

Multi-Tasking and higher level skills



SPOTlight
Trust 5.0

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Multi-Tasking & Higher FEDL's

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We all know how challenging 2020 was with the arrival of the global pandemic and the national lockdown that we all never thought we would live through. At times I felt as though we were living in an episode of the Hand Maid's Tale, with our faces all being covered up and not being allowed to interact with family or friends. But, as we started coming out of the higher lock down levels and work started to pick up again, I found myself trying to multi-task more than ever before and working more hours than before to try catch up on lost income earning hours from last year (I am sure I am not alone in this!)

The reality however is starting to hit me that the more I try to multi-task the more mistakes I am making (for example; I have sent out incorrect dates for our upcoming workshops multiple times, had the times listed on the website as 7pm to 4:30 am, and the list goes on). I am also finding that my time with my family is being negatively affected as I am trying to work all the hours possible in the day. Now my health is being affected as well, and instead of spending the long weekend celebrating my 40th birthday I have been in bed with a head cold. This has all started my questioning the science around multi-tasking that, as girls especially, we think we are so good at...

The reality is that no one can do two things at the same time; either you are focused on the one task or the other, and the overall result is that neither task has your full attention. I should have been more aware of this personally as my MSC research was about the impact of Cognitive Load on Postural Control. While the results were statistically insignificant due to the small sample size, the observation was clear that a child's postural control decreases, or they use more postural fixation, when they are focused on a task that is cognitively demanding.

"If you have to dual-task, remember to choose tasks that are dissimilar. If the tasks are similar in form and function, you won't perform them well concurrently"
(neurogrow.com)

Meet our team

Micah-Lee James



Speech-Language Therapist, DIR Fellow, SPOTlight course coordinator & lecturer

Favourite animal – Tiger.
Majestic beauty at its best

Where do you wish to visit? –
There are many countries I want to see, and I know we still will. But. If I am wishing, then... outer space

Your favourite celebration – My birthday. *I like to make a big deal about loved one's birthdays too*

Your favourite part about flying – *The take-off, landing, turbulence. And, jumping out.*

Your last meal choice on death row - *Curry, no wait sushi, uhm pizza, actually calamari, oh pampoen koekies...international buffet? Mm, it doesn't matter, as long as there is a shot of bourbon*

Thinking more about this topic today when I am sick in bed, and realizing that I have yet again sent out the incorrect advert, made me look a little more into this topic and I found this interesting article <https://neurogrow.com/the-science-of-doing-too-many-things-at-once/> and they say *Research has shown that dual-task performance is worse when compared to single-task performance. Worsening of performance from single to dual-tasks, referred to as performance cost or interference, happens for a number of reasons (Koch et al., 2018). Mostly, it's all about architecture – brain architecture, that is – and the mental effort required to perform a task or attend to a stimulus. In the 80s, a researcher by the name of Wickens proposed something called the Multiple Resource Model (MRM). The general assumption of the MRM is that while performance deficits occur when tasks are time-shared, the cost is less severe when the two tasks do not share common perceptual or cognitive resources.*

So, what does this have to do with attaining the higher FEDL's? The higher functional emotional developmental levels are all about grey area thinking. These are not typically focused on in DIR training due to the nature of the children we treat not often being able to reach these levels, but as therapists we need to be able to function in these higher grey areas most of the time if we are going to be reflective about, and successful in, our interactions. **Level 7 is about multicausal and triangular thinking** – if we as therapists are trying to do too many things at once, our ability to 'join the dots' in therapy and help the parents to understand their child's behaviours will be affected. I'm sure, like me, you have found yourself drifting off to your TO DO list in the middle of a session and have to work harder to get back into the moment. Well, my suggestion to myself is to try decrease my multi-tasking and see if that helps me stay in the moment more consistently. **Level 8 is about grey area thinking and Level 9 is about growing sense of self and reflection**, which again can not be fully reached if we are stretching our brains in too many different directions, and this will affect our effectiveness in therapy as well. I personally find that the more I try to do, the more fragile my regulatory capacities become; which means I take longer between sessions to regulate myself before the next child arrives, and more and more the time I have between the sessions is not long enough for this process, and so things unravel from there.

So what can we do about it? That is a million dollar question, and I'd love to hear your thoughts and suggestions on our FB group or Website forum, but for me I think it looks like this:

1. Schedule in more set admin times during the working day. For me these will be split between note writing/client correspondence etc, practice management and Spotlight
2. Change the look of my To Do list to reflect the different admin tasks
3. Plan more down time – I am a Christian, but I know that many other faiths including Judaism and Islam have a Sabbath, which is a time of rest and reflection. That is something modern culture is doing away with more and more, but something that Lockdown is helping to bring back – down time with family!
4. Delegating – I am terrible at delegating. I usually just do it all myself as the control freak and perfectionist I am but I am learning that we have teams around us, if not in our practices then in our families, who are more than willing (and able) to help us out. I just need to learn to accept that help 😊

Upcoming
workshops

PORT ELIZABETH | 15-16 MAY 2021

CAPE TOWN | 29-30 MAY 2021

Durban and Johannesburg dates are on our website and bookings are open. Book now to take advantage of our early bird rates



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