

WHAT IT IS

Executive-function scaffolding skills enable turning a foggy, overwhelming situation into a tiny, doable plan (the next 48 hours, then next week). That means prioritizing ruthlessly, breaking tasks into “first steps,” setting up reminders and structure, and reducing friction with warm handoffs and scheduling help so support is actually usable.

WHO TO USE IT WITH

Students who need structure, coordination, and low-friction follow-through. This includes students with ADHD or executive-function challenges (diagnosed or not), neurodivergent students, and students in a mental health flare (anxiety/ depression/panic) where overwhelm disrupts routines. It also includes students under high stress or trauma, those managing chronic health conditions or brain fog, first-gen/low-income or caregiving students with limited bandwidth, international or transfer students navigating unfamiliar systems, and students in major transitions (returning from leave, post-hospitalization, post-conduct) who need a steady point person to align supports and keep them moving forward.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What’s been feeling hardest lately, day-to-day?
2. Walk me through a typical weekday for you, from waking up to bedtime.
3. Are there certain times of day or settings where focus is easier or harder?
4. If we could make one thing easier this week, what would it be?

TEACHING INSIGHTS

Students presenting with these challenges don’t need five well-meaning emails; they need one clear path, so an effective case manager can align advising, faculty, coaching, counseling, and accessibility services behind the scenes, clarify roles, and keep messaging consistent while protecting the student’s privacy and agency.

They need calm risk sensing and documentation. Ask simple safety and functioning questions, notice escalation (sleep collapse, isolation, “can’t do this” statements, missed appointments), and document neutrally without drifting into therapy or investigation. Done well, this creates a steady “guardrail” around the student while they rebuild traction.