

Speech Pathology — Executive Functioning & Problem-Solving Services

Executive functioning and problem-solving are essential skills for life. In fact, they are the road that connects all the key points in a person's day, week and life! There are many brilliant and very capable people who are not able to realise their potential because they do not have these skills that allow them to bring out their abilities in other areas. When you say 'essential skills for life' these two are top of the list!

- **Executive Functioning —**

Executive functioning refers to all the small sub-skills needed for independence, organisation, taking initiative and planning and executing a course of action. This is a broad basket of skills and some examples include: sequencing, breaking down tasks into their component steps, prioritising, formulating concepts around time and how long a task will take or period will last. *It is quite common for very capable people to struggle to demonstrate and realise the full potential of their strengths due to their weaknesses in executive functioning.*

For example, an articulate, highly intelligent person who doesn't have strong executive functioning skills may be able to ace a maths or science test but cannot get themselves organised to leave for school on time in the morning with all the things they need for the day packed in their bag. This same individual may use significant unwanted behaviours when asked to do a writing task, because, though they may have many excellent ideas, they are not able to break the task down and work out how to move systematically through it; they can't formulate a clear concept of how long the task will take them – hence, it can seem like they will literally be at the task forever and be so overwhelmed, they can't even make a start.

- **Problem-Solving —**

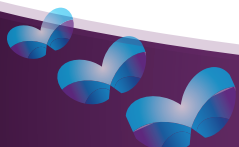
Problem-solving skills are technically a type of higher-level language skill. These are the skills required for interpreting and responding to whatever is presented to a person in a setting, interaction, task or with their own body throughout the day. We are constantly applying problem-solving skills to interpret and understand what is going on around us and to formulate and deliver our next move in response. *This is why people who do not have strong problem-solving skills frequently struggle with change and can be quite insistent on routines and expectations remaining the same – because they do not have the skills to rapidly and easily come to an understanding of the change, what it means for them and then work out how to adapt.*

A classic example of this is when a child has a substitute teacher in their classroom at school. The students who have strong problem-solving skills can smoothly and effortlessly process all the minute differences in how the new teacher will run the day compared with their regular teacher and adapt accordingly. Students who do not have strong problem-solving skills can become highly anxious when they have a substitute teacher, because they do not have the skills to interpret and adapt to all the small differences and changes that will be presented to them throughout the day as a result of this new teacher leading the class.

Incidentally, these skills are also essential for successful social interactions.

Support for Executive Functioning & Problem-Solving Skills at Fabic

The above skills can be very successfully taught and people can get to the point of using and applying them independently and naturally. At Fabic we offer speech pathology interventions to support with the development of these executive functioning and problem-solving skills. Each program is personalised for the individual and their particular circumstances



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OF NOTE — *These skills are most effectively taught when the person is supported to apply the skills in their everyday life, continually so. This requires a daily commitment on the part of the key adults or support people who are with the individual day-to-day. Without this consistency of support, the person may develop the key skills but will not transition to using them independently and successfully in their everyday life. As such, we recommend that families consider when the best timing would be to introduce these interventions, i. e. when there will be support available for the person to develop and apply the skills in their everyday life.*

As the family and/or support team for the person are such a key part of this intervention, we also offer training sessions for those who will be working with the individual in everyday life where needed.

Medicare plans, private health insurance and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plans can be used to support access to these interventions.

Executive functioning and problem-solving interventions are available at the Fabic Brisbane and Gold Coast clinics as well as in the client's home or other relevant setting via our mobile service to Beaudesert, Brisbane, Lismore, the Gold Coast and other locations as well as online via Zoom or Skype.

Meet Kathryn — Our Lead Speech Pathologist

Kathryn Maroney is the lead speech pathologist at Fabic. Kathryn has extensive experience working in the field of disability and the general practice of speech pathology. Kathryn has worked in private practice, schools, community health and the not for profit sector. It has been her absolute pleasure to offer speech pathology services for Fabic since 2014.



Further information about Kathryn is available at www.fabic.com.au/about-us/kathryn-maroney

For more information about the Fabic executive functioning and problem-solving interventions or to book an appointment, please contact Fabic by phone on (07) 5530 5099 or email at info@fabic.com.au

