



Taking Flight: Mastering Executive Function - How a Mother and Son Transformed Academic Struggles into Collegiate Success

Carolyn Carpeneti

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What should we do when our children struggle academically? Should we let them fail so they'll learn from their mistakes and do better next time? Perhaps. But what if they lack the organizational tools to succeed?

Carolyn Carpeneti's son had effectively coped with learning differences through high school and was accepted into the university of his dreams. Only weeks into his freshman year, Carpeneti was stunned to discover that her son was flunking. The problem, it turned out, was not lack of intelligence, interest, or motivation but *weak executive function*—the ability to plan, organize, manage time, initiate action, and achieve goals, a skill set that often does not develop in the human brain until the late teens and midtwenties.

Executive function is not a form of intelligence but a way in which people demonstrate intelligence. Is weak executive function one reason why 25% to 30% of college freshmen don't return a second year, or why only 56% of college students graduate within five years? Is weak executive function derailing the confidence and careers of thousands of talented young adults?

Taking Flight chronicles how a mother created a system that rerouted her son from early failure onto a path of success. In the process, she journeyed deep into the silent epidemic of weak or delayed executive function and uncovered a link between traditional education and the inability of kids to thrive and perform at their best. The hard-won, practical solutions Carpeneti embraced, many of her own devising, are shared in *Taking Flight* so that other parents can move beyond confusion and frustration to help their struggling loved ones unlock their dreams and potential.

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