

PARENT INFORMATION 3

Strategies 4 Getting Things Done with HEN

Your child has to do and remember a lot in a school day; lessons to learn, rules to follow, friends to make, friendship issues to sort out, new teachers, different demands... And then there are after school commitments, chores, homework... Creating systems for success that help your child to Approach tasks confidently - with persistence and using their Supa Thinking - makes sense in their busy lives – and yours too.

Approach is the second A of The Triple A's 4 Getting Things Done. Your child has learned about The HEN Strategies today:

H	Hardest	Do the HARDEST thing first – and get it done.
E	Easiest	Do the EASIEST thing first and get motivated and moving.
N	Nearest	Do the NEAREST thing first – do first what's due first.

What's your Approach to Getting Things Done? Does it vary? Do you prioritise tasks according to their difficulty, likely boredom factor, due date, how much you enjoy them and how quickly you can get them done to build momentum? It's important to think about your own Approach to tasks, because it helps to teach your child about building a system for managing their Approach to tasks.

The good news is that there is no right way or wrong way. The only wrong way is to pack your bags and buy a ticket to Procrasti-NATION. Having an Approach is a successful step towards Getting Things Done.

You no doubt have watched your child eating dinner...many times. Perhaps they eat the parts they enjoy the most first, and leave the other items until last. Maybe they eat everything they don't like first, and save the most enjoyable parts for last. These sorts of behaviours often give clues as to how your child also Approaches other tasks.

If, for example, your child builds up momentum to eat the items of food on their plate that they don't really like - by eating the most enjoyable parts **first** - they're using the EASIEST thing first strategy. If you were to ask the same child to tidy their bedroom and insist that they do the HARDEST part first, they might not be able to build momentum to get into the task. Your child obviously likes to build up their task momentum by experiencing some early success.

If your child experiences this success, it follows that their self-talk will be Supa Thinking:

'I can do this!' or, 'I'll be finished soon', or, 'It's not that bad.' Supa Thinking - done repeatedly - gives children a sense of optimism - a very important concept for home and for school.

Optimistic thinking means that a child (or adult) is more likely to see something as achievable, manageable and even enjoyable – even if it's something they don't want to do. Here's an example of the development of optimistic Supa Thinking. You have asked your child to clean the rabbit hutch. It's not their favourite task, but they know that it doesn't take long, and there's a sense of satisfaction in seeing the happy bunny hopping in the straw when the job is done. Your child says to themselves, 'It won't take long. I'll do it straight away. It's not that bad.' Later you ask your child to put the bins out. Your child already has a sense of satisfaction at completing a job and their optimistic thinking comes into play. 'It won't take long. I'll do it straight away. It's not that bad.' What's happening is that your child's brain 'wiring' is changing. Instead of immediate Stinking Thinking – 'Why me? It's not fair! I always have to do everything!' your child's brain is learning a pattern of thinking that is positive and helpful.

Wonderfully, this sort of brain-wiring helps your child over their entire life-time. A child who is taught how to manage their thinking, as well as strategies for Approaching tasks, is laying down pathways in their brain that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

This week, take the time to observe your child's patterns of Approaching tasks. How do they manage their homework? Hardest part, Easiest part or Nearest Part first? Take the time to notice out aloud the patterns that you are seeing. "I notice that you always do the part of your homework that you have to hand in tomorrow first – the Nearest part." You might like to think about your child's chores – if they work well to a time expectation, then maybe some tasks can be given a timeline – "The dishwasher needs to be emptied by 8am on your day."

If your child doesn't have a strategy (HEN), introduce one at a time, reviewing it with your child afterwards. Children who are the most successful will know what strategy they use - and they tend to use that strategy widely. The more they use the strategy and the more success that they experience, the more powerful their Confident, Persistent and Resilient Supa Thinking will be able to fuel their Learning CPR Tank.

REFLECTION POINT:

Understanding your own patterns of motivation and avoidance when it comes to Getting Things Done is important – it is part of your brain-wiring. Patterns of success can be initiated by the smallest action – treating yourself to a new pen before sitting down to fill in all the forms for your new passport. Something as simple as that can motivate new patterns of behaviour. Many people buy a size smaller swim suit for the new season to inspire better eating behaviours. These are simple ways to motivate positive and productive patterns of behaviour.

What patterns of avoidance and motivation does your child have? Is there a small action you can take to change that pattern? It's often simpler than you think.