What's Getting in the Way of Getting It Done?

Adapted with permission from the work of Dr. Peg Dawson, author of <u>Smart but Scattered</u>

✔	Obstacle	Possible Strategies
	I can't think of how to start the assignment.	- Chunk the assignment into small steps and create a checklist - Use self-talk to get yourself through the first few steps - Talk about it with a peer or a parent before starting - Brainstorm ideas using post-it notes on a wall, then rearrange the post-its to create a plan
	I don't understand the assignment	- Ask a peer - Chunk the assignment into small steps and create a checklist - Look at an example from class or a textbook - Ask the teacher to explain it in a different way - If you are the teacher, use visual prompts to help the student understand
	I could probably do the assignment, but it will take a lot of work and just the thought hurts my brain.	- Use positive self-talk or a helpful mantra - Break the task into small steps and just do the first 1 or 2 - Estimate the time for each part of the task, then keep track of how much time it actually takes - Create a small reward for completing each step - Set a timer for 10-20 minutes, then alternate with a preferred task or brain break
	The task is way too boring.	- Tie this task to long-term goals and benchmarks - Brainstorm ways to turn it into a game - Work in 5-10 increments - Turn the task into a checklist and add a small reward for completing each step
	This assignment is pointless.	- Identify 1 skill you may get out of this assignment that could be helpful for long term goals - Ask a teacher to clarify the goal of the assignment - Find a different way to approach the task that incorporates a skill you want to work on (like video editing, or oral presentations)
	The conditions for working aren't perfect—when they are, I'll get started.	"Not perfect" is another way your brain tells you there is an "obstacle" –name the things getting in the way (e.g. hunger, energy, supplies, noise levels) and brainstorm ways to overcome these obstacles - Think about your energy during the day – schedule the hardest tasks for when you have the most energy and save easier tasks for other times
	I have way too many things to do and don't know how to prioritize my time.	- Make a list, then rate each item on a scale of 1-5 for *importance* and 1-5 for *urgency*: - Complete the important *and* urgent things first - Schedule or make a plan for things that are important *but not* urgent - Ask for help with things that are urgent *but not* important - Leave for later (or drop completely) those things that are *neither* important *nor* urgent

Instructions: Use this as a tool for talking to your student about what is getting in the way for them. Check off any obstacles that apply, and circle any strategies they think might be helpful, or add their own ideas. Try out the strategy for a set amount of time, like running an experiment. When the experiment is done, reflect on what worked, or what should be tweaked to make it better.

	It's going to take way too long.	• Write out the steps and estimate the time for each • Plan backward, starting with the time you need to be finished with the task • Split the task out over multiple days
	There are other things I'd rather be doing that are more fun or important.	• Alternate between preferred and non-preferred activities • After doing something you don't want to do, reward yourself with the thing you do want to do • Use the Pomodoro method
	Wait, what assignment?	• Use a large whiteboard calendar or paper planner to schedule out longer assignments as you get them • Set alarms or reminders on your phone at different checkpoints • Use colored bands on your wrist as reminders
	The assignment isn't going to affect my grade so why bother?	• Clarify the purpose of the assignment, including what it *does* count for • Connect it to *habits of work* or life skills • Use self-talk to help yourself through • Think about the assignment in the context of your relationship with the teacher
	Perfectionism—I'm not going to start because I know I won't be able to do work that meets my standards.	• Break the work up into small chunks and focus on one chunk at a time • Look at the teacher's rubric or specific instructions to get a realistic view of expectations • Focus on a "first draft" instead of aiming for the final product • Name your own expectations aloud to a peer or parent to get feedback on whether this assignment calls for a perfect product, or a "good enough" product
	I'm stressed out about other things and can't focus. I'll do better if I wait until my life calms down.	• Write down the thing that is distracting on a piece of paper, fold it and put it away. Take it out after the task is done or during a break • Take a walk outside before sitting down to the task • Ask your teacher for a modified version of the task, or if you can cut down on your homework • Ask a parent or teacher to be your "scribe" and write down your ideas while you talk them out • Use a planner or calendar to structure your time
	I'm too tired. I don't have the energy to do this now.	• Move – go for a walk, do 5 pushups, do a handstand • Take a 5-minute break or run an errand before returning to the task • Use a timer to limit the amount of time you need to focus, or use the Pomodoro method • Focus on one small, easy first step
	If I finish this, I'll have to do the *next* thing.	• Make a plan and write it down • Use positive self-talk to remind you that you can get through this, or that you only need to do one step at a time • As the parent or teacher, remind the student of previous times when they accomplished something similar