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AUTUMN 2024

# Homeschooling

*and beyond*

**Tips for talking  
with teens**

**Is your child  
a gestalt  
language  
processor?**

**Navigating  
the online  
wilderness**

**Help!  
my child's  
not coping**

*Remedial options*

**HOMESCHOOLING  
CONFIDENTLY** The way  
forward

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I've recently received many phone calls from parents who're concerned that things aren't going as well as they'd hoped they would. They want to know whether they should wait and see if learning/reading/working faster/paying attention/working independently/planning and prioritising tasks (the list can go on) improves and how to know when it's time to seek help.

I always get these questions at this time of year from parents from all walks of life, concerning children from various ages, backgrounds, schooling systems and abilities.

**“Get to know your child’s learning skills profile: their cognitive and executive function skill strengths and weaknesses.”**

# Learning frustrations



Dalena van der Westhuizen, cognitive development specialist, executive function skills coach and co-founder of BrainAbility, explains how to spot learning differences and when to seek help

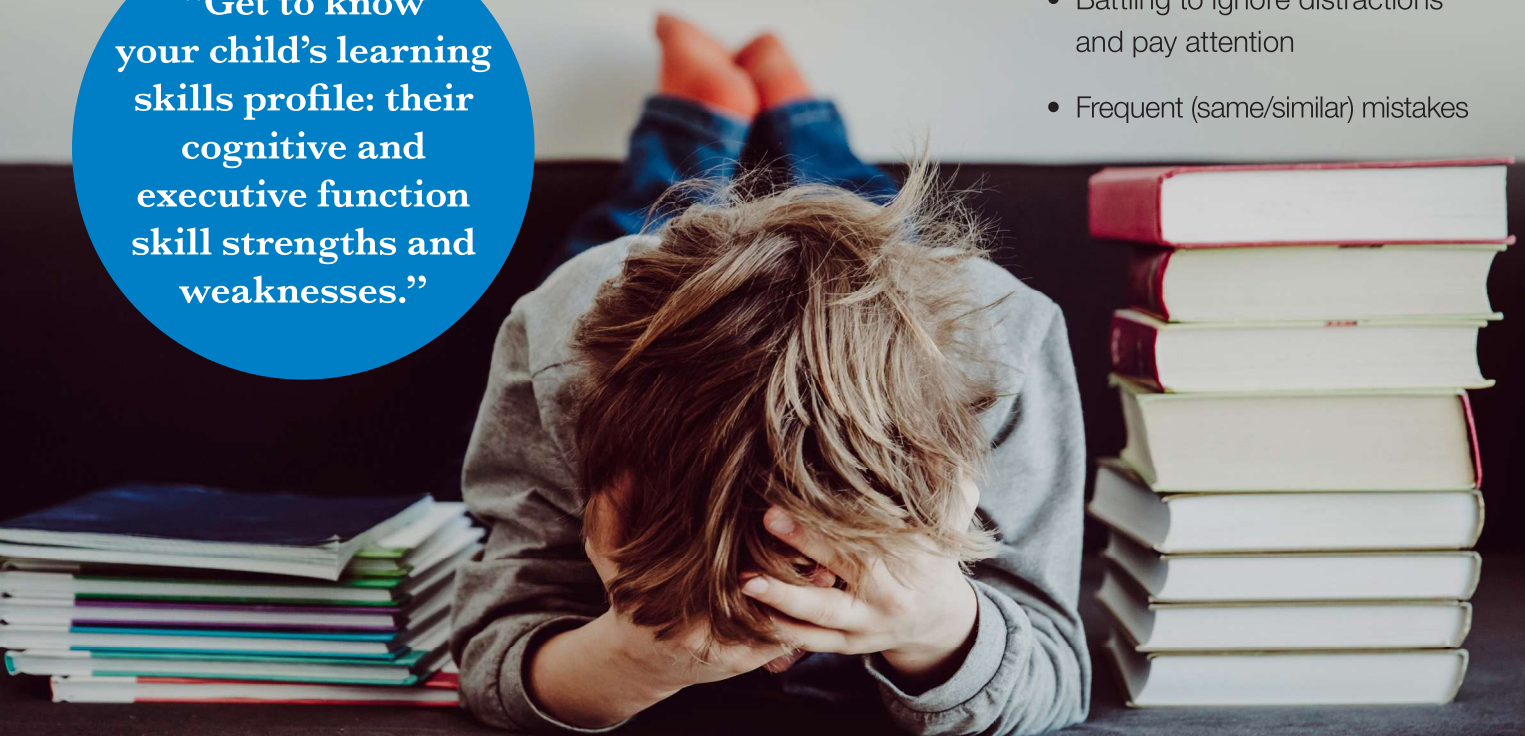
So let's look at these questions and the answers that have been shaped by more than a decade of intensely working with parents and children who, just like you, might be looking for the right answers.

Let's start with how to spot learning differences. While all children certainly have their

own sets of strengths and weaknesses and shouldn't be expected to fit a standard mould (especially when it comes to learning), there are universal indicators that help is needed.

Here are a few examples:

- Difficulty multi-tasking
- Battling to ignore distractions and pay attention
- Frequent (same/similar) mistakes

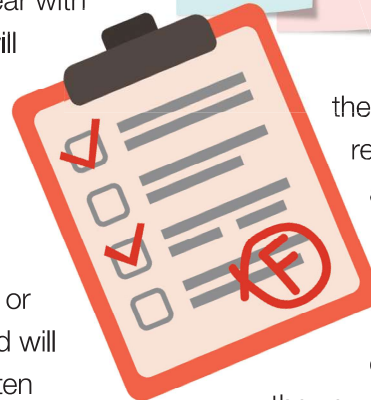
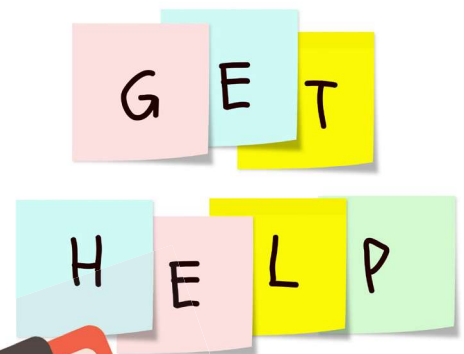


- Struggling with maths and problem-solving
- Struggling with reading, reading fluency or reading comprehension
- Difficulty retrieving information on the spot/under pressure
- Doing poorly in tests or exams
- Difficulty relaying information, especially in their own words
- Struggling to work independently
- Rushing through tasks and missing all the details
- Difficulty visualising processes or formulas
- Difficulty remembering or following multi-step directions
- Frequently asking for instructions to be repeated
- Struggling with planning, organising, starting and finishing tasks

- Having to re-study the same information a few times
- Taking a long time to complete tasks, battling with time-restricted assignments

### When to seek help

We often start a new year with the hopes that things will be different. We want to believe that trying harder, a new tutor or extra classes, a new curriculum, a new school, homeschooling or a different study method will change things – and often

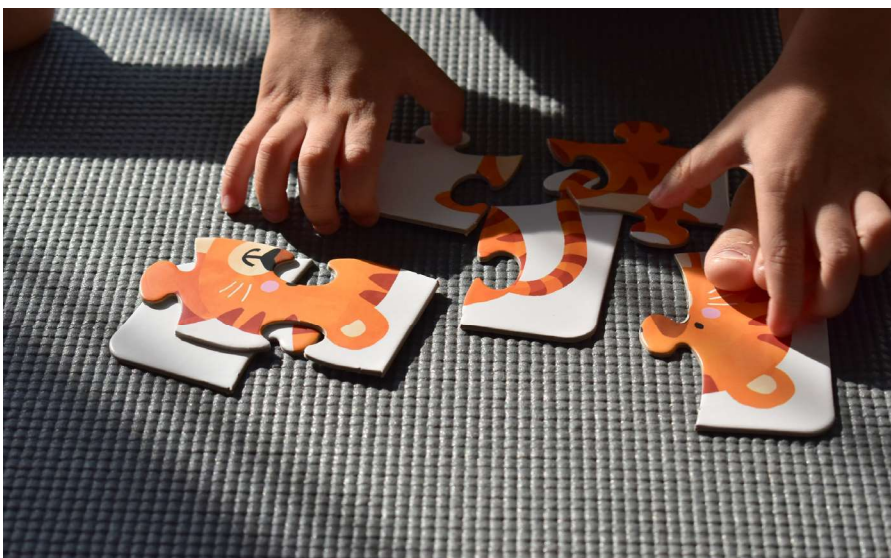


these things indeed result in small and temporary improvements. Yet towards the second quarter of the year, often

the very same problems and frustrations of the previous year start popping up.

This happens because the very first step in truly addressing these issues is pin-pointing what's causing them in the first place. Get to know your child's learning skills profile: their cognitive and executive function skill strengths and weaknesses. Only then can a plan of action be put together to permanently address frustrations.

As for when to seek help, my answer is always: "If a child's already getting assistance in the form of extra time, tutoring, occupational therapy, extra classes/programmes or frequent help from a parent, yet is still struggling or unable to function as an independent student, it's time to get help as soon as possible."





**“If a child’s already getting assistance, yet is still struggling or unable to function as an independent student, it’s time to get help.”**



### **Does “Let’s wait and see” work?**

I often meet parents who decide to take the “wait and see” approach because they themselves struggled in school, yet are successful people today, or they relish the fact that their child’s good on the sports field, so academics aren’t as important

or they simply prefer to believe that things will get better by themselves.

Some believe that waiting is the right approach, as their child “works hard and is doing OK”, or “loves going to school”, or “is homeschooled so that we can do things our way”. As parents, deep down they’re noticing little red flags, yet choosing to ignore them.

I then see the very same parents and children a few months or years later, urgently looking for answers and help. The reality is that our children are learning, growing up and facing a completely different world from the one in which we, as parents, grew up. Whether they like it or not, our children are facing international competition when it comes to tertiary studies, finding a good job and competing in a fast-paced, ever-changing work environment.

In the workplace of the future, they’ll need to be able to continue learning, operate at a fast pace, think on their feet, problem-solve and work independently. If they’re unable to keep up, they’ll be left behind – with fewer choices and fewer opportunities.

These may be harsh words, but they’re true – so please don’t “wait and see”. Act now!

