

Do I Need a THERAPIST OR AN EXECUTIVE FUNCTION COACH?

A Guide to Choosing the Right Support.



EF COACH

VS

THERAPIST

- Skill-building
- Productivity
- Organization
- Time management
- Goal-setting



Primary Focus

- Mental health concerns
- Emotional well-being
- Psychological healing

Action-oriented – focuses on structured strategies, accountability, and change; may touch on emotional regulation related to task performance.



Approach

Emotion-focused – explores underlying issues, trauma, emotional patterns, and thought processes; may incorporate skill-building when needed.

Individuals struggling with task initiation, organization, planning, and focus, often due to ADHD, learning differences, or lack of structure. May also experience mild anxiety or feel overwhelmed.



Who They Help

Individuals struggling with anxiety, depression, trauma, emotional dysregulation, or clinical disorders often include those whose mental health symptoms impact daily life.

If present, anxiety/depression is acknowledged and treated by a licensed therapist; strategies provide structure and motivation to reduce overwhelm and increase functionality.



How They Address Anxiety/Depression

Directly treats anxiety, depression, trauma, and emotional dysregulation using clinical interventions; may improve executive functioning as mental health symptoms improve.

SMART goals, habit formation, self-monitoring strategies, accountability check-ins, and productivity systems (planners, apps, schedules) may draw from behavioral science and coaching-adapted versions of CBT



Tools Used

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), exposure therapy, EMDR, and psychodynamic therapy integrate emotional and behavioral tools.

No licensure required; training in ADHD coaching, education, or related fields



Training & Certification

Licensed professionals (LCSW, PhD, PsyD, LMHC, etc.) with clinical training

Improved executive functioning skills, better task management, and increased independence can improve emotional confidence and reduce stress related to daily tasks.



Outcome

Emotional healing, reduced anxiety/depression, and improved self-awareness may enhance executive functioning as mental health stabilizes.