

Monthly tips and resources featured in **What's Next?** are created for young adults, their families, and supporters who are exploring options for life after high school in Indiana.

## Organization not your thing?

Issue No. 17, January 12, 2022



For many of us, organization isn't a strong suit. All that planning, preparation, processing, and prioritizing seems like too much work, but it's part of something researchers call **executive functioning**.

Think of it as your brain's administrative assistant, the person responsible for scheduling appointments, organizing your emails, submitting the homework, putting the laundry away in all the right drawers, and tossing out the junk mail. For many, those executive function tasks come naturally. But for those of us with certain developmental conditions or learning disorders, our administrative assistant seems to be on a permanent leave of absence.

The fact is, though, you'll need some executive function supports and workarounds to succeed in high school, college, or work. In this issue of *What's Next*, we'll talk a little about how to find the right supports for you and give you some suggestions and resources.

### Accepting supports

First things first. If you're a teenager or young adult, you want to be in control and make your own decisions. That's a good thing. But if a parent or therapist suggests you might need some organizational supports, does that make you feel like you're being forced into something you don't want? If so, take a step back. Maybe you need to be MORE involved in the decision-making process. Ask your therapist, for instance, to show you the options so that *you* can make choices. And if one thing doesn't work, try again with something else.

**Parents, special note to you:** You want to help your child and provide them with what you see are solutions to their problems and frustrations but try to see things from their point of view. Don't force your solutions on a teenager who is in the process of developing their decision-making skills.

Case in point: Your color-coded, comprehensive wall calendar might seem great to you, but

*Continued, page 2.*

to a teen it might seem overwhelming. What some teens and young adults need to “see” on the calendar are the BLANK SPACES, indicating FREE TIME. Focusing on the blank spaces may let them see the opportunities for video games, hanging out with friends, movies, and chill time. With that, the calendar becomes a useful tool they may feel good about choosing and using, rather than a burden. Then it’s a win-win, not a battle of wills. Whenever you explore an executive function support, think about who it’s for and how it can give them more control over their environment or time, or how it can make their lives easier.

## Visual, digital, people—or a combination?

Amazon’s Alexa or Apple’s Siri help many of us remember to take medicines or bring in the mail. However, you may want to work with a family member or support person to help you think through and research organizational strategies that could help you at school, work, or in your personal life.

Automatic bill paying, for instance, will save you from having to remember to send in a check every month, but do you have someone you can rely on to check that you’re not overpaying? Sometimes you may need a combination of a digital support with a real-life person who can set things up or maintain the support.

When evaluating supports, especially those that will help you in your transition to life after high school, consider ease of use and expense. In the Resource links below, check out the organization apps and tools, but be sure the tech is doable for you or that you can independently use a tool, app, or other support.

## Resources

- [Everyday Challenges for Young Adults with Executive Functioning Issues](#)
- [How Executive Functioning Issues Impact Teens and Young Adults in the Workplace](#)
- [Apps for Teens Who Struggle with Organization](#) (scroll down to the video)

---

*What’s Next? is a project of the Center on Community Living and Careers and the Indiana Department of Education.*

*For more information about the content of What’s Next? emails, contact us at [whatnext@indiana.edu](mailto:whatnext@indiana.edu).*

*Want to subscribe to What’s Next? by email? Send an email to [whatnext@indiana.edu](mailto:whatnext@indiana.edu) with “Subscribe to What’s Next?” in the subject line. Tell us your first name, last name, and email address, and we’ll get you signed up.*

*Your information will always be kept private!*