tough. School field trips, assemblies, holidays, vacations all include so many new situations, that even with preparation, your child may still become overwhelmed.



# Avoid Overload

**Kids with executive functioning problems often get overwhelmed when they get too many spoken directions, have to sit still for too long, are with lots of people, are asked to write a lot by hand, or work for long periods without breaks.**

**Make sure your child knows what's going to happen beforehand as much possible.**

Establish routines for day-to-day activities (getting ready for school, eating dinner, doing homework, taking baths). If there's a new situation coming up, go over the details as much as you can. Tell your child as much as you can about what will happen each day, and write it down when you can.



**Clues that children are getting overwhelmed might be when they get anxious, get angry, get hyper, or get stuck.**

**Stand up for your child and request accommodations and supports.**

Speak up in faith communities, with family and friends, athletic teams, and so forth. Get accommodations at school. Help the other adults in your child's life know how to support your child.

# Break it Down

Children with executive functioning problems can be very smart when big jobs are broken down into small steps, but they have a hard time with big jobs that are not broken down. Children may not be able to do all the laundry and put it all away, but they can collect all the dirty clothes. Once the clothes are collected and washed, ask your child to fold it.

Getting started is one of the executive functioning skills that can challenge children. Get to the smallest step that your child can manage successfully. Once she has completed that, then she can do the next step and so on, until the job is done.

## **Remember to provide the right amount of support.**

Not too much and not too little. For example, when your child was learning to zip his coat, you didn't also ask him to tie his shoes. As soon as he learned to zip, you stopped helping him with that job, and taught him to tie his shoes.

## **Figure out what parts of a task are most difficult for children and then focus on helping your child with that task.**

## **Use the 3R's of multi-step tasks –“Recipes”, “Rules” and “Routines”.**

When you think that your child can't or won't do something, try this before giving up: write the task down in small steps and see if that helps your child to complete the task. Put up a sign in your house that lists important rules, like no hitting. Practice doing a new thing the same way over and over before giving up.

## **Break any task that is hard for your child into progressively smaller chunks until your child is successful.**

For example, if getting dressed in the morning is a problem, try laying out your child's clothes and ask your child to get dressed one step at a time.

# Talk Less, Write More

Believe it or not, sometimes when your child won't listen to you or won't follow directions, it is because your child needs to SEE what you mean in addition to HEARING what you say.

The visual is a reminder, especially for children who struggle with the ability to hold on to the "memory" of the instruction you just gave.

**Write a chart, or list on a white board or a piece of paper that shows what you want your child to learn or do.**

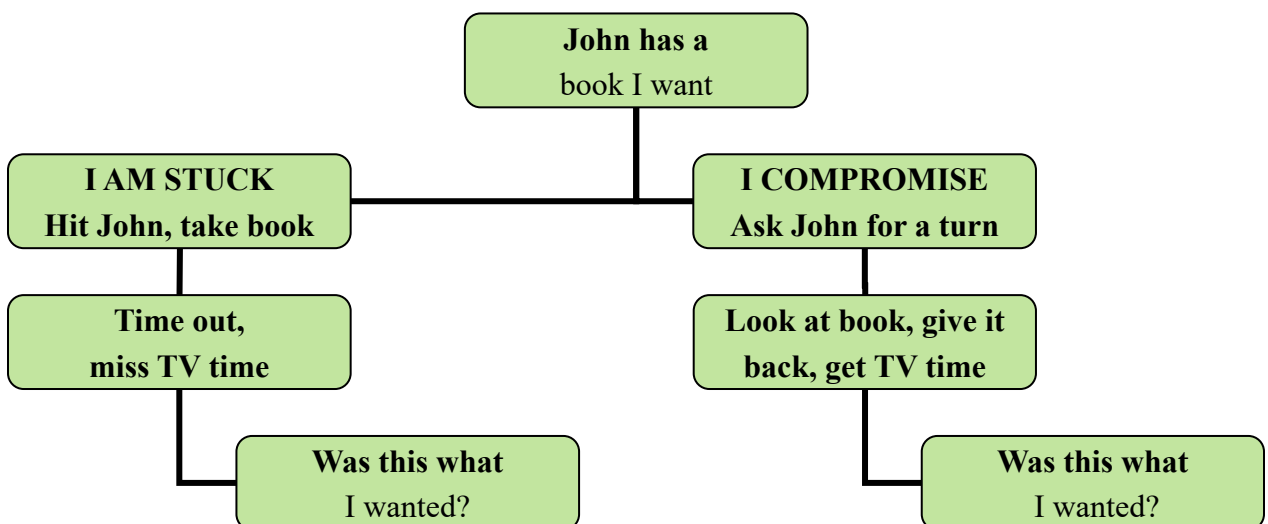
If you find yourself nagging and repeating instructions, try writing them down.

**Use as few words as possible, as consistently as possible to help your child remember specific things.**

That's why we have developed the UOT vocabulary that you and your child have been learning like "Plan A/ Plan B" or "Big Deal/Little Deal."

**Draw flow charts (boxes connected by arrows) that explain what happened in a bad situation and how it could have gone better.**

For example, if your child grabs something from her brother and a fight starts, you and your child can talk it through with the flow chart.



# Take Care of Yourself First

Taking care of children is hard work. Taking care of a child who struggles with executive functioning is especially hard. Sometimes you might feel overloaded or inflexible yourself! The lessons you learned in your own family about how to take care of children do not necessarily work for children with executive functioning problems. In fact, you are being asked to teach some things that you might never have learned yourself! So remember that you need to take care of yourself, FIRST.

If you are not taking care of yourself, it is hard to have the energy, the joy, the patience, to take care of your child.

**Participate in things that interest you that have nothing to do with your child.**

**Create a circle of support – build a team for you and your child.**

That includes all of the adults in the child's family, friends, school, physicians and therapists, support groups, and so forth. Share your feelings and experiences – joys and sorrow! Celebrations and frustrations! You can also teach all of these people about your child—your child's special strengths and special areas of need.

**Remember your child is unique.**

Sometimes your child's behavior will remind you of someone you know or a family member – even the child's other parent. Those could be bad memories or good memories. Remember that any inherited characteristics include both the good and the bad.

**Ask for help.**

Learning, using, and teaching these skills can be hard. Don't hesitate to reach out to family, friends, and others who can help you.



# Take Care of Yourself First

## **Don't forget other members of your family.**

Give them the love and support. Your child with executive functioning challenges isn't the only person in your world who needs and loves you.

## **Give yourself downtime.**

Make the effort to do something that will recharge you. Find a person who will take care of your child while you do something that is good for you. If you can, do self-care activities while your child is at school. During school breaks, look for special camps. Our support staff can give you information about how to get respite services so you can get a break.

## **Sometimes it is OK to split up.**

You may need one adult with the child who is having trouble with executive functioning while another adult is with the other children.





# Think “Can’t” Not “Won’t”

A lot of times, children with executive functioning problems fool people. It looks like they are being bad on purpose, sometimes even saying they are doing something on purpose, when really they are doing their best. For example, children could seem to be acting stubborn when their brains are actually stuck. It can seem like they are not trying when really they are disorganized, but they actually don't know how to get started, or they could seem defiant, when in fact their brains are being impulsive. They may look like they won't do something when really they *can't* do it.

**Once you understand your child's strengths and challenges better, you can explain them to other people, like teachers and ministers, so that they will not confuse the “can'ts” with the “won'ts” and help your child know what strategies to use.**

**Be a detective to figure out what causes your child's behavior.**

If punishing your child for doing something wrong doesn't work, then maybe he *can't* do what you want without support. Get help in telling the “can'ts” from the “won'ts” – Evaluations from professionals can help sort out what behavior is attached to executive functioning difficulties and which are not.



# Glossary of UOT Vocabulary

**Big Deal / Little Deal:** Understanding the difference between situations that are very important (the “Big Deals”) and situations that are just mildly annoying (the “little deals”). Never tell your child that what he thinks is a Big Deal is really a little deal.

**Choice / No Choice:** We have choices when we can pick among different options. There are other times when we have no choice, and must do a task or activity that may not be our favorite. “No choice” is only used once in a while, for things that are really no choice (like going to school).

**Compromise:** When two people each give up part of what they want so that they can reach an agreement and get some of what they want.

**Executive functioning:** Skills that help people control their behavior and reach their goals

**Flexibility:** Shifting from one activity to another, accepting a different way of seeing or doing things, and going with the flow when unexpected things happen

**Flexible thinking:** Thinking of a new solution to a problem and keeping calm when things don’t go the way you planned

**Goal setting:** The ability to set a goal

## Goal-Why-Plan-Do-Check:

**Goal:** Something you want or need to do, know how to do but want to do better, or want to learn to do

**Why:** The reason that the goal is important

**Plan:** How to reach the goal

**Do:** Trying the plan

**Check:** Stopping and thinking: Did the plan work? Do I need to try a new plan?

# Glossary of UOT Vocabulary

**Off-target distractions:** Another activity that can get in the way of reaching a target goal

**Organization:** Keeping track of materials, understanding the main point, seeing the big picture, and knowing what the top priority is at any given time

**Plan A / Plan B:** We always have a way we would like things to go, which is Plan A. Plan A will not always work out, so we will also need a “back-up” plan, Plan B.

**Planning:** Developing, carrying out, and modifying a plan of action

**Stuck and Unstuck:** When we are stuck, we are doing the same thing over again, and this is unlikely to get us out of the situation. Changing what we are doing can get us unstuck.

**Target goal:** Something you want or need to do that is more important than anything else you may want to do at the same time

