



# Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning

*By Joyce Cooper-Kahn, Laurie Dietzel*

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## **Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning** By Joyce Cooper-Kahn, Laurie Dietzel

**(2009 National Parenting Publications Awards (NAPPA): Honors Award)**

Executive functions are the cognitive skills that help us manage our lives and be successful. Children with weak executive skills, despite their best intentions, often do their homework but forget to turn it in, wait until the last minute to start a project, lose things, or have a room that looks like a dump! The good news is that parents can do a lot to support and train their children to manage these frustrating and stressful weaknesses.

**Late, Lost, and Unprepared** is a must-have book for parents of children from primary school through high school who struggle with:

Impulse Control (taking turns, interrupting others, running off)

Cognitive Flexibility (adapting to new situations, transitions, handling frustrations)

Initiation (starting homework, chores, and major projects)

Working Memory (following directions, note-taking, reading and retaining info)

Planning & Organizing (completing and turning in homework, juggling schedules)

Self-monitoring (making careless errors, staying on topic, getting into trouble but not understanding why)

Written by clinical psychologists, **Late, Lost, and Unprepared** emphasizes the need for a two-pronged approach to intervention: 1) helping the child to manage demands in the short run, and 2) building independent skills for long-term self-management. Full of encouragement and practical strategies, the book's organization--short chapters with overviews, summaries, case studies, tips, and definitions--makes it easy to grasp concepts quickly and get started.

Part I, *What You Need to Know*, provides information about: what executive functions are and how weaknesses in these skills affect development; the impact of weak executive function on children's emotional lives and their families; how professionals assess executive function problems; and associated conditions (AD/HD--children with an AD/HD diagnosis always have executive skills issues--learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, Tourette syndrome, etc.).

Part II discusses *What You Can Do About It* including how to change behavior and set reasonable expectations, and offers specific intervention strategies for children of different ages, varying needs, and profiles.

**Late, Lost, and Unprepared** is chockful of ideas for helping your child or student be productive and independent--today and in the future.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Drs. Cooper-Kahn and Dietzel have filled a very important need for parents-- putting the essential concepts of the executive functions into practical words and actions. They have written a book that families have been asking about for years. This practical guide will be a tremendous help to children, teens, and young adults as they learn the key skills to better manage their learning and problem-solving. --Gerard Gioia, Ph.D., Director, Neuropsychology, Children's National Medical Center

Here we have [one of the] first practical manuals for parents that is replete with realistic, science-based, and compassionate recommendations for helping children and young adults weak executive abilities. The authors are to be congratulated for their straightforward, clear, and concise presentation of the material, and their litany of parental recommendations for making accommodations and for managing and improving the self-regulation problems of children.

--Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D., Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC

In their powerful and thoughtful book, Drs. Cooper-Kahn and Dietzel have hit a home run for the team of parents and children dealing with organizational issues! This extremely well-written and wide-ranging book will inevitably become the go to guide for parents of children of all ages as they deal with the common problems of following directions, completing work, and monitoring their behavior.

--Patricia O. Quinn, MD, Developmental Pediatrician, Washington, DC, Author of **Putting on the Brakes: Understanding and Taking Control of Your ADD**

Few adults may know the clinical definition of *executive functioning*, but parents and educators who interact with a child (or adult) with developmental delays can easily relate to words like *disorganized*, *chronically late*, *forgetful* or *impulsive*. The label might be Asperger's or ADHD or learning disabilities. These are the often bright kids who seem to never be able to corral their knowledge to meet deadlines or specific assignments. Homework? No problem. Turning it in--well, that's another story. Science lab project? An easy A, if only he didn't leave it to the very last minute to complete.

**Late, Lost, and Unprepared** delves deeply into the world of executive functioning skills, explaining their role in learning and in critical life skills: time management, impulse control (in words and deeds), cognitive flexibility, and initiation, planning and organizing, among others. Part I of the book widens understanding about EF skills in general, including assessing your child or student's abilities. Part II, the *what you can do about it* section is page after page of positive strategies, highly practical tips and case studies that cement concepts and learning. A well-organized, well-written book that's sure to become a well-used addition to your home or professional library. --*Autism Asperger's Digest*, January/February 2009 --*Autism Asperger's Digest*, January/February 2009

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#### About the Author

Joyce Cooper-Kahn, Ph.D., a clinical child psychologist, specializes in helping children to successfully manage developmental challenges. Using her expertise in the assessment and treatment of learning, attention, and social-emotional difficulties, she works with children, families, and educators to build children's competencies. Dr. Cooper-Kahn is the co-founder of Psychological Resource Associates, a private mental health practice in Severna Park, Maryland. She is the parent of an adult son with AD/HD and executive skills weaknesses.

Laurie Dietzel, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist with expertise in neuropsychological assessment and the diagnosis of AD/HD, learning disabilities, PDD, and other neurodevelopmental disorders. Dr. Dietzel is currently in private practice with a focus on testing, training, and consultation at Dietzel, Butler & Associates in Silver Spring, Maryland, which she co-founded. She provides local and national continuing education workshops for mental health and educational professionals.

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