



TEFOS 2019

The Executive Function Online Summit

Hosted by SethPerler.com

The Anti-Boring Approach to Powerful Studying

- Seth Perler: Hey, what's up everybody and welcome back to the executive function online summit. I'm really glad you guys are here. Again, my name is Seth Perler from sethperler.com. I'm here today with Gretchen Wegner and she helps students while she works like I do with students, parents and educators because she feels like everybody needs to be working on the issues that we're dealing with there and, but she really specializes in helping students see she has an approach called the anti boring approach to studying, is that correct? And her and she really takes unusual approaches to help students figure out how to study smarter, not harder, how to get more out of their studying. Really. How do we learn? So, um, good morning. How are you?
- Gretchen Wegner: Morning. I, I'm still a little bleary-eyed I have my coffee with me so I'm imagining we'll pep up as we go here. It's morning time recording this just for the, the watchers out there
- Seth Perler: and today, what are we going to learn before we get into a more in depth intro?
- Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, I'm kind of known for my whiteboards so I made a few for us today. But yeah, since I'm really interested in the study piece, like how do we get students to study effectively and independently. I want to talk about the relationships between executive functions and studying. Um, I also want to look at what I'm seeing as the biggest reason that students struggle with studying in the first place. Uh, I guess that's an assumption I'm making that uh, students struggle, but I think it's, I think it's a pretty good assumption to make. You probably see that, right?
- Seth Perler: Well, for the parents who are here, who are here because they want to learn about executive function, I would guess that 99% of the parents are here because there's kids struggle with school.
- Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Right. And that studying to the students I work with too. Yeah, totally. Yeah. So we'll look at that and then we'll talk a little bit about neuroscience because I have a model, the study cycle that we'll do next that kind of summarizes the really complex, there's so much we know about the brain now and you can't quite teach it all to students or even parents without overwhelming them. So I've figured out how to consolidate and teach the nugget, the most important nuggets that make students take action, effective action on studying. So we'll look at both of those and then we'll look at some routines, some time management routines that I like to call anti boring routines that kind of help students, um, take action more consistently with their studying.

Seth Perler: Awesome. And I do, I want to mention that Gretchen has a youtube channel like I do where she's in, she's loves the, I use a lot of whiteboards but not on my youtube channel, but she makes all these quick videos giving tips about how she approaches helping kids. So check that out. Um, cool. I'm really excited to get into this because as we were talking in the pre interview, this is an area that I want to be better at in terms of my practice. You and I probably work with very, very similar kids, um, except in different parts of the country and we really probably worked with very similar kids. So I'm excited, really excited to dive into this. Before we dive in, we'll do some background questions for five or 10 minutes. I want to ask you about Gretchen, you, your personal background. Nothing to do with professional stuff. Who are you real quick?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Do you know the phrase I'm third culture kid? I don't, so, um, I, I think it's funny that that came up as the first thing, but I grew up overseas and until I was in third grade and there is, I read an article, thank goodness for the Internet and being able to like re like I read this article about five years ago and I was like, oh my God, that's me. And it's like kids who grow up, um, overseas, uh, but identify like I was an American, I just lived in Egypt, in Australia. Um, you know, you're kind of in the middle, you're kind of stuck in the middle between cultures. And so I've never felt like fully American fully anything. Um, because like I lived in a village in Egypt for several years and um, so I have just this wide like this, this child, like all these crazy experiences when I was younger that um, that helps me be the quirky person I would say I am today.

Seth Perler: Are you familiar with the term multipotentialite? No. There's a great blogger she coined this term and but it's like sort of this idea that we don't have to have one career and one interest and that we can really, you seem like that type of person that gets into all types of hobbies and interests and learning endeavors

Gretchen Wegner: and I'm having to control that actually it's, it's made me a little like [inaudible] cause they're like too many things. Like I'm meeting to make my business. I know you said not business wise, but I'm needing to make my business more like a little less crazy with all the things. But yeah, I have a little invention called the muse cube that I like to swing dance. I like to do art, I like to do Improv so

Seth Perler: I'm kind of all over the place. Cool. You seem like a two week kid I would've, I would've worked with. So. Cool. And, um, tell us about where you're at and then give us a bit about you professionally, your professional [inaudible]

Gretchen Wegner: and where I'm at geographically. Yeah. I live in Oakland, California. It's one of my favorite places on earth. I now realize the lake actually like Merritt nearby is just an amazing place to walk around all the time and you see people just so many different types of people walking around the lake and doing the different exercises. And Anyway, I love Oakland. Um, so what was the second question you asked?

Seth Perler: Professional background.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. So it's all this. Yeah, I think I want to go way back, but I'll make it quick. Um, I, I've always been kind of an, I remember one, a visiting professor from

Nigeria called me an egg head. I've always been an egghead. Um, and sometimes I feel a little shy that some of the anti boring approach techniques that I teach are just things that I figured out when I was 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 to try and make school. Um, sufferable so horrible word to use, but it's kind of what it is. It's like I tell students I can't, I can't promise to make it fun, but we can at least try and make it anti boring because you're responsible for your own boredom, not the teacher. And so you can try things that don't for your brain. But so I will as that kid who was just very creative.

Gretchen Wegner: I remember one time I was studying in high school, during dead week, I went into a classroom by myself. This was back then, we had blackboards, right? Not whiteboards. And I put, I think it was a science class, maybe chemistry. And I just filled the blackboard with tiny little writing and tiny little pictures. And so the entire semester of chemistry was on the blackboard by the end of that study session. And um, and I did well on the finals. So I've always had this mix of being really sincere about studying and also really creative and brought the two together. So, um, one of my first jobs was at the educational theater company and I like to tell people the name, cause I think you'll get why this planted some seeds in me was called climb theater and climb stands for creative learning ideas for mind and funny.

Gretchen Wegner: So from the very beginning I was interested in that and then I realized actually I want to be a teacher. So I went back to school and got trained as a teacher and then I landed in a classroom out here at a private school. [inaudible] realize I'm no good at trying to make kids do things they don't want to do. Um, and I wasn't passionate. I was teaching history and I wasn't passionate enough about the subject area because what I was passionate about was each kid figuring out the source of their own curiosity and creativity and, and figuring out their own learning process. And, um,

Seth Perler: you gotten a degree in teaching history?

Gretchen Wegner: No, I got my master's in education. I basically was like, oh, I love creative. I love creating curriculum. Uh, I should teach the, I should. And I, and I liked sustained relationships with students cause at the theater company I only had relationships for an hour at a time with the [inaudible].

Seth Perler: You and I are very similar and yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. Part of the way that I designed my business was because I was a teacher for 12 years, but I really, um, I, I actually thought about going into therapy, becoming a therapist and I didn't want like one hour a week. I wanted to really get to know my people. Like they almost felt like family. And that's happened. Like some of my clients I've had for three, four or five I have from years back that I'm still in touch with. And I really like connecting with human beings, you know, and I, so it sounds very similar and I like, you know, what you're saying about climb, like as I imagine you as a teacher, I imagine you in that school, it must feel kind of stifling to feel like in limiting and boxed in to it and you using like the type of person who has to really go out, be able to try things, create models. Uh, work with people, um, in very different ways, differentiate for different minds and see them very differently. And that's probably not the,

Gretchen Wegner: yeah, it wasn't really possible in that setting. And I tried and I too was not somebody who was interested in grading. I don't believe in grades exactly myself. I mean, I do believe in feedback and sometimes right.

Seth Perler: Numbers do provide a, just to give context before we started here, we were talking about that I don't believe in letter grades and um, but yeah, I agree with uh, assessment or like, yeah, like useful information about how a child is progressing or learning or isn't or whatever. So go ahead. I'm sorry.

Gretchen Wegner: Right. Yeah. And um, so actually I, I didn't get re contracted, it was a private school, so I wasn't exactly fired, but I didn't get re contracted because the new leader came in and he saw it. Yeah. I was this kind of explosive, creative person who needed a lot of mentoring around the parts of teaching that are more administrative and you know, not as creative and he wasn't willing to do that. The level of mentoring I needed. And that's how I accidentally stumbled upon academic coaching. I applied for a bunch of tutoring jobs cause I was just kinda desperate. And one of the tutoring jobs was called academic coaching. And um, in fact it's what I'll tell the story because it's perfect for what we're talking about today at the interview. Um, the person who interviewed me said, have you heard of executive functions? And I said, well, no I haven't, but let me just make up a definition based on what I think it is. This was like 10, 12 years ago based on what I think it is given the name executive functions. And I defined it apparently very well. And she was like, yeah, go research it. But yeah, you, you're, you kind of get what's going on here. So she hired me actually to start a school based academic coaching program. So I went from like zero to 20 clients immediately and I was managing two or three other coaches and I got to go to faculty meetings. So I got to interface between teachers and students.

Seth Perler: And she allowed you to design the programming?

Gretchen Wegner: Um, well I was using her model of academic, but her model was just simply eight sessions once a week for an hour or was that,

Seth Perler: but you had flexibility in terms of, because you were mentioning earlier that you like to design curriculum. I just, for anybody who's watching as people, this is mostly parents who are watching and I just want to fill in any holes that they, that some people may not know about. But for somebody who enjoys designing curriculum, which is, I think what you said, I liked to too, even though I don't agree with most of what's out there because it's a textbook and it's very, you know, follow our steps, but to design what I call creatively differentiated curriculum, which is just the words that I use. But so you've got to you, so you get started. It's kind of a blessing in disguise that you weren't, didn't have your contract anymore. And then suddenly you get into this field where, wow, you can really spend some time creatively helping students.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Because part of being an academic coaches connecting deeply with the [inaudible], the students asking good questions, hearing their answers and then going, oh, okay, I get what's going on. Let's try this now. And so the, let's try, this is like improvisatory curriculum writing and so that brings together both of my like special skills. I'm really good at making up interesting and actually like my

best ideas are the ideas that happened when I'm just speaking so likely. I think you're might be that way too. Like I bet a lot of brilliance will just come out today because we're in conversation with each other

Seth Perler: now. Why do you think I'm, because I'm guessing you're in the same situation where I am, where you see these kids and they're, they're just use the anti boring purchase. They're bored to death and they're in a school and there they have a teacher or class and, and we don't empower teachers to take an improvisatory. I'm not sure if I use that word approach and I know why I think we wouldn't do that. But why do you think we don't see many teachers or educational approaches that allow a teacher or empower a teacher to, um, go, go more with what, what's going on with the interests of the kids or the curiosities or, you know?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. I mean we could probably spend our whole hour talking to,

Seth Perler: for everybody watching. We will get into some real strategies for what you can do. But

Gretchen Wegner: yes. Yeah. I mean I think it's a number the, when you learn about the history of our model of education, you see that our model was built to create students who are good factory workers who know how to respond to instructions and change shifts when bells ring and that kind of thing. And so if that's what we're training students to do, we also need teachers or nothing but just poor middle managers, right? Who are trying to control the, the factory worker people. So I mean, it's kind of sad to say that out loud, but it's like that's the model that was,

Seth Perler: yeah. Well, I think that's important for parents who have not heard this stuff to here are some of what you and I and um, a lot of people will be talking about behind closed doors. Um, so keep going. Yeah.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. So I think that's, that's one reason is um, school is not necessarily designed for creative thinking. School is also designed to take all of the information that's deemed important to western largely white culture and insert it into the minds of students so that they can be productive citizens, productive citizens in the way the country is structured. So, um, and

Seth Perler: cause it sounds like some conspiracy theory and, and all that, but if somebody is writing the textbook, somebody who's designing the curriculum, who are the powers that be and why do for example, why don't kids learn anything about money and how to manage money, you know, oh my God,

Gretchen Wegner: that just be so incredible. Yeah. Yeah.

Seth Perler: There are hierarchies in our culture and the powers that be don't necessarily, okay, I'm not going to get too into,

Gretchen Wegner: so those are a couple of [inaudible] cause you asked specifically about teachers and so, but I know that so many teachers, and I was this way, I'm sure you were this way, all the teachers who come through my trainings are this way. They're

highly creative people and they want to do a good job too. They parroted this kind of limiting structure and also were overwhelmed with too many kids in the classroom. Kids don't really want to be there. So they're either compliant, like they're pretty numbed out and either they're compliant or they're not compliant with the rules. But either of that comes from a nervous system that's kind of um, in a, in it like the fight, flight or freeze state. So we don't really have a situation that helps people be relaxed, happy learners. And in elementary school, I think more than middle and high school. So there's just so many complexities that come into people feeling hemmed in and like they, they can't be their fullest selves in the classroom. And you can't be creative and improvisatory to use my word if, if you're not comfortable being your fullest self and gosh, do our kids with, with learning differences. No. What it's like to not feel like you can be your full self. Right? Yeah.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah.

Seth Perler: Okay. All right. We're back to it. I had to pause for a second there. Um, cool. So I'm, I'm really glad that we had this little talk. If you want to fin if I interrupted or you want to finish up on that, go ahead. But I, I don't think I've gone there with anybody who we've talked who I've spoken to on the summit yet and I don't, I, you and I could probably talk about this forever and I don't want to go down that rabbit hole anymore, but what I would do want parents to know who are watching this is that, um, we shouldn't just accept the way things are and maybe Gretchen and I have viewpoints that you don't agree with or haven't thought about or how bout or whatever. But definitely explore these issues and question things, especially parents when something doesn't feel right.

Seth Perler: I think a lot of times parents are, I'm also influenced by the system or the powers that be to be quiet. Don't be a helicopter parent. You know, trust us, we've got, if something doesn't feel right, explore the heck out of that and really go down that rabbit hole and, and be tenacious and advocate for that kid and, and be the squeaky wheel and really listen to your gut and you know, consider how you approach communicating about those things because um, you want to get the objective, which is to get your kid the services they need. But um, so how can you best communicate what you need to communicate but let do listen to your gut and explore when you feel that. Don't ignore that I, is that fair to say?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. And the way that I would articulate that just a little bit differently, but it's the same thing as listen to your body. Like in so many way, schools are anti body, so sit still don't move. And, and kids, especially the Kiddos that we work with are so in their bodies often in a painful way. Like, I was just talking to a client yesterday who back when he, now he's in college and when he was in sixth grade, he was like, it's just like fire under my skin, Gretchen. That's what ADHD feels like to him. And so yeah, parents, when you have a feeling in your body that says something's not right, do pursue it. Don't just assume that all the placating administrators out there are necessarily right. If you're not feeling right about it,

Seth Perler: cause they, not everybody does get it and, and does understand, uh, what's going on. And, and you know, we have an teachers or administrator, you know, we're human beings. They may have grown up with their own, um, dysfunction, their own ideas about the world and their own ideas about education. And it may not be right or right for you or for your kid. Um, cool. I want to get, I don't want to get distracted, but I think what you said is so important, and this is coming up in almost every single talk with the body. So I'm gonna, we're not even into the meat of this yet, but I am going to get off track here because I think it's so important. So you said, I want to say it's in the body and you said in our schools we do not really honor or empower kids to really explore, uh, articulate.

Seth Perler: Um, when you said that the kid, the kid with AVD said it feels like his [inaudible] on fire under his skin or whatever the word you used. Most of us would kind of let that comment go, but I think it's really important to say he's communicating something really important. And by the time we're adults, so I'm thinking of the parents watching this, probably a lot of the parents watching this. We are very disconnected as that all it's from our bodies and our probably like what the heck you talking about Gretchen and Seth? What do you mean my boss? You because our culture, we are very disconnected and I have spent 15 or so years like learning that it and getting into meditation and mindfulness and Yoga and starting to feel what's going on to a level I never even knew existed because I never grew up with that. And then there are probably parents who have gone down the rabbit hole and understand this. So tell us a little bit more about why that was so important for you to say and, and um, and how, what, what might parents leave this, you know, at least the next couple of minutes, this conversation with what should they know? What do you wish they knew or started knowing about this?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Gosh, um, what's the short thing? So when I, when I got my masters in education, I've always created my own major in Undergrad and Grad school and everything. And so I wrote about, uh, three different kinds of inquiry. I wrote about a critical inquiry cause that's like very important. Right? And then I wrote about spirit centered inquiry, which I think we don't allow students, we don't talk about it in school. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And, um, and then I talked about body-based inquiry and I was like, what would schooling look like at the time I didn't know about coaching and that now I would say those three are very wrapped up in the work that I do with students. But what would the classrooms be like if we allowed ourselves to inquire with all of these parts of ourselves? And it's what makes our students with ADHD so precious is that they, although they're not conscious of the body based inquiry, like their body is telling them things all the time about what's right and what's wrong and rather than telling them like, your body is wrong, what if we listened to that?

Gretchen Wegner: So maybe I'll just tell a quick client story cause it might be useful for the parents. I another student with ADHD, she, she hates reading. I'm sure you've seen that. Right? And she, um, she says, I can tell it's a good book. They're reading the outsiders the summer. I can tell it's good, but my legs feel itchy. She said my legs just feel itchy. So we've been doing, so I did some research and um, that's just what I do. And I was like, oh, I, yeah, what are some ways to read where you can

move your body? And I got all kinds of ideas and so she's to, she's now got a yoga ball in her room and she's gonna sit and bounce on the yoga ball while she's reading or kick the ball against a wall. Or, um, you know, you can even like be on a trampoline and read if you want to or sit on the trampoline and I kind of bounce. It's your bite a little bit. And it's like when we don't say that's something that's wrong about you, whatever the body is saying is wrong, but actually let's actually get curious and see. Let's inquiry into what the body is saying it needs. Um, so that we're not trying to turn you into one of the compliant kids who sit quietly trying to help you figure out how system

Seth Perler: can interact with the world. Awesome. I'm standing right now. I have a bouncy chair with a spring on it. This one wobbles like that. It's not a fit ball, but I use the fit balls in the office a lot. Um, I remember my first student, uh, he was a fifth grader. I was teaching fifth grade at the time and he was one of the, he had so much trouble standing still sitting still. And I remember this was the first time when I really pulled someone aside and I'm like, okay, here's what I'm going to let you do. I'm gonna let you walk around. You has to be in the back of the classroom if I'm teaching. Uh, and as long as you are actually, uh, someone engage, cool. And it worked. And that was sort of one of the first experiences where I had, cause I had to start questioning the system and all these things.

Seth Perler: And as I'm starting to learn about two e kids and complicated needs and stuff. Um, so, and one of the things that I do actually, when a kid will say to me, and I'll say this now, cause I think some parents can use this. If a kid says like, I hate math. I see it. Awesome. So let's stop right there. What do you mean? Where is hate in your body? What does it feel like to hate math? W B? Because when we're exploring that and then they can get a sense of, okay, now I'm emotionally safe, then it's not actually, I don't find that kids actually hate reading or hate math. They hate how they feel when they're engaging in this activity that's considered math. Now it may be busy work and then they don't like feeling stifled or they don't like feeling, um, like they have to do something where they don't know how to do it or they don't like feeling distracted if they're trying to read or you.

Seth Perler: But we have to really dive into what, what do you mean hate? That's a very strong word, so let's explore that. So thank you for saying that. Like, yeah. Yeah. And I love you pointing out, it's a strong word. Embodied emotions are in our bodies and so I love that you take a time, take time to explore where that is and help them. It's, it's fine to hate things. I hated school all the time too. Yeah. And it's what do we do about that? And one thing that I'll do a lot is I'll notice, um, I notice you actually, you just moved the pillow on the back of your chair. Yeah.

Seth Perler: So you're saying that you'll notice what's happening with clients giving you wait time to see what you would say, but yeah, like I'll notice what's going on. So we'll be diving into, let's say writing an essay or whatever the schoolwork is and I'll notice something in their body language, like the shoulders going up or the face changing or scratching. And I'll say, I'll just point out, I notice you're doing this and then I pause like I just did with you. Um, but I said, I noticed you moved the pillow behind it and you could have said, oh yeah, I was just uncomfortable. Or Oh yeah, this helps me feel more, more relaxed. But what I'm saying really is, is

that I noticed what's going on because when I reflect that to them, they start to have greater body awareness. But it also opens up, we haven't even gotten into what you're teaching today, but it opens up conversation about what about the deeper level.

Seth Perler: And so much of what I talk about in my practices, we always look at the tip of the iceberg. You're getting D's and F's. You're not turning stuff in. You're not trying, you're not motivated. You know, it's what's beneath the iceberg that that's, that's the magic. That's where we can really find, um, useful information to really help a kid out. So I'm doing a lot of that reflecting, and I'm pointing that out too. Cause parents can do, it's such an easy one to say that it's saying you need to get started. Why? Why aren't you starting put your name on it, you know, in the homework battles to, to be like, wow, you look kind of stressed. Oh your shoulders look tense. Wow. Wow. Your face looks kind of angry.

Gretchen Wegner: And that's body-based inquiry, right? Like what's going on? I'm starting with your body. What's going on

Seth Perler: now as far as the spiritual inquiry, totally. Something I never talk about, but I've been thinking about making a youtube video for a long time called the spiritual side of teaching because my teaching was a spiritual act of service to humanity. That's how I looked at it. I never, I don't think I've ever said that publicly.

Gretchen Wegner: I feel honored.

Seth Perler: But hello everybody. That's my first message to you. Like I do consider my life's work a spiritual, my mission, my, my work. Um, have you heard of indigo kids?

Gretchen Wegner: I have, but I, in this moment I'm not remembering what it is.

Seth Perler: When you said spiritual inquiry that just reminded me of indigo kids would be kids that are possibly highly intuitive, um, that maybe see angels or things like that. So something else. Explore

Gretchen Wegner: spirit, spirit centered inquiry in the context of education. Cause I don't want to, you know, it's hard, right? To get to, it's vulnerable personally, but also hard in the culture to get to into religion and or spirituality. But for me it's like where is the source of meaning in life coming from? Is it coming from just being a good kid and following your parents' instructions? Is it coming, you know, like where is meaning and how can we have this? Yeah, yeah, yeah. So it's like the heart, Spirit Saturday.

Seth Perler: Yeah. And I don't want to get into religious discussions either, but as far as spirituality when we can define it in like a term like that meaning yeah. Or, or something else that everybody understands love. This is an act of love and we don't say that much, but teachers are doing for example, they do because they love kids or at least they start out, you know, we have teachers who get burned out and stuff but um, but they love education. They love humanity, they love people. You know, in parents love their kids, they love their families, they love

their people. So, but we don't w you know, and that's the basis of every religion is love. Anyhow, I had a, this has become,

Gretchen Wegner: wait, I know we are going to go here, but each of us beforehand, like what would make this a great like and especially meaningful conversation. I said, I'd like to connect and learn and here we are connecting and learning or should we talk about studying?

Seth Perler: Let's reel it in. All right, here's, so this is still the, the pre questions but they're more, they're more linear and direct. So how do you help students and families specifically, what's your super power as far as kids who struggle with executive function? What's your super power? How do you help families?

Gretchen Wegner: It's still one of my super powers is just kids realize that Oh this lady is fun. Um, this lady is fun and this lady will tell me the truth. Um, and not try and pretend like, like that I say that I can't make school fun for you. Sorry. That's not what our work is going to be about. But we can have fun together and I teach, I can teach you how some some tools for not being born. So my other superpower which works with the students and also with the educators is I appear to be really skilled at taking a lot of complex information and condensing it down into a very concrete, easy to understand visual image. That then because you have it as a concrete concept, you can take action on it. Um, so in my work with kids, a lot of it is, yeah, just listening at the beginning to hear what's going on. And then I'm like, so collecting all that complex data and then narrowing it down and going, okay, I see the habit. That might be kind of your fulcrum habit. Let's work on this thing first and see, see how that might shift everything else or not. Um, and then move on from there.

Seth Perler: Meaning so that they could the, the um, what did you say? Fulcrum. What

Gretchen Wegner: fulcrum habit. Like what's the habit that's in the middle that might effect,

Seth Perler: that might tip it so that they can navigate school more effectively. And then how do you define executive function in one sentence and then you can explain it, but give us a w your one sentence and then tell us the, unpack it a little bit.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. I think executive functions are about being able to step outside of yourself and see something. I've never said it that way before. Like you step outside of yourself and you see yourself that's metacognition or you step outside of yourself and you see the future. Um, and so you're able to plan accordingly. So you're able yeah. To, to just have that one step removed so you can see more of what [inaudible]

Seth Perler: it's happening. Nice. I like that. So, um, there, there's a guy on the summit, he talks all about self regulation. That's his word. This sounds a, I mean we're all saying the same thing, but you're taking it from the metacognitive stance. So being, being able to remove yourself. Cause what happens when we are not executing well is we're not self-aware. We're not metacognitive. We're not introspective. We're not self-reflective. We're not conscious of what we're doing. We're not mindful of what we're doing. We're just automatically responding and

reacting to whatever the situation is. But if we can stop, we can actually think when you said future to get away from are more Wu part of the conversation earlier. She's not saying see the future like that. But to be able to imagine your future goal where you're trying to get you to finish a paper to finish a class

Gretchen Wegner: ready for a test for this guy.

Seth Perler: Cool. And I think you unpack that a little bit as well. Right?

Gretchen Wegner: Okay. Yeah. So I may, well I'm, well I don't want to, if we're still in the intro, I don't want to jump ahead, but I do have a whiteboard where I listed sort of the chunks of executive. Okay. Um, because the first thing I said we would be looking at is what is, how does studying relate to executive function? Cause some people are like, I just, I need help with time management, like executive function, not studying. But it's like, but so here is, I mean there's so many different ways to, to, to name the executive functions.

Seth Perler: Unpack that real quick. So what she's saying is there experts who will say there are three executive functions, some that'll say five, some that'll say eight. I just made a course where I listed 10 but they're, I actually will refer to 20 to 30. Like I might say impulsivity, I might say inhibition. Those are two sides of the same point. I might say them together. Anyhow. So just to set that stage before you get into how you listed.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. So this list that you're seeing here is from the training that I do for educators, but I just wanted to point out quickly that like, so managed learning how to manage time, that's an executive I like to say skill rather than function cause that's [inaudible] I know the word skill is like Oh yeah I want a skill. So um, if you're going to learn how to study, like studying over time and little bit of chunks is proven to be more effective than cramming before the test. Right? So you have to manage time well if you're going to study well, organizing your things. Like if you've lost all your papers and don't have access to the old quizzes to study from, then you're not going to be able to study well. So organization is so much a part of studying, planning and prioritizing. So looking ahead, the test is in five days, I'm probably not going to get the study guide because teachers don't give them early enough until like two days before.

Gretchen Wegner: But I could start studying earlier. How am I going to write in my planner the different things that I need to do that are effective. I'm not going to walk through all of these here cause we don't need to do that. But I think I think people get the idea or even like you mentioned the impulsivity. Let's this one, right? Yeah. Like oh I should study. Oh, but I'd rather watch youtube studying is hard. So what are some tools and tricks to set up your studying so that you are able to better inhibit your impulses when they come up? Every single executive function is intimately connected with the act of studying and preparing for tests. Yeah,

Seth Perler: they're all related. Can you go through the rest of your list?

Gretchen Wegner: Oh, do you app? Yes, but I threw it on the floor. Um,

Seth Perler: I love it. No, I want you to go through it. This fantastic.

Gretchen Wegner: Okay. Yeah.

Seth Perler: Time organizing, planning and prioritizing.

Gretchen Wegner: And then

Seth Perler: those two together.

Gretchen Wegner: Planning and prioritizing. I did it just cause I in the model that I was teaching, I needed to do a few every week and so I needed to break it down and kind of like you said, it's sometimes it's easier to clump. Yeah. Um, so then, uh, this one I can't read backwards assessing your working memory. Oh my goodness. Working memory is so important in studying because I don't, I don't know if people know what working memory results, but the, the quick version is I like to draw three little bubbles. Would I do this? Like there's longterm memory, that bubble short term memory and then working memory is like if you're solving a math problem, two plus three plus four equals wet, then then you're using your working memory. You're holding those numbers right now and using them to do something with them. Um, so when you're

Seth Perler: working on something you just temporary, it's just like temporary storage.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, exactly. That's a good phrase. Temporary storage for the information and so studying, that's what you're doing. Your either learning for kids. Many of our kids with learning differences struggle with working memory. So one of the things you have to learn how to do when you're studying is how to use paper as your working memory and how to take better notes so that you're getting out of your head and onto your paper and then manipulating it that way rather than manipulating it. Like in, in your mind,

Seth Perler: how do you know if your kid struggles with working memory?

Gretchen Wegner: Um, I mean, I always have my, my students always have the neuropsych report, so [inaudible] so that's always what I, what I see. So I have the clue ahead of time, but what would you say, what's a, what's a clue if you don't have a neuro psych? That working memory is hard.

Seth Perler: One that I see a lot, well, one one that I see a lot is just plain forgetfulness.

Seth Perler: Yeah. So, you know, hey, can you go grab this, this and this? And the child may forget one, two, or all three of the things. I'm another, I see a lot with middle school students or middle or high school students, but middle school students often, uh, that are good at math. They used to be able to use their working memory well enough with math to track things than they don't want to write their work and show their work. You said using paper as working memory as brilliant, but they don't want to show all their work. So they miss in their working memory. Uh, as they're juggling the math stuff, they miss one detail, the whole answer's wrong. And some teachers give credit for work, someone if they

don't show their work and they miscalculated one thing in their working memory or multiple things and that's going to be wrong. So that's a way that I see it sometimes.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Well said. Yeah. I saw it with my 11 year old nephew who was just visiting me for 10 days, you know, and, and some of this is learning differences and some of this is just kids. Kids are human beings who have executive dysfunction, period. That's just distracting. Yeah. And so I would say, Hey Sebastian, can you take out the trash and could you do this and can you do that? And he might remember the first one, but definitely not the other. So, so initiating tasks is the next one, like getting started. This is like one of the single biggest issues I work on with all my clients.

Seth Perler: And that's where I talk about resistance a lot. Yeah,

Gretchen Wegner: exactly. Exactly.

Seth Perler: So in other words, procrastination.

Gretchen Wegner: Yes. Right, right. And I, you know, cause I like using antibody, anti boring. So anti procrastination tools. What are some tools that help you initiate tasks? And then once you've successfully initiated God, how do you sustain your attention so that you don't waste the beautiful, the beautiful effort that you put into initiating?

Seth Perler: How do you keep going? How do you follow through?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, and especially when studying, because studying is so vulnerable because it reveals to you what you know and what you don't know. And then when you see what you don't know, you have all these thoughts coming in. I'm stupid, I'm dumb. This is gonna take too long. I'm going to make an F. I'm going to disappoint my family. So when you're studying kids can receive that onslaught and how do you persist even in the face of that extreme vulnerability and that extreme negative self talk. So that's like a toolkit in and of itself.

Seth Perler: And can I mention two that negative self talk, that inner critic. As that goes off we are having the embodied experience, we are feeling something in our body that is

Gretchen Wegner: the heat from the, for me, my cheeks get red, I feel the pain in my stomach

Seth Perler: so our kids are having, you know I I often say school is an emotional experience because they are having these feelings going on

Gretchen Wegner: and then think about a classroom of like when I, when I was a classroom teacher at a public school and I had a 150 students coming through my day and then bodies received the experience other bodies whether we like it or not. And I was exhausted at the end of the day, partially because I was like I have 150 different like emotional systems coming through my classes.

Seth Perler: Yeah. Our nervous systems are co-regulating and bouncing off. Yeah.

Gretchen Wegner: Terrible. So I'm sustaining attention and focus and then completing tasks and persisting towards goals. Those could be seen as separate executive functions. But again, I put them together here also because I was running out of room as you can see, I break it up like that too. Yeah,

Seth Perler: it's a self-starting um, file, um, uh, task persistence and then task completion. Yeah.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, exactly. And then these last three that I lost, or four, actually one, two, three, four that I lost based around, these are more of the metacognition, understanding yourself. So understanding, self, controlling your emotions, learning how to be flexible and then inhibiting your, your impulses.

Seth Perler: I haven't heard anyone talk about the flexibility. So what, you mentioned that one real quick.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. So a lot of my students will say, I don't want to plan because I know I'm not going to follow the plan and then I'm going to hate myself. And it's like, well, plant. And I say it's so much plans are meant to be made but not necessarily followed. I say the same thing.

Seth Perler: You don't even necessarily have to do it. Yep.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Cause when you're making the plan, you're rehearsing something, you're, you're creating a set of pathways in your brain for what's about to happen. And then it's some kids do, some of the very sincere students who are like overly perfectionist, do then try to execute exactly the plan that was made, but then they're not being in the present moment because we make the plan and then life happens. And so we have to learn how to move with, oh, I have to go to grandma's tonight for dinner. Well, I thought I was going to I, my plan was to do x, Y, and Z flashcards or whatever. Um, so you have to kind of learn how to work with that. And it's, it's very hard for me as a grown up to be flexible. Sometimes

Seth Perler: a flexibility can be developed, especially when you metacognition will, you learn about it and start to talk about it and,

Gretchen Wegner: yeah. And that's one thing coaches do, right? So it's like what? So we made the plan. And then the next question usually is what could go wrong with the plan? And so we start rehearsing po a few different possible flexible options if the plan doesn't go well, of course we can't know for sure what the options will be cause we don't know what the future will bring. But um, but the, but that's how we're practicing flexibility in our coaching sessions. All right.

Seth Perler: And then the next one is when you're working with a family or when you're working with a student who struggles with executive function, what's your a to B? In other words, a student starts working with you, family comes to you say, Hey Gretchen, we've, we are struggling with this. And then you get to a point B where the family is like, thank you so much. We're in a different place. And you're like, yeah, good and you guys don't need me anymore. Awesome. Move on. What, how do you describe those two

Gretchen Wegner: places? Yeah. I think it's actually, I'll answer that. And I want to say first that some students will always need some kind of coaching or intervention or some kind of team. Many of our kids, especially like this young man who I've been seeing off and on since he was in sixth grade with ADHD, he is all was going to need some kind of external mentorship and support. I still struggle. I legitimately struggle and I've learned to compensate. But yeah. So I just want to name that so families don't feel bad and point. Yeah. Yeah. And I'm not saying that cause it's like I make money off of continuing to, I actually like to, I like to graduate people away from me and if they stay with me too long and still need coaching, then it's like, well let's get a different mind in to work with you because I think I may have like enough to just be nicer for you or you've heard everything I have to say.

Seth Perler: So then in terms of like when they've, you know, when, when they move the needle and it's significantly different, what's that look like?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. So, um, there are two different types of students. There's the one type who just doesn't know how to study and they're just like, I keep on, I study so hard and I'm still making ds or cs or bs, whatever the bad grade is for them on tests and that they're an easier group to work with because it's like they don't necessarily have a lot of executive dysfunction. They just haven't been taught how to study because let's face it, we don't teach this skill to students. And so that ADB is, I teach them a toolbox, like I walk them through my, my online course and then we, in our sessions, they do that outside our sessions and our sessions, we practice the tools that they think will be helpful. I like to have this image of the toolbox and I, I, you know, cause I like to have images. I have a toolbox here and it's just got regular tools. But my idea is when you work with me, you will go from having just one or two little tools in your toolbox to having an overflowing toolbox so that you always know, like in a moment you can troubleshoot for yourself and go off. I was using isn't the planner's not working anymore? What's a new tool I could use and the study cycle that we're about to learn as kind of the main tool in there. So that's why I always have that.

Seth Perler: I use that metaphor myself, my, my, uh, when people sign up for my list, I send out a toolkit. But it's, it's exactly as you say, like they, you have to know how to use these tools and we can get better and better and better. But kids don't even know that there is a toolbox. They're drinking randomly.

Gretchen Wegner: Exactly. Seems to look like studying. Yes, exactly. And so for some, the students who come to me with some kind of an extreme diagnosis, they won't actually get a full toolbox right away. Uh, because that's, that's another developmental level for them. They might need to understand that there is a tool and that you can use it and let's just practice using that one tool, whatever it might be, the planner or setting reminders or you know, whatever. Um, so when I'm working with that kind of family, we just sort of slow way down and sometimes for a semester all I'm doing is helping triage in the moment so that I can understand them better before I ever help build some consciousness around what the tools are.

Seth Perler: Okay. Yeah. And triage is what drives where I start my coaching price process usually. Yeah. Okay, cool. So then that student gets the point B and that point B is like they've got a toolbox, they can use it fairly well. Yeah, definitely. And then what's type two?

Gretchen Wegner: Oh, well, so the, the first student is just, just needs the studying and then they get the toolbox and they can use it pretty well. The type two is the student who comes in with a lot of executive skill deficits and is just like life feels chaotic to the student and the family and that's where we're in triage together. Um, and that's where usually, you know, the stages of competency is actually, maybe that's the best answer. How do we move from A to B? It's like first the student needs to become, many students don't actually realize where their incompetencies are. Right? They just know life sucks. And so we have to help bring awareness.

Seth Perler: Let the DK dk. Yes. They don't know is that, is that, I don't know about stages of competency model or not, but Da da is they don't know that they don't know something and she's the Gretchen is saying that we have to even get them to unders understand that there's a problem, then you can start to get willingness to work on the problem, et Cetera.

Gretchen Wegner: Right, right. And many families want to come in like I've got, I want to see the grades better and we need to get work turned in. And it's like, well you're,

Gretchen Wegner: yes. Yeah, exactly. And your student actually may not yet make the connection that they're missing work, that they have a lot of missing work. They just see each one individually, but they may not see the patterns yet and they may not see the connection between the patterns and the low grades. And so it might take a full semester of me collecting data with them and me being a quiet nervous system because you parent probably have a freaked out nervous system and so your kid can't even hear you when you're pointing those patterns out to you to them. So I kind of helped them see the patterns. And so that might be all we'll do in a semester is get to the

Seth Perler: a point where the kid goes, oh,

Gretchen Wegner: this really is a problem next semester. I want to really work on turning work in.

Seth Perler: And I think that goes back to what you said earlier about, you know, some people will be working on this for years or for the rest of their life and a, and what is progress? And I think that, um, uh, parents often want to see progress in these tangible ways that we've sort of been indoctrinated into, into looking at. But that you really have to look at progress in other ways. And say, wow, the fact that the kid knows and cares can be a massive progress for a lot of kids. Huge. Yes. So you gotta really step back. We have stepped back as adults and say, what are we actually trying to accomplish here? It may not be the tip of the iceberg and what we think. Um, maybe other things. So that ties right into what are, what are some of the blind spots that you see for families that are coming to, what is their dk dk?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, I mean, I would say the biggest blind spot, um, is on the side of the parents. Sorry, parents. Well that's who's watching. They want to learn. Yeah. And I think, so I heard myself saying at a talk recently is like, and so maybe this might be the most important thing that a parent like it may be more important than the study cycle when I'm about to say is that every parent needs at least three ways to self soothe and to calm their anxiety that don't include their child's behavior changing. And so I see a lot of families wanting to do coaching. Of course they want it for their kids. They love their kid, they want the grades better. And what they're not really naming is, I'm so anxious, I need my kid's behavior to change so that my life doesn't have to be so anxious. And if that, if that's happening, like I'm happy to work with your kid and to support your kid and I really need you to do the emotional work that you can do to calm your own anxiety because your kid is taking is like like a sponge, sucking in your anxiety about your anxiety, about their future, and they're not going to be able to grow as fast in my work. If you don't have three things you can do on a daily or weekly basis to calm your own anxiety that don't include their behavior changing.

Seth Perler: I liked that you put the number three on it. It doesn't matter if it's three or 10 or 50 but just to, to put a structure around, look, be consciously working on some of these things and I'll throw out what some of my things could be cause I talk, I talk about that as adults. We need to be doing our own deep inner work. We Mirror to our kids. Um, they, we speak nervous system and nervous system. They're vibing off of us. Um, and, and when we mirror, when we, uh, model, excuse me, that we are care enough about ourselves to do our own work on ourselves too, without even telling them. They see that, they feel it, they learn it, they learn from us that that is important. And then that's what an adult does. And they can journal, they can read self-development books, they can go to therapy themselves, they can go to self help groups. Um, they can go to Facebook groups, they can meditate. What are some that you,

Gretchen Wegner: well, just more body ones. You can go work out. You can, oh my goodness. Go. What did the, the take a tree bath is that the Japanese word sprays for it. Like go be in nature. Um, get into your breath. Like 20 minutes of cardiovascular can do amazing things to change your chemicals inside you.

Seth Perler: Cool. I've been doing a lot of breathwork lately. Wim Hoff and two-stage breathwork. If anybody wants to look that up. It's been amazing for me. I'm awesome. Awesome. So, so one of that was one of the big blind spots and then I'm going to ask about, um, it'd be fun cause I do want to get into the study cycle and we may go longer on this one if that's okay with you. But this is such a nice foundation getting to that point. Um, what blocks, well this might be the same answer. What blocks kids from being able to move forward? What's one of the biggest blocks you see that holds them back?

Gretchen Wegner: Oh, since I already mentioned that to the parents, maybe saying that it's the same answer, but for the kids more and more. Like I'm not a trained life coach. I'm a trained teacher. You know, I moved into academic coaching, I put the Word Life Into Academic Life Coaching for myself cause I wanted parents to see we're going to handle more than just grades. And, um, I am seeing just more and more

and more that even though I feel rushed and I feel rushed by the parents to like work on whatever the missing work is and all of that, that I need to slow down and help these students find tools to manage their own anxiety. And, um, whenever I share, um, I'm not gonna, this is not one of the models we'll be able to talk today, but this is that my time management gears, but I talk about with students and each key or reference, it's sort of like a checklist that they can use and what it, the last gear is self-talk. You need tools for self-talk. And whenever I asked students after I shared this model with them, I say, which gear is the gear that gets in your way the most? And every student says self-talk. And

Seth Perler: so the mindset, yeah, the distance. That makes sense. I'm stupid. I hate this. Yeah.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. And so I have a couple like quick tools that I teach them and a lot of them don't even necessarily use the tools regularly. But one student told me just a few weeks ago, she said, you know, I was less anxious during final exams because I knew there was a tool I could turn to if my brain started freaking.

Seth Perler: So what's one of those that's really concrete that people can learn? Right? The second, well I don't

Gretchen Wegner: know if I could teach it right. The second easy access.

Seth Perler: Well let's, let's, that's okay. Yeah. Cause we're gonna get into the study cycle.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Yeah. That talk is one that we can do all, you could do a whole summit next year. It could be like how do we help kids handle their stressful thoughts and their stressful feelings?

Seth Perler: So, and then what, what is a, a common misunderstanding? And I think you've, you've alluded to this too, but what's one of the most common misunderstandings that parents have?

Gretchen Wegner: Oh, that parents specifically have.

Seth Perler: So parents watching right now they want to help their kid with executive function. What's one of the big misunderstandings that you always hear parents come in with?

Gretchen Wegner: Well, I'll keep it true to studying since I know we're going to be moving soon to the study cycle, but it's, it's that, um, I don't, how do I articulate it? It's like they assume [inaudible] they, they assume that, oh, but I've shared like I told my kid how I studied like flashcards or like this, this idea that knowing one or two strategies means you know, how to study and they're not following through with the strategies I gave them. So something's wrong. Um, and it's actually knowing how to study is actually not about strategies. I mean, yes, we want a lot of strategies, but if you don't know how to use the strategies smartly, you can use the strategy well or you can use a strategy not so well. And so the real importance actually I would say of teaching brain theory to students and giving them a roadmap for this, this body and brain of ours by actually teaching a little

bit of brain science is really important. And I don't think parents realize that coming in.

Seth Perler: This has been a fantastic foundation. Thank you so much. Now let's get into what do we do with all this information?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, get into it. Okay. Let me look at my list to see if there's any, I think of, I think maybe we should just dive into, yeah, well so, okay, so this is one, I don't know if you've read this book, it's an older book by now. Make it stick. The science of successful learning, there are many others now. This is Brown Roediger and McDaniel and these are some, I think some, some professors who actually mentored the learning scientists who you may know, they have a podcast all about the brain and learning as well. And when you look at all these things, it's like, it's, it's so good. There's so much great information here about how the brain works, but it's overwhelming and it's not actionable at all.

Seth Perler: That's what I find with a lot of the executive function stuff in particular. And that's why I want the summit to be a lot of it's not, it's, it is overwhelming and it's like what do we do? And that's why this part of the session is what do we do? Yeah,

Gretchen Wegner: yeah, yeah. So I like to teach families and I give this talk at schools around the bay area. Um, I like to, to teach that all those books that I showed, the three most important things you need to know about how the brain learns. And that's what I realized in the study cycle. So shall we learn those, right? Yeah,

Seth Perler: let's do it. I love, yeah, me too. I love models, but I've, I've immersed myself in so many that I can see what themes work for me and communicate that. Yep. Let's,

Gretchen Wegner: yes, I did. I wasn't as good an artist as I sometimes am when I draw, because you and I were chatting while I was trying to draw these, but, so this down here is my attempt at drawing a basket. Um, I don't yet have a better metaphor than a basket, but if somebody thinks of one, I'd love to hear it. So this is like everything, the basket is filled with all the facts and all the skills you need to demonstrate. You have mastery over when you take the test. So just imagine it with like filled with all these facts you need to know. So the first step in learning is we need to get the information from outside of us, from the textbook or from the teacher's brain or from wherever. And we need to get it into our brain. So this is the learner I've revealed the learners brain so that we really get like it's coming into the brain. This is step one of three. And um, this, this is just the initial learning. So I put, you know, you can put the word learning here. If I'm making it really simple for students, I just put the word in. Like we've got to get the information in our brain. And sometimes I even make them do the gesture because when we use our bodies,

Seth Perler: I remember things more, no matter what subject it is, somehow we have to take this thing that's metaphorically outside of us and get it in here.

Gretchen Wegner: Exactly, exactly. And the word, the brain science word that I introduced students to that I always like to use the brain science for that they get, but this is a real

thing is encoding. So we have to turn this information into some kind of code in our brains. We have to build our initial neural pathways for the information.

Seth Perler: The brain cells are making connections, which means that it's starting to stick.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, right. It, yeah. And it may not fully stick yet, but something sticks. And so we'll, I'll talk about with students, if we're working on a specific test, I'll say, how did you learn the like does your teacher lecture first or does your teacher assign you to read the textbook first? Like what is your first interaction with the material? And that's the encoding.

Seth Perler: So what is the first thing that the first thing that is pouring out of the first way that the bucket is pouring out?

Gretchen Wegner: Yes. Okay, cool.

Seth Perler: And I meant from a little hack. I have here a lot for kids who are willing to be proactive. Now I'm dealing with resistant kids, but one of the best things that kids who, um, the, one of the best things is before they dive into a unit of study is to what? Get on Youtube and watch a documentary or um, an awesome passionate utuber about, well, the subject they are about to dive into because they might have a little foundation. Then when the teacher starts pouring their bucket, it's encoding onto something that's already

Gretchen Wegner: exactly, actually then it'll be, let's, let's try to remember to come back to that because after I showed the whole cycle, then I'd love to, were to ask you if you watch your youtubes first so that you're actually encoding it yourself, then where are you on the study cycle when your teacher is teaching you? So, but let me share the other pieces first. So we encode and a lot of students stop right there. All they ever do is and code and code and code. So they reread their notes, they reread the textbook. It's so boring. Right? But that's, that's, yeah, it's all they're doing. But there are two more stages that they're missing out on that makes for more efficient and also effective learning. So the stench too is on the second side. Do you have any guesses that for what it might be connection? Like the connection of, of the ideas.

Seth Perler: Yeah. Connecting what you've encoded to something that's more meaningful or something that you already know.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, that might actually be step three. Okay. So, but that's lovely. And I always love to ask students to make a guess cause sometimes I learn too. So step two is once we've encoded, then we need to actually test ourselves to see what got encoded, what stuck, what did it and all the science shows that what they, what people call retrieval practice is the best study strategy ever. So rereading is not as effective as testing yourself to see what you know and what you don't know. So I like to use the word test here because kids know what a test is. I like to use the word out as the simple word cause like before you are pouring it in and then it's like peering in and seeing like if we're thinking of water, like were there holes in the bottom? Like did some water drip out white water stick, what stayed, what did it, that's what you're testing yourself here.

Gretchen Wegner: And in education usually teachers are responsible for testing you, but the smart student gets that. I'm responsible for testing myself repeatedly and lots of small ways and the more I take that responsibility away from the teacher and I claim it for myself, the better I will be able to learn. So, oh and retrieval or retrieve, that's the fancy brain term there. So when we retrieve, we find out two things. Either I know it or I don't. So if I, I'm just going to use flash cards. And as an example, if I retrieved by going through flashcards, then I find out, oh yeah, I kinda knew that vocabulary word or don't. If I know it great. That fact or that word can leave the study cycle for right now, not forever, but for the present moment. If I don't know it, it goes back into the basket and the basket is now all the things that are going to be on the test that I still don't know well,

Seth Perler: so there's all the things that leaked out at the bottom of the bucket.

Gretchen Wegner: Exactly. Exactly. Yes. So, and there's nothing wrong with you that things leaked out. That's the learning process. Because what we need is we need to do the third thing and the third thing is over on the encoding side again. So then everything that's still in the bucket we need to encode, but here's the rub. We need to do it in a new way. So not by rereading the textbook again, but in a new different way because we're trying to not be bored with our learning and we're trying to not expect our teacher. It's wonderful if our teachers are creative curriculum designers, I've come up with all kinds of fun ways for us to learn. Yay there they are helping us do the study cycle. We don't have to think about it. That's fun. But you actually can be responsible for having a full toolkit of ways to encode things differently. And when I ask students after I teach them this, I say, which, which step is your strength and which step is your weakness in regards to how many tools you have and what would you say stuff for yourself? Where on the study cycle is your strength and weakness?

Seth Perler: Probably three. I like to immerse myself in a lot of different ways of doing something.

Gretchen Wegner: Hm.

Seth Perler: I like that people talk about it, read about it, watch videos about it. Um, see where it shows up in everyday life. So maybe three.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. Cool. Yeah. And so the resistance students that you talked about before, who you see like normally the teacher's going to lecture about it first step one, but if they actually watch a youtube video about it first so that they've encoded some things. So they've taken responsibility for step one on the study cycle. Then where are they on the study cycle? When the teacher's lecturing, when they go to class?

Seth Perler: Probably probably a combination of two and three.

Gretchen Wegner: Right, exactly. If, if you are being mindful. So cause this is where metacognition comes in and learning how to, like I as a student get to choose where I am on the study cycle in any given moment. So when I come to class I could say, Gosh, it'd be fun to listen to the lecture and test myself and see if I can guess what the

professors or the teachers about to say before they, if I do that then I'm practicing retrieval when here with my guests and then the professor says something different than I thought they would say, oh that just got encoded in the new way. I heard it, not just from the youtube video, but I heard it in a classroom environment, you know, being spoken rather than visual. So it is possible for all these things to be happening at once, but it's also pop and the more advanced students can start making choices for how they do these steps at once. But the students who can't hold that complexity yet, we make study plans according to like, okay, you now know the test is four days away. So actually, and maybe I'll ask you this question stuff you've already learned that once, right? Hopefully like you went to class, whatever you, you already encoded it, but where on the study cycle do you begin? If you're starting to actually prepare for a test?

Gretchen Wegner: MM, probably too. Yeah, exactly. That's, that's the most efficient way is to test yourself to see what you know and you don't know so that you know what's in the basket or the bucket. I love your bucket and water idea and then once you know that you can make your study plan for, it's like, oh, I'm going to have to make a plan to encode all these things in a new way. Usually I teach a process of honing your notes in a specific way that helps you in code creatively and then test yourself to see what you learn and what you didn't. And so then you're bouncing back between two, three, two, three, two, three. But starting with two is usually the most efficient way to do it. All right, cool. And this is called what, what's this model? I call this the study cycle.

Gretchen Wegner: Um, and on my website Gretchen wagner.com. I act, it's not quite ready as we're recording this, but it will be ready when people are watching. I have a new course, um, that, you know, we've been talking for an hour and a half, but this course breaks down teaching the study cycle first to students. And then I provide some tips for parents and then I provide some tips for educators and some shorter videos and uh, so people can um, go grab that. And then we have through this telesummit will be, um, you know, there will be a handout that I haven't created yet cause I wanted us to talk first to see what might need to be created. But I'll have a little written summary of the study cycle, including the visual image. All My whiteboards have this image on the back of them and I, I give these to all of my clients. And so this, um, this will be, this image will be a part of the, um, handout that people can download. So if people want to like put it on their refrigerator. Cool. Were there any other whiteboards that you wanted to go over today? Nope, that was the last one. Okay. Let me

Seth Perler: do a couple more quick, very, very actionable practical questions. You have a parent watching, they have a middle schooler or high school or maybe a, an elementary kid that's just starting to get into note taking. What's one of the most important things? I, I, you know, people tend to, I guess in my view, people tend to think of note taking is this very linear step-by-step copy. What's on the board. Um, dry process. What's one of the best, uh, note-taking tips these parents should know, that they can convey to their kid?

Gretchen Wegner: Um, practice using visual symbols and, and maybe even just to make it simple practice like bullets and arrows so that kids aren't, aren't just writing down what

the teacher's saying, but they're like seeing like, oh look, that idea is connected to this idea with the Arrow. And they're, I mean, when I, I have a section on, on note taking and the anti boring approach online course and we, we look at all kinds of tools for what I call honing your notes. But the brain is incredibly visual. Whether you think you are, even if you don't think you're a visual learner, you're human. Sorry to break it to you. The brain's visual and all the studies show that connecting words to images really makes a difference. So in like truly highly advanced note-taking, you'd have a lot of images, shapes, visual symbols in your notes. But for the new note taker, just practice, like rather than just align like practice bullets, like main bullet and then subheading, bullet and then practice arrows.

Seth Perler: Okay, cool. Yeah, I taught, I teach kids to draw their notes and use for color pens and make it very visual because it works. Um, awesome. And then another one is, um, when it comes to, uh, studying specifically for a test, what's one of the most important practical tips they can do with their kid?

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. So what I would recommend is that every parent, um, understand the study cycle and I know we're creating a video to directly to students and so I will likely, I haven't made it yet, but I will likely just reteach the study cycle but to students in five minutes, you know, on the video. So it's nice and short. So parents watch that video with your student and then when it's time to study, um, ask your student or even when they're doing homework, actually let's not even make this about studying. Cause if you do it when they're doing homework, it's preparing to study, get practice that just asking your kid where on the study cycle are you right now? Most of the time they won't know. Even if you're filling out a worksheet. Cool. You can make a choice. Am Do I want to fill out the worksheet by testing myself first to see what I know and what I don't know, in which case I don't open the textbook yet or do I want to encode it in a new way by reading the textbook and then filling it out? Um, and then, and then ask my parents to quiz me afterwards to see what I know and what I don't know at the end. So just developing a consciousness. Where are you on the study cycle and stop. Sorry. Trashed with here. I hope it's not too loud.

Gretchen Wegner: I'm developing our consciousness around, uh, what do I want? Oh, I lost. I got, I found my thought. Now parents stop asking, did you study? Or when are you gonna Study? Stop asking that question. Not a useful question. You're not communicating anything. Instead ask a question like, Hey, I know the test is coming up. Where on the study cycle do you need to be tonight? Oh, I need to figure out what's in my basket. I need to do initial testing to see what, what I have to study. Great. Perfect.

Seth Perler: And I liked that. And for highly linear, uh, parents, I can see this being challenging because I can see them wanting to think that there is a right answer to that question.

Gretchen Wegner: Right.

Seth Perler: But I noticed when you asked me where I thought things were, your response back to me was, sounds like a pretty good answer. Um, no matter what I said,

Gretchen Wegner: right. Actually I did get a clue the way you answered and the ideas you gave. Like if, if this were a coaching session and you were a student, I saw that. Oh yeah. Seth does have a bunch of interesting and coding methods. That's wonderful. And I already heard the things that you're missing in your tool box by the coaching session. I would go there eventually with you to help add the tools that I heard you are missing. But I didn't need that to you right now because Yay that you feel competent about something awesome.

Seth Perler: But what you said was that the goal of this, and I just want to make clear for people who are looking for sort of the right answer or whatever, the goal wasn't to do that, but was to develop the consciousness around it. And I do that a lot in my practice. I'll ask these questions to kids and I don't even necessarily care what the answer is. I care to develop the metacognition, the consciousness around the issue and there's so much value.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah, sorry, there's so much.

Seth Perler: I just wanted to mention that just like parents don't worry, you know about necessarily where they're actually at them having the discussion and you can then say, oh and I think you're probably here too. Or, or, oh, okay, that sounds great. Or tell me more. Or you don't, we don't have to have, um, these linear sort of ends and right answers to things. This is more about a process

Gretchen Wegner: then the right. Yeah, and parents, you also can reflect about the study cycle. Like, oh my God, remember that study cycle thing that we saw that lady do on that summit? I was at work today. I decided to ask myself where am I on the study cycle with this one thing? And I realize that actually I could be more efficient if I took a quick moment to test myself and I like to make a list on what do I know and what don't I know before I write the report than if I just sat in front of the computer and tried to write the

Seth Perler: four and just modeling that is so powerful on so many levels.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. And what I would love to see as something like the study cycle be a common language that teachers, parents and students have. So, so that we build students' metacognitive abilities faster in terms of being able to watch for what they're doing when they're learning and then being able to take action.

Seth Perler: Now you've got a, I'm, I'm asking a couple more questions. These are just super practical. You've got a parent watching and they're like, okay, this all sounds great, but my kid won't task initiate. They won't start anyway. They procrastinate. They've got every excuse in the book. Um, you know, if they're working with you Gretchen or a tutor, you know, they can do stuff, but when they're at home, they don't get anything done. How do I help them get started?

Gretchen Wegner: Okay. Um, the quick answer would be have a family focus time after school between the hours of such and such and such and such. Everybody's focused. This idea of body doubling, um, of, of like, we work better when there are other focused people around. So you're, you're distracted kid is not gonna work as well if you're cooking and watching TV and doing something fun and somebody

else's, whatever, whatever, whatever. So just be like, okay, this is the time when we're having focused work happening in the house. I mean, that's not a magic bullet that a student would, might still be really distracted, but it'll make it a little easier to have other bodies bodies again. Right. That idea. Yeah. Yeah.

Seth Perler: And um, and then you have a student who is working either with you or, or the parents are, you know, they're, they're trying to do their work and the kids really distracted. What are some of the things you find yourself saying over and over about? Parents are like, yeah my kid's always distracted. They might start but they keep getting off task.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. And that's when finding out like what's distracting you right now? I mean if it were me I would grab, where did I put my gears? I would grab the gears cause all my clients know the gears and so they would know there's tools, routine team and self-talk. And so I'd say I noticed you're really distracted. Which of the gears? Like where do you think you're, are you most of from that real quick? Um, no you don't have to, it's just a like it's sort of like to do it thoroughly. It's like you're the hub on not thoroughly but a little more than like do you have the right tools? Like did you leave your texts?

Seth Perler: Okay. Okay. So the tools is one.

Gretchen Wegner: Yeah. That routine is the other like have you thought through like, like I, I teach and I teach a set up routine to students. Like when you got home, set up your work first, like if you're diving into, try and do your homework. If you don't set it up and think about the steps not going to happen, so maybe they need to do this.

Seth Perler: Okay. And I use the words routine and habit more or less interchangeably. Do you as well?

Gretchen Wegner: No, because for me, I have, it can be a single action that they're working on. Sometimes I have, it is a routine, but for me a routine is a set of behaviors that each behavior is doable by itself. Like, Oh, I can open my planner, that's not a problem. Oh, I can look at the planner and fill in the things that are missing. Does that make sense? The list of like three to five really doable things where you might feel overwhelmed if you're like, Oh God, I gotta do my homework, but you're not overwhelmed. Like, oh, I should do the setup routine. What's the, Oh, I can at least open my planner. Maybe that's all I'll do. And you open your phone. Oh, okay. I can go ahead. And

Seth Perler: they've got the tools and the routines and then

Gretchen Wegner: the routine, the team. And so that's about other bodies like do, can you do it by yourself? Do you need to ask a friend to show up on facetime to do quiet homework with you? Do you need that family focus time? Do you need, do you actually not really understand what you need to do? And so you need to email your teacher. Some teachers will email you back pretty quickly, some won't. But, um, so how do you, do you need to include other people? The team. Okay. And then what was the last one? Last one is the self-talk. Um, where you, uh, yeah. Is

there a thought you're telling yourself that's really stressful, that's keeping you from focusing cause you're telling yourself like, oh, I can't do this one more. Like, Oh, I just wanna Watch my TV show I don't want to do, or Oh, I feel stupid. Or whatever it is.

Seth Perler: Yeah. One of the things I say a lot is don't believe everything you think because we, you know, we often just take the self-talk seriously as if it's a fact. It's just a thought. Awesome. This has been so great. Um, now those were, I didn't expect to ask all those questions but um, I have a real wrap up question. Um, so, and this is the, the I think the final, um, yeah, the, I have two, two more real questions. The first one is what specific actions can parents take this coming week to implement some of your teachings? They can go to your site, they can download the um, cycle.

Gretchen Wegner: I would say that specific actions are to watch the study cycle video designed for the students. So it's just five minutes, but to watch it as a family step one, step two would be out a family meal later on. See if you can test yourselves to see as a family, if you can recreate the study cycle. And if you remember the steps, that's the second one. And then at another family meal the next day. Test yourself again to see if you know the steps and play a little game to see if you can notice in your lives over the last day whether you did anything where, or they you were encoding something for the first time or whether you were testing yourself and just see if you can identify one of the steps out work. So starting to build consciousness around this cycle so that you can start using this tool tool in a powerful way.

Gretchen Wegner: Okay. And then the last, last question, is this from your heart to the parents that are watching right now, what is the most important takeaway you hope people will leave with? Of all it is so hard. Like just be kind, be kind to yourself. Parenting is so difficult and parenting a student who is creative and neurodivergent is even harder in the kind of culture we have. And um, I know you probably have a lot of that net negative self talk in your head about I'm doing it wrong. I've, if I, my actions are going to make or break my child's success and happiness and ability to be a loving presence in this world. I'm guessing you may be telling yourself that and um, just give yourself a lot of love. Your kid is going to be okay. Every client I've ever worked with, I, cause I track them too. They turned out good. They're okay behind yourself. Take a lot of deep breaths and really trust it's going to work out. Awesome. Thanks so much, Gretchen. I really appreciate you. Yeah, I appreciate you too, Seth. This has been fun. We achieved, I think, our goal of, of connecting and each learning something. I think so. All right, everybody. Go take action. Have a great day. We'll see you in the next one.