



# Strategies and Solutions to Improve Your Executive Functioning

Tools for Life, Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program

Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation

May 2020

# Introduction and Goals

- The Tools for Life team is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by collecting and vetting resources for individuals with disabilities in the community, as well as their family and circles of support.
- The resources in today's presentation are not meant to replace advice or instruction from a doctor or medical team. These resources are here to educate and empower. We encourage you to take this information, do further research, and share what you've learned with your medical and support teams.
- All presentations and resources are accessible and will be posted on the Tools for Life website [www.gatfl.gatech.edu](http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu). We ask that you share this information with anyone that will benefit.
- We are in this together and together we are stronger. Stay safe and educated!



# Contact Your Statewide AT Program

Visit AT3 Center

[www.at3center.net/stateprogram](http://www.at3center.net/stateprogram)



The screenshot shows the AT3 Center website interface. At the top left is the AT3 Center logo. To the right is a search bar with the text "search on AT3..." and a "Search" button. Below the logo is a blue navigation bar with a "MENU" icon and the text "National Assistive Technology Act Technical Assistance and Training (AT3) Center". A row of six small images shows various people using assistive technology. Below the images is the heading "Program Directory - Find Your State Program". Underneath is a link "+ Need help searching?". The form consists of two steps: "Step Number 1: Select Directory:" with a dropdown menu labeled "Select Directory", and "Step Number 2: Select State:" with a dropdown menu labeled "Select State".

# Your Presenters

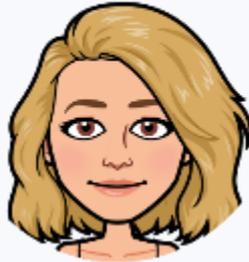
**Liz Persaud**

Program and Outreach  
Manager



**Sam Peters**

Program Specialist



**Tori Hughes Holder**

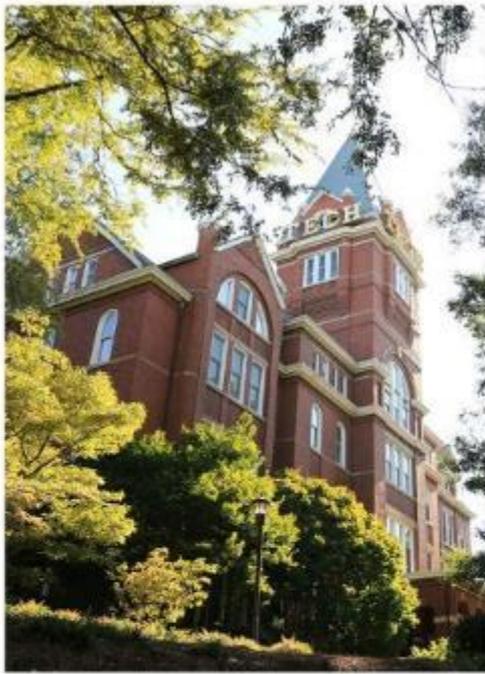
Outreach Specialist



# Today's Session

- ✓ Executive Functioning
- ✓ Organization - Home, Work
- ✓ Time Management
- ✓ To Do Lists
- ✓ Daily Routines
- ✓ Screen Time Fatigue
- ✓ Work Life Balance vs Integration
- ✓ Resources





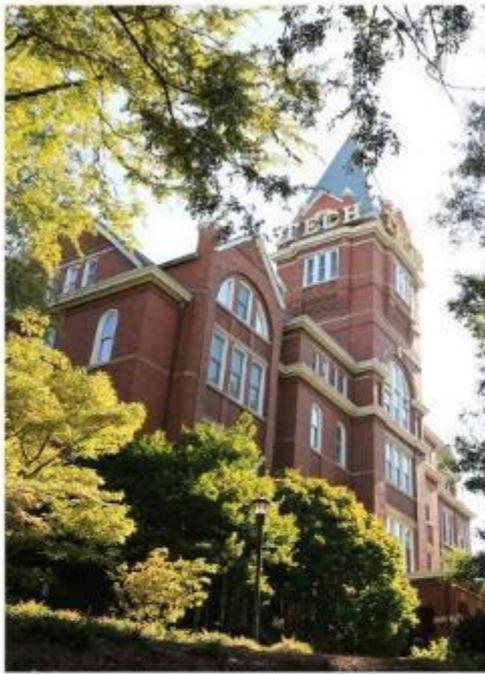
# What is Executive Functioning?

# Executive Functioning

- Executive function is a set of mental skills that include working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control.
- It is an umbrella term for the neurologically-based skills involving mental control and self-regulation.
- The executive functions are a set of processes that all have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal.
- We use these skills every day to learn, work, and manage daily life.
- Trouble with executive function can make it hard to focus, follow directions, and handle emotions, among other things.

## Session Notes

Today's session primarily references work and tips for working from home. However, we encourage you to think about how these strategies and resources can be used to benefit you in other areas of life.



# Organization

# Organization at Home

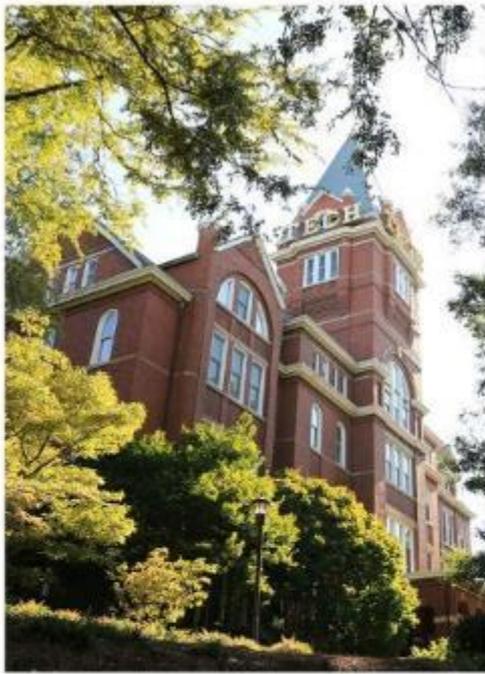
- Use a dry erase board or bulletin board to keep track of activities and important information
  - Phone numbers
  - Appointments
  - Bill due dates
  - Cleaning schedule
  - Workout schedule
- Create specifically dedicated spaces for work, sleep, and more
  - For example, have your meals in your dining area rather than in your living room or bedroom. It helps to separate the activities and create routine.



# Organization at Work

- Use project management software to help self-management.
- Can assist with:
  - Organization
  - Goal setting
  - Time management
  - Self-motivation
  - Stress management
  - Accountability
- Examples include:
  - [Microsoft Teams](#)
  - [Microsoft To-Do](#)
  - [Freedcamp](#)





# Time Management

# Time Management



- “Time management” is the process of organizing and planning how to divide your time between specific activities.
- Good time management enables you to work smarter – not harder – so that you get more done in less time, even when time is tight and pressures are high.
- Failing to manage your time damages your effectiveness and causes stress.
- Work smarter to enhance productivity

# Benefits of Time Management

- Greater productivity and efficiency.
- A better professional reputation.
- Less stress.
- Increased opportunities for advancement.
- Greater opportunities to achieve important life and career goals.

## Time Management Lessons Learned

- ✗ Missed deadlines.
- ✗ Inefficient workflow.
- ✗ Poor work quality.
- ✗ A poor professional reputation and a stalled career.
- ✗ Higher stress levels.

# To Do Lists

THINGS TO DO

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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MADE WITH LOVE BY BEAUTIFULDAMDESIGNS.NET

- These are **prioritized** lists of all the tasks that you need to carry out.
- They list everything that you have to do, with the most important tasks at the top of the list, and the least important tasks at the bottom.
- By keeping a list, you make sure that your tasks are written down all in one place, so you don't forget anything important.
- By prioritizing tasks, you plan the order in which you'll do them – now or carry over uncompleted tasks.

# Software for Time Management

- An advantage to using a software-based approach to manage your list is that you can update it easily.
- Instead of scratching off tasks and rewriting the list every day, software allows you to move and prioritize tasks quickly.

- MSWord
- MSExcel
- Microsoft Outlook
- MS To Do
- Gmail
- Remember the Milk
- Todoist
- Toodledo

# Daily Routines

Creating daily routines can be beneficial during this time, when our usual day-to-day activities and structure have been disrupted

## Tips:

- Schedule your day (each family member can have their own schedule!)
  - Include activities like meals, exercise, mental breaks, happy hours
  - Can use low-tech (white board, agenda) or more high-tech (apps, computer)
- Set aside time for schoolwork
  - Allows for an intentional amount of time to be dedicated without distractions
- Create a grocery list
  - Limited trips recommended to the grocery store
  - Can be low-tech or high-tech
- Chore schedule
  - A clean environment allows for less distractions and more productivity



# Reducing Screen Time Fatigue

# Screen Time Fatigue

- Increased video conferencing
  - Focusing more intently to absorb information
  - Added distractions (ex: texting, toddlers, TV), especially if lacking a private workspace
- The way we process information over video is different than in person
  - To “pay attention” we stare at the camera
  - Having to engage in a constant gaze makes us uncomfortable and tired
  - Avoid staring at a window of yourself
    - Can become hyper-aware of your expressions and how they are being interpreted



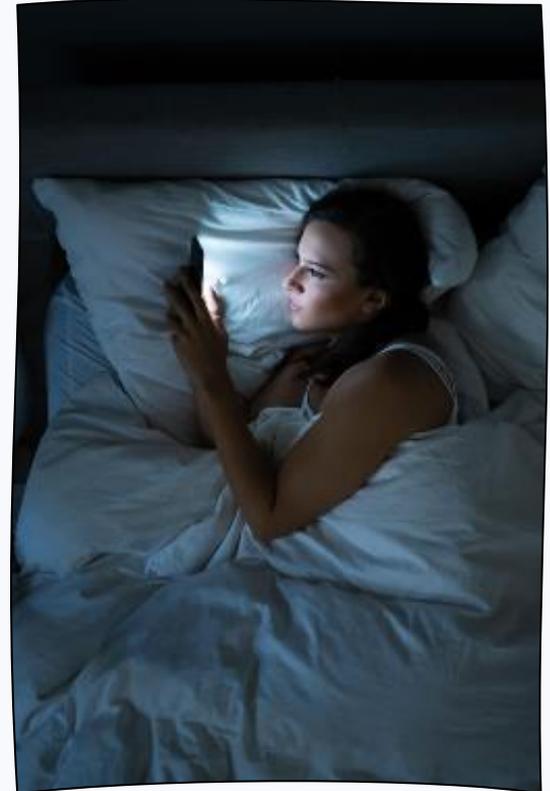
# How to Reduce “Zoom Fatigue”

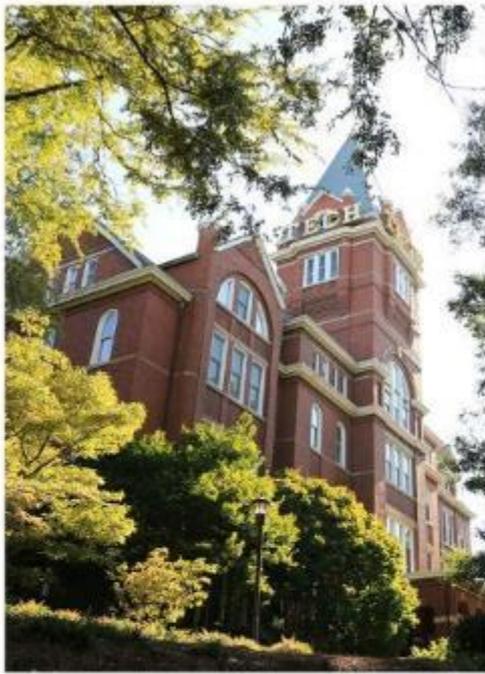
- Avoid multitasking
  - Close tabs, put phone away and stay present
- Build in Breaks
  - Look away from computer, minimize video, don't require video for entire meeting
- Reduce on screen stimuli
  - Minimize your own video!
  - Encourage the use of plain backgrounds
- Make virtual social events opt-in
  - Appoint a facilitator if it's a large group
- Switch to phone calls or email
- For external calls, avoid defaulting to video, especially if you don't know each other very well



# Turn Off Your Screen!

- Your eyes need a break just as much as the rest of your body!
  - Set a timer that will alert after a certain amount of screen time
  - Take “tech-free” breaks
    - Eat meals without a computer or smartphone
    - Read a book, but not on a tablet
    - Go for a walk
- Reduce your screen time before sleeping
  - Blue light mimics daylight and suppress melatonin, the hormone that regulates when you are awake and asleep
  - Checking your smartphone in bed keeps your brain active, which can then make it harder and longer to fall asleep
    - Cut off screens between 30 minutes and 1 hour before going to bed
    - Establish a bedtime routine with activities that do not involve screens





# Work / Life

# Defining Work Life Balance

- Work–life balance is the lack of opposition between work and other life roles.
- It is when the demands of personal life, professional life, and family life are equal.
- Work–life balance consists of, but it is not limited to, flexible work arrangements that allow employees to carry out other life programs and practices.



# Work Life Balance



- **Work-Life Balance does not mean an equal balance.**
  - Trying to schedule an equal number of hours for each of your various work and personal activities is usually unrewarding and unrealistic.
- **Your best individual work-life balance will vary over time, often daily.**
  - The right balance for you today will probably be different for you tomorrow. The right balance for you when you are single will be different when you marry, or if you have children; when you start a new career versus when you are nearing retirement.
- **There is no perfect, one-size fits all, balance you should be striving for.**
  - The best work-life balance is different for each of us because we all have different priorities and different lives.

# Defining Work Life Integration



- Work-life integration is often defined as an approach that creates more synergies between all areas that define life, including work, home/family, community, personal well-being, and health.
- Emphasizes gentle pivots rather than hard boundaries between different areas of life.

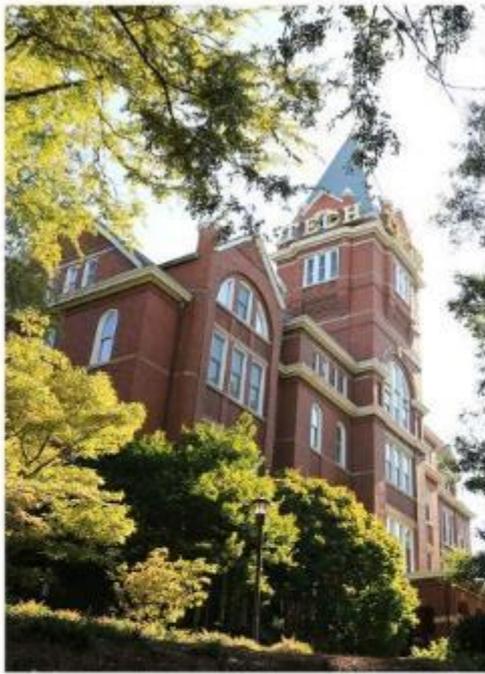
# Work Life Integration

- Blend responsibilities
- Create a schedule
- Work with a purpose
- Try not to compartmentalize
- Find your best work environment
- Keep the focus on productivity, not on time spent
- Coordinate with your significant other and family
- Remain committed to boundaries
- Adjust your priorities

## Example

Work-life integration might look like having breakfast with the family and drop off the kids at school, then work from 9am to noon, then eat lunch and go to the gym, then attend a work meeting in the afternoon, then pick up the kids and make dinner, and respond to emails for a couple hours before bedtime.

It's not for everyone!



# Helpful Resources

# Resources



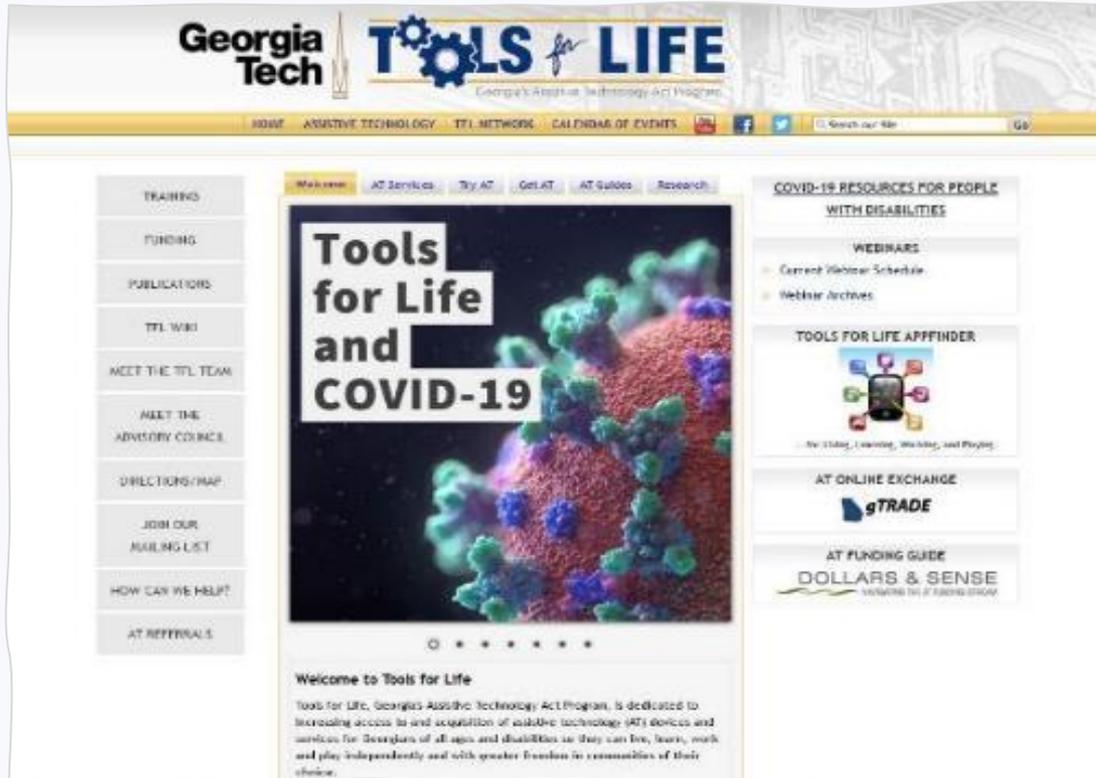
- Tools for Life - [www.gatfl.gatech.edu](http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu)
- AT3 Center - [www.at3center.net/stateprogram](http://www.at3center.net/stateprogram)
- Executive Functioning - <http://www.ldonline.org/article/29122/>
- Executive Functioning 2 - <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/what-is-executive-function>
- Microsoft Teams - <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7>
- Microsoft To-Do - <https://support.office.com/en-us/todo>
- Freedcamp - [https://freedcamp.com/SCICOM\\_Sri\\_Lanka\\_odK/Daily\\_Operations\\_VHg/todos](https://freedcamp.com/SCICOM_Sri_Lanka_odK/Daily_Operations_VHg/todos)
- Zoom Fatigue - <https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-combat-zoom-fatigue>
- Reduce WFH Screen Time - <https://hbr.org/2020/05/5-tips-to-reduce-screen-time-while-youre-wfh>
- Reduce Screen Time before Bed - <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/put-the-phone-away-3-reasons-why-looking-at-it-before-bed-is-a-bad-habit/>
- TFL COVID-19 Resource Guide for People with Disabilities - [https://gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=COVID-19 Resources for People with Disabilities](https://gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=COVID-19_Resources_for_People_with_Disabilities)

## Search by App Name or Categories



- Education
- Environmental Adaptations
- Hearing
- Vision
- Navigation
- Teleworking
- Cognition, Learning, and Development
- Personal Care and Safety
- Social distancing
- Mental health
- Productivity
- Communication

# Tools for Life and COVID-19



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Tools for Life website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Georgia Tech logo and the 'TOOLS for LIFE' logo. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar and a menu with options like 'HOME', 'ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY', 'TTL NETWORK', and 'CALENDAR OF EVENTS'. The main content area features a large banner for 'Tools for Life and COVID-19' with a background image of a virus particle. To the left of the banner is a vertical menu with links such as 'TRAINING', 'FUNDING', 'PUBLICATIONS', 'TTL WEB', 'MEET THE TTL TEAM', 'MEET THE ADVISORY COUNCIL', 'DIRECTIONS/MAP', 'JOB/OUR MAILING LIST', 'HOW CAN WE HELP?', and 'AT REFERRALS'. To the right of the banner, there are several sections: 'COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES', 'WEBINARS', 'TOOLS FOR LIFE AFFINDER', 'AT ONLINE EXCHANGE' (with a gTRADE logo), and 'AT FUNDING GUIDE' (with a DOLLARS & SENSE logo).

[Tools for Life COVID-19 Resource Guide for People with Disabilities](#)

# The Tools for Life Team



**Carolyn Phillips**

Director, Tools for Life

[carolyn.phillips@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:carolyn.phillips@gatfl.gatech.edu)



**Liz Persaud**

Program and Outreach Manager

[liz.persaud@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:liz.persaud@gatfl.gatech.edu)



**Martha Rust**

AT Access Team Manager

[martha.rust@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:martha.rust@gatfl.gatech.edu)



**Danny Housley**

AT Acquisition Manager

[danny.housley@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:danny.housley@gatfl.gatech.edu)



**Gina Gelinas**

Educational Outreach Manager

[ggelinas3@gatech.edu](mailto:ggelinas3@gatech.edu)



**Rachel Wilson**

AT Specialist

[rachel.wilson@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:rachel.wilson@gatfl.gatech.edu)



**Sarah Endicott**

Research Scientist

[sarah.endicott@design.gatech.edu](mailto:sarah.endicott@design.gatech.edu)



**Annabel Joyner**

AT Lab Specialist

[ajoyner8@gatech.edu](mailto:ajoyner8@gatech.edu)



**Sam Peters**

Program Specialist

[speters37@gatech.edu](mailto:speters37@gatech.edu)



**Tori Holder**

Outreach Specialist

[tori.holder@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:tori.holder@gatfl.gatech.edu)



**DeeDee Bunn**

Speech-Language Pathologist

[dbunn6@gatech.edu](mailto:dbunn6@gatech.edu)



**Sal Kibler**

AT Services Intern

[mkibler3@gatech.edu](mailto:mkibler3@gatech.edu)



**Ciara Montes**

AT Specialist

[ciara.montes@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:ciara.montes@gatfl.gatech.edu)



**Ben Satterfield**

Research Associate

[rsatterfield8@gatech.edu](mailto:rsatterfield8@gatech.edu)

# Contact Us



## Tools for Life, Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program

Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation (formerly AMAC Accessibility)

Georgia Institute of Technology

1-800-497-8665

[www.gatfl.gatech.edu](http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu)

[info@gatfl.gatech.edu](mailto:info@gatfl.gatech.edu)



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