MAPS OF THE SELFSCAPE

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01-19-2026	An Ecological / Existential Atlas of Executive Functioning Inspired by the Brown EF/A Scales	
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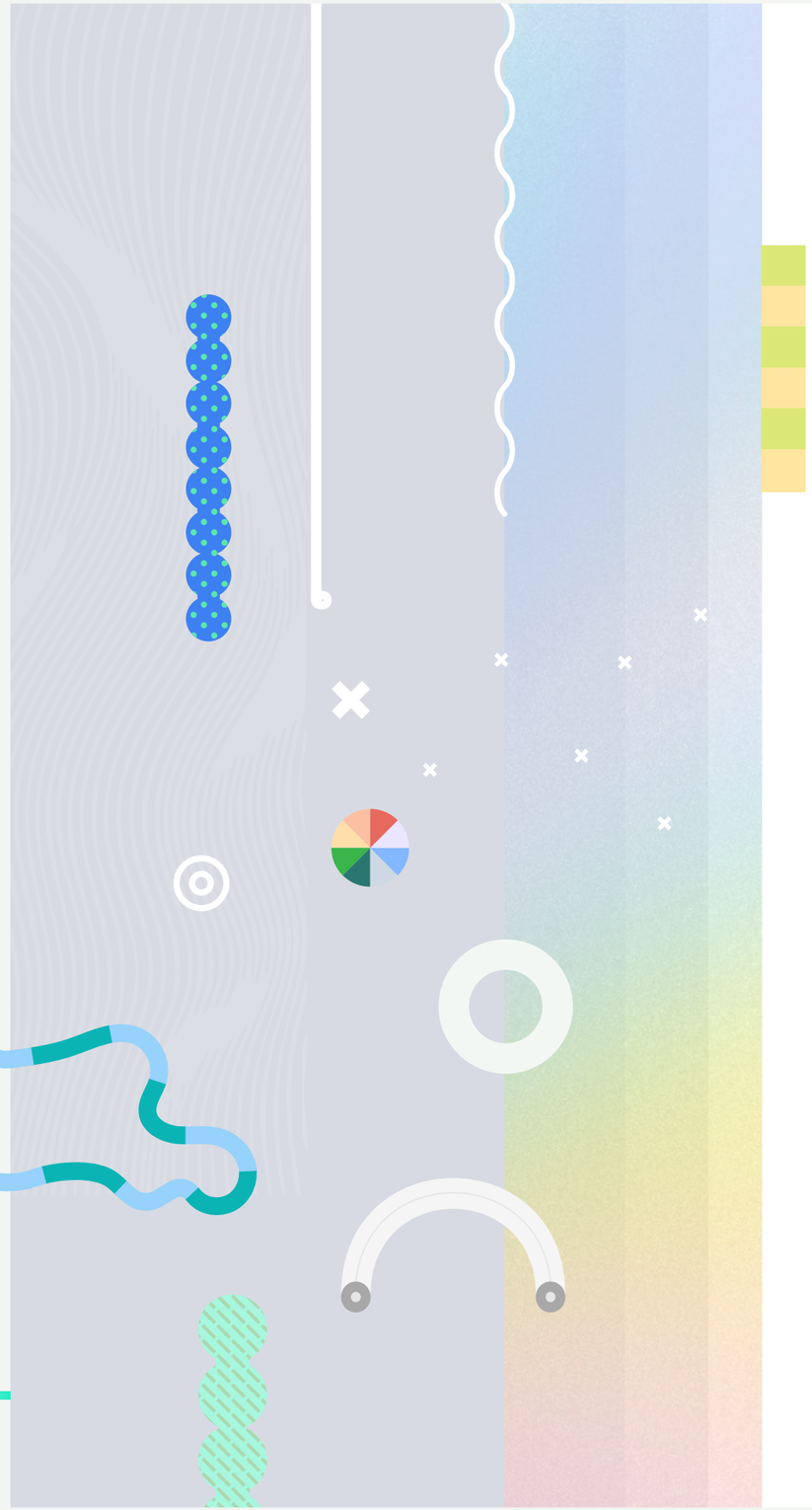
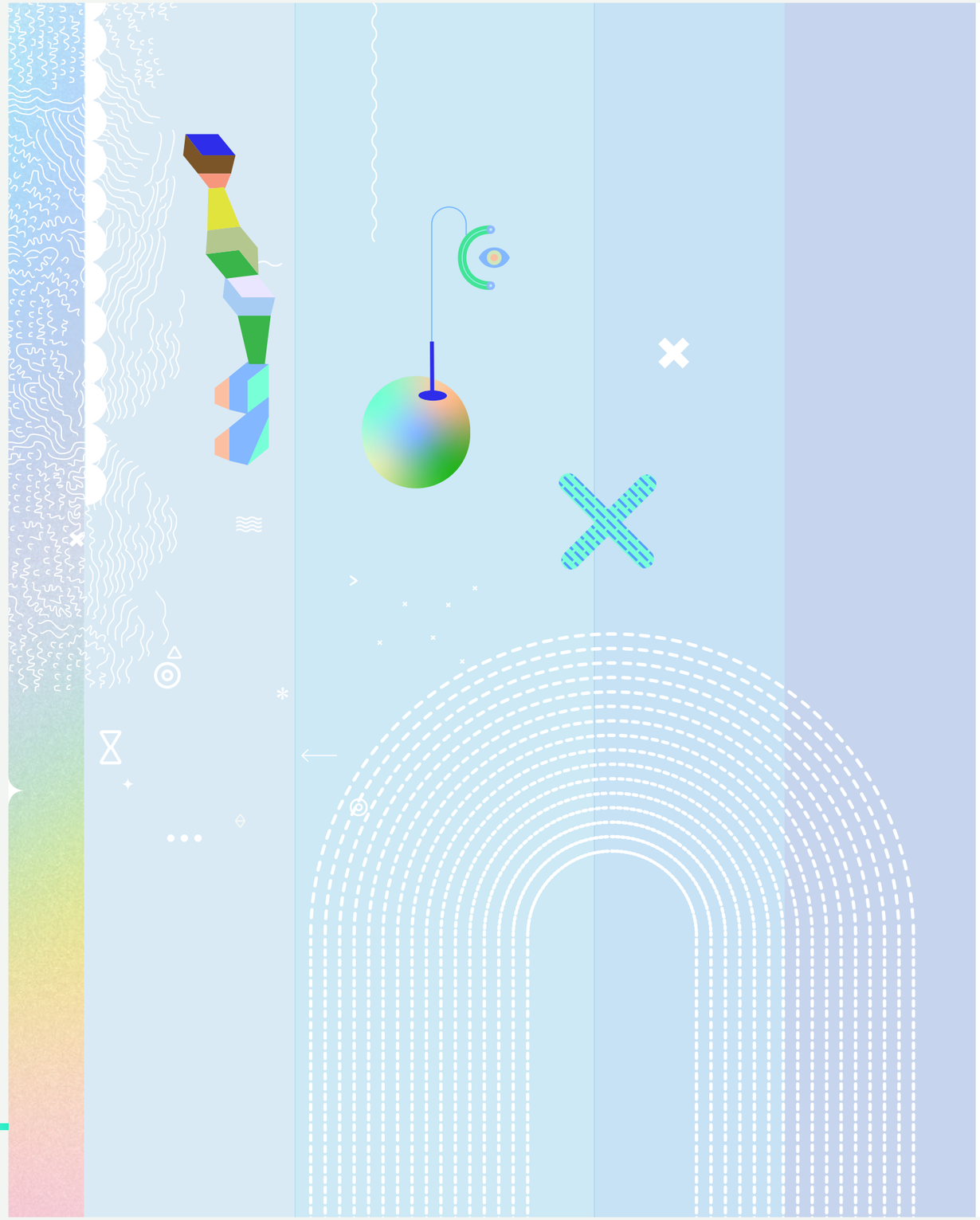


Maps of the Selfscape:

/ An Ecological–Existential Atlas of Executive Functioning
/ Inspired by the Brown EF/A Scales
/ BY CARRIE A. DYER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

/ Written, designed, illustrated, and mapped by Carrie A. Dyer. / Created during my graduate studies in Counseling at Wake Forest University. / This work is inspired by my brother, Fletcher H. Dyer, whose life and loss continue to shape the counselor and human I am becoming. / It is dedicated to my husband, Richie Dean Rutledge, who steadies me, believes in me, and reminds me every day why this work matters. / There are no words big enough for my parents, who have encouraged me since I was a child and trusted the unfolding of who I am. / And to the professors who helped call me forward, Dr. Robyn Walsh, Dr. Shannon Warden, Dr. Jennifer Wagstaff, Dr. Jordan Austin, Dr. Sarah Moore, Dr. Allison Forti, Dr. Seth Hayden, and Dr. Nate Ivers, thank you for making room for my voice.



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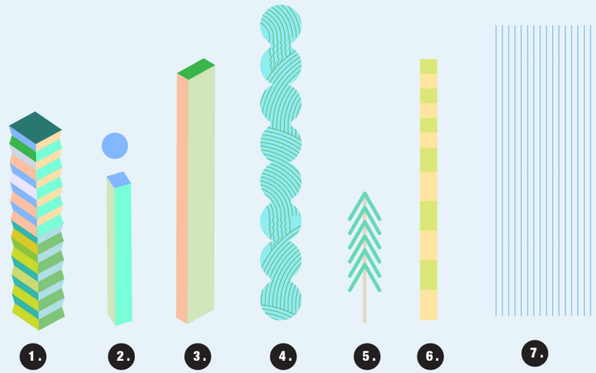
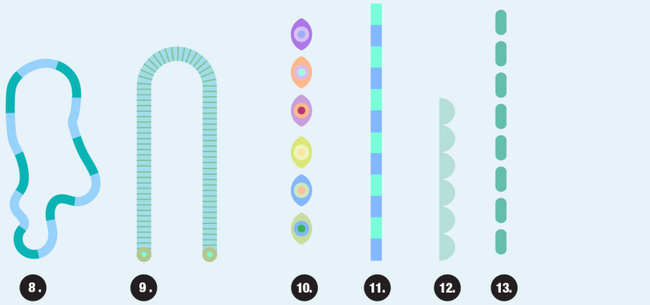
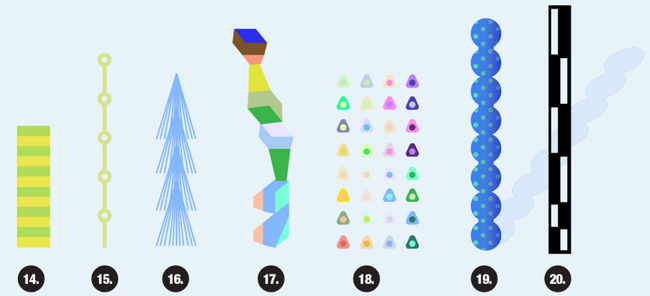






01. A Landscape Within

At its heart, Maps of the Self-scape is an exploration of the hidden terrain we each carry inside, the winding paths of attention, the weather systems of emotion, the quiet forests where memory gathers, and the shifting ground of effort and overwhelm. Executive functioning is not only a clinical construct but a landscape of lived experience: a geography of how a person moves through the world, how they lose and find themselves, and how they navigate the distance between intention and action.

This project emerged from the belief that every mind is a kind of ecosystem, shaped by history, context, culture, and the stories we inherit and the ones we choose to grow. This view aligns with interpersonal neurobiology, which conceptualizes the mind as an embodied, relational process shaped by lived experience (Siegel, 2012). Mapping these internal landscapes invites counselors and clients alike to witness executive functioning not as deficit, but as meaning, pattern, and possibility.

02. Context and Rationale for the Project

Maps of the Self-scape was developed within the broader landscape of counseling assessment, where standardized measures, lived experience, and multidimensional theory converge. The Brown Executive Function/Attention Scales (EF/A) were selected as the focal instrument due to their relevance for clients navigating ADHD, AuDHD, trauma responses, chronic illness, and other neurodivergent patterns of executive functioning. In counseling settings, executive-functioning concerns commonly appear as difficulties with initiation, sustained attention, emotional regulation, overwhelm, working memory, and follow-through, domains central to both Brown's model and contemporary clinical practice. The EF/A therefore provides a structured starting point for understanding how internal processes and environmental conditions shape a client's daily functioning.

This project situates the EF/A within an ecological–existential framework, integrating Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, existential dimensions of being (Yalom; van Deurzen), feminist theory, narrative identity theory, intersectionality, and attachment- and polyvagal-informed perspectives (Porges, 2011). These approaches also resonate with multicultural frameworks emphasizing cultural humility and responsiveness (Hook et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2022). Together, these approaches highlight that executive functioning is not merely a cognitive capacity, but a lived, contextual phenomenon shaped by embodiment, developmental history, cultural narratives, relational environments, and meaning-making processes. Executive functioning is thus conceptualized as an ecology, a dynamic interaction between a person and their context. This aligns with Hays' (2023) emphasis on culturally responsive, developmentally attuned assessment practices.

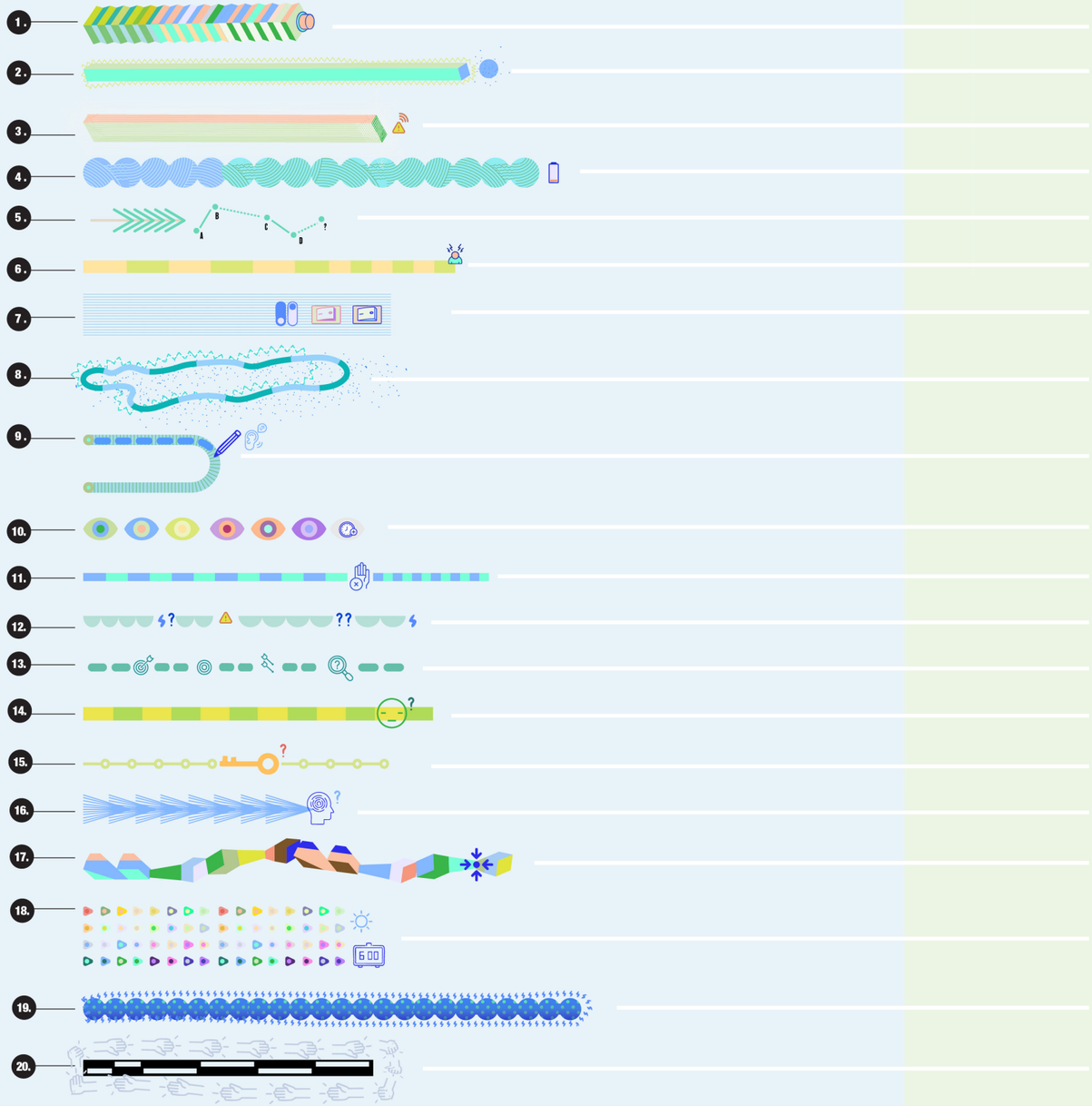
The creative cartography method used in this project translates Brown's EF/A domains into visual landscapes that externalize complex psychological processes. By combining conceptual mapping, narrative inquiry, and expressive arts principles, the project offers neurodivergent clients a way to see their internal world in forms that resonate with spatial, symbolic, and somatic ways of knowing. Visual metaphor becomes an interpretive bridge, grounded in psychometrics yet expanded into multidimensional meaning-making.

This project also reflects a commitment to trauma-informed and neurodivergent-affirming practice, recognizing that executive functioning is often misinterpreted through deficit-based, ableist lenses. Reframing EF through ecological, existential, cultural, and parts-work perspectives reveals these patterns as adaptive survival responses rather than failings. In this way, Maps of the Self-scape becomes an integrative assessment companion, linking standardized measurement with lived experience and expressive visualization to support clarity, agency, and coherence in the counseling process.

03. Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to explore executive functioning as a multidimensional human experience through an ecological–existential lens, emphasizing how relational and environmental contexts shape patterns of mind and behavior (Siegel, 2012). Drawing on Brown's EF/A Scales, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and existential phenomenology, this project seeks to reimagine executive functioning beyond pathology or deficit. Instead, it positions EF as a living system shaped by embodiment, relational environments, personal meaning, and cultural narratives.

By integrating clinical theory with visual metaphor, this work proposes that ADHD and neurodivergent patterns of executive functioning can be understood not merely as impairments, but as adaptive responses within complex ecological and existential



The Brown Executive Function / Attention Scales (EF/A) (Brown, 2017)

N = No Problem
L = Little Problem
M = Medium Problem
B = Big Problem

1. I have trouble getting started on projects, assignments, or other tasks.	N	L	M	B
2. I get restless and fidgety when I have to sit still or wait in line.	N	L	M	B
3. I need to be reminded to keep working or to pay attention.	N	L	M	B
4. Unless I'm doing something I enjoy, I feel sleepy or tired during the day, even after a full night of sleep.	N	L	M	B
5. I have a hard time following instructions, especially when I have more than one thing to do at the same time.	N	L	M	B
6. I feel excessively stressed or anxious in situations that should be manageable for me.	N	L	M	B
7. I have trouble switching from one activity to another.	N	L	M	B
8. I am easily distracted by background noises or other things going on round me.	N	L	M	B
9. It's difficult for me to take notes and keep listening to what else is being said.	N	L	M	B
10. I need extra time to finish my assignments or projects.	N	L	M	B
11. If I think of something to say during a conversation, I interrupt others to say it before I forget it.	N	L	M	B
12. I worry too much about things that could go wrong and what others might be thinking about me.	N	L	M	B
13. I remember some of the details in assigned reading but have trouble understanding the main points.	N	L	M	B
14. I don't notice when I may be boring, confusing, or irritating others.	N	L	M	B
15. I tend to forget to bring-or often misplace-things I need, such as phone, keys, wallet, or purse.	N	L	M	B
16. If I can't understand something right away, I stop trying.	N	L	M	B
17. I find it hard to focus on one thing for a long time unless it's something I'm really interested in.	N	L	M	B
18. It's difficult for me to wake up, get myself out of bed, and get started in the morning.	N	L	M	B
19. I get frustrated and irritable over little things.	N	L	M	B
20. I get restless and fidget with my fingers, hair, clothing, or jewelry too much.	N	L	M	B

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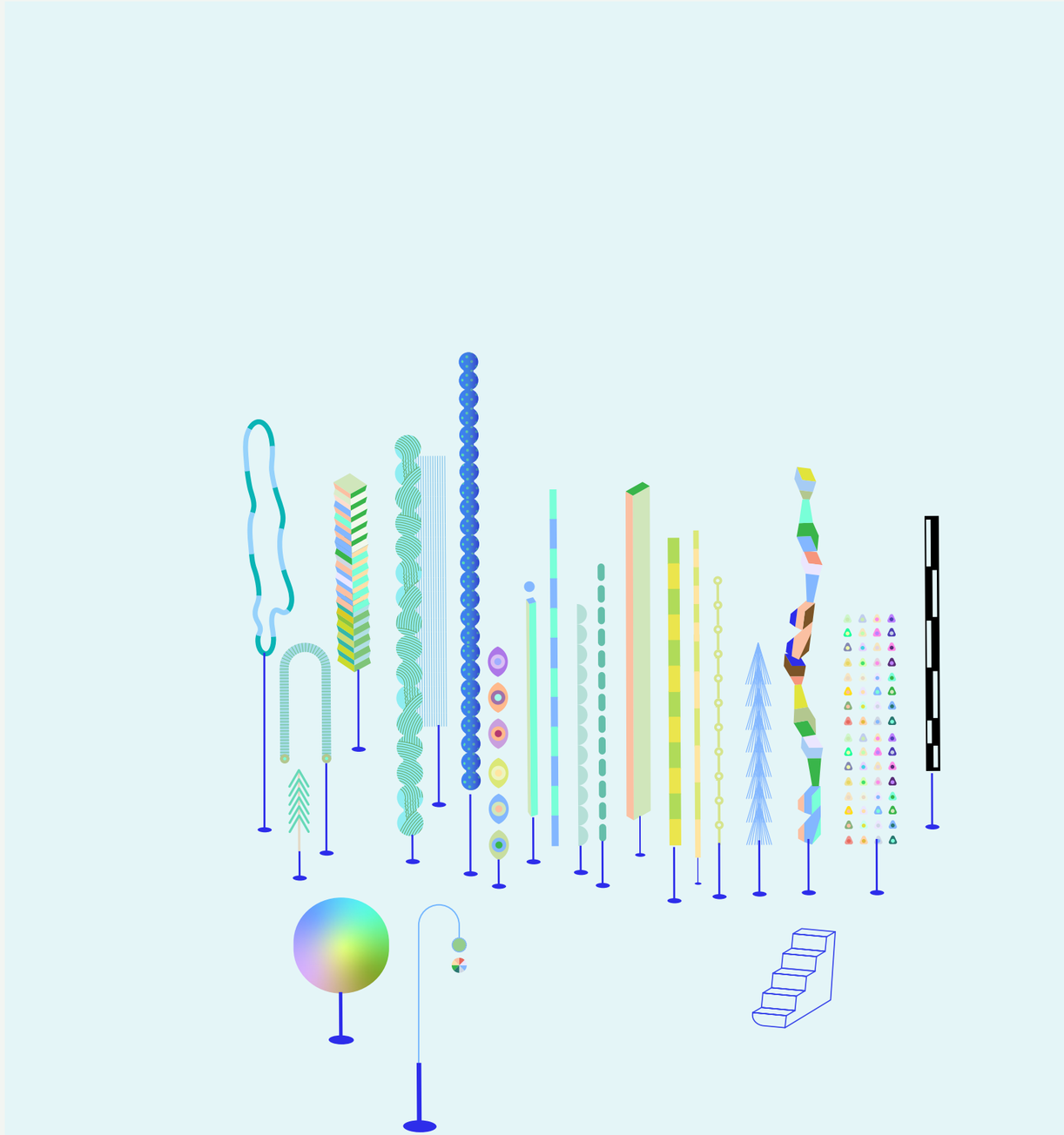


contexts. The Maps of the Selfscape aim to support counselors, clients, and educators in visualizing these patterns with greater compassion, clarity, and depth.

04. Methods / Approach

This project uses conceptual map making, visual mapping grounded in psychological theory, to translate executive functioning into accessible metaphoric environments. The method integrates qualitative conceptual synthesis, narrative inquiry, and principles from expressive arts therapy.

First, Brown's six EF domains were analyzed across four theoretical frameworks: ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner), existential dimensions of being (Yalom; van Deurzen), neurodivergent literature (Driven to Distraction; ADHD 2.0; Unmasking Autism), and embodied ADHD experience (see also Barkley, 2015).

These conceptual strands were then transformed into visual landscapes representing somatic, cognitive, relational, cultural, and temporal dimensions of EF. The maps were developed through iterative sketching, semiotics, and symbolic translation, treating each EF domain as both a process and a place.

This hybrid methodology honors the lived complexity of ADHD and executive functioning, particularly for clients whose internal experience is nonlinear, sensory-rich, or visually oriented, by merging clinical insight with spatial, metaphor-rich representation, while grounding the work in clinical and psychometric insight.

05. Description of the Assessment

The Brown Executive Function/Attention Scales (EF/A) were developed by Thomas E. Brown (2013, 2017) to measure six interrelated domains of executive functioning associated with ADHD and related neurodevelopmental profiles. Unlike categorical symptom checklists, the Brown EF/A scales conceptualize ADHD as an impairment of the executive system, an interconnected set of processes involved in activation, focus, effort, emotion, memory, and action.

The instrument includes age-specific forms (children, adolescents, adults) and uses a 4-point Likert scale to assess the frequency and intensity of difficulties in daily life. Scores provide domain-specific insights rather than a single summative index, making the EF/A particularly useful for treatment planning, psychoeducation, and collaborative assessment.

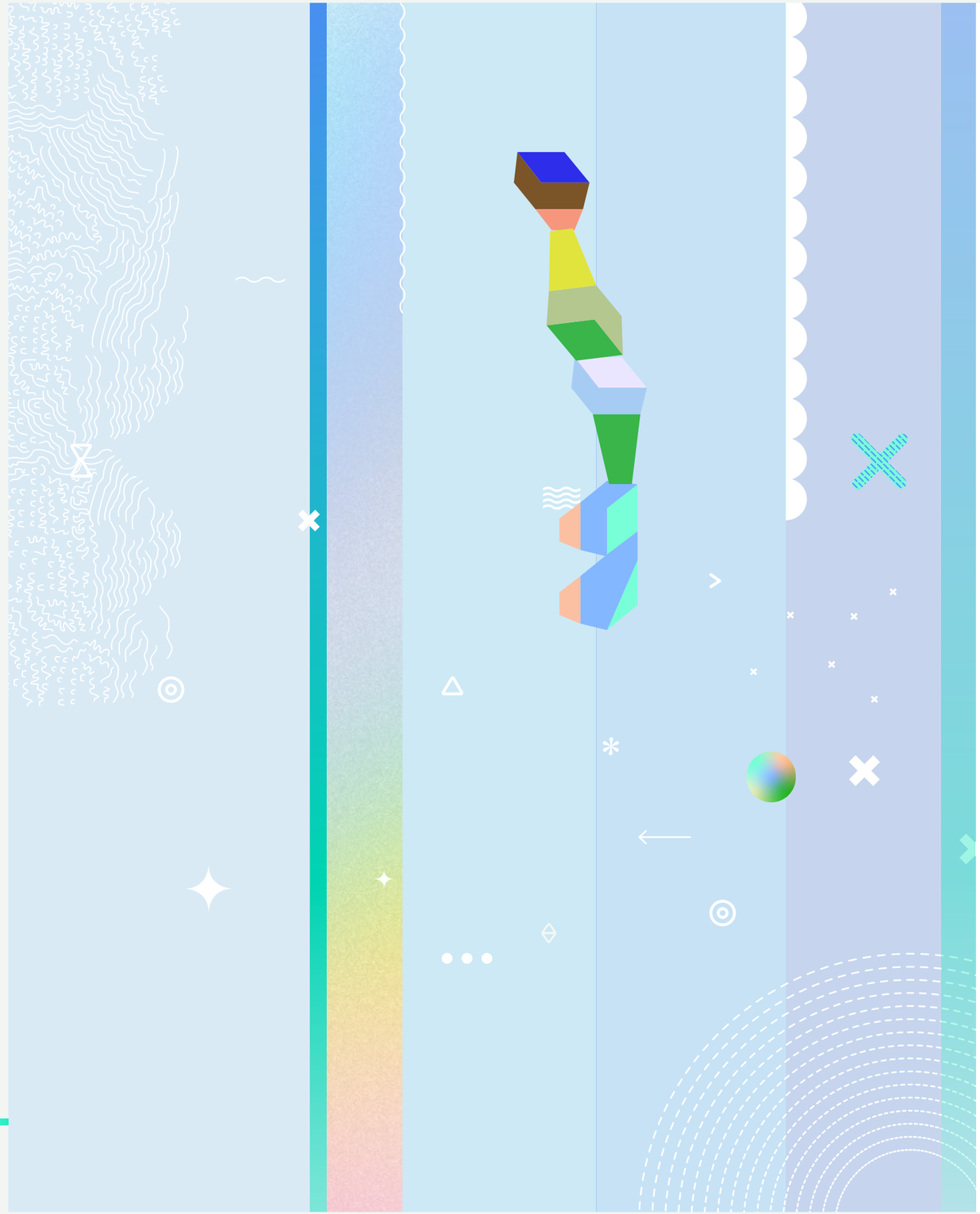
Brown's model positions executive function not as deficits in willpower or motivation, but as neurologically mediated difficulties in self-management and internal coordination. This approach aligns with contemporary neuroscience describing ADHD as a network-based difference involving attention regulation, working memory, emotional modulation, and task initiation. For clients with ADHD, AuDHD, long COVID, or trauma-related executive disruption, the EF/A's domain-level structure offers a nuanced and ecologically valid representation of lived functioning.

06. Psychometric Properties

The Brown EF/A Scales demonstrate strong psychometric foundations. Brown (2013) reports high internal consistency across domains, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients in the .90s. Validity studies support the instrument's construct and convergent validity; EF/A scores correlate with other established measures of executive functioning, such as the BRIEF, and with diagnostic criteria for ADHD in the DSM-5-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

However, psychometric research on the EF/A in autistic adults, AuDHD populations, and individuals with trauma histories remains limited. Emerging literature suggests that executive fatigue, sensory overload, chronic pain, and long COVID, related cognitive dysfunction, can influence domain scores in ways not reflected in the initial normative samples. In clients with trauma histories or chronic autonomic activation, executive functioning patterns may be influenced by stress responses consistent with polyvagal theory (Porges, 2011). In line with Hays' (2023) emphasis on culturally and developmentally informed interpretation, EF/A results must be contextualized within a client's lived environment, identity, and health context.

Research on executive functioning provides strong empirical grounding for the Brown Executive Functions/Attention (EF/A) framework and supports its relevance in both assessment and treatment planning. In addition to Brown's work, foundational ADHD research by Barkley (2015) also supports the view of executive functioning as a multidimensional, self-regulatory system. Brown's (2006) foundational work established the six-cluster model of executive functioning, activation, focus, effort, emotion, memory, and action, and documented how these domains interact to shape ADHD-related impairments beyond behavioral symptoms alone. Subsequent validation studies continue to reinforce this multidimensional structure. For example, Snyder et al. (2015) found that an integrated executive function battery aligned closely with Brown's conceptual model, demonstrating meaningful convergence between EF/A domains and both behavioral ratings and performance-based tasks. More recent work with adult populations shows similar patterns: Fried et al. (2021) reported that Brown's executive function domains, especially emotional regulation and activation, were strongly associated with functional impairment in adults with ADHD, empha-



sizing the model's utility for both clinical conceptualization and intervention planning. Collectively, these studies support the EF/A framework as a psychometrically grounded, clinically sensitive assessment approach that offers richer insight into neurodivergent functioning than traditional symptom-only ADHD measures (Brown, 2006; Fried et al., 2021; Snyder et al., 2015).

07. Strengths of the Instrument

The Brown EF/A Scales offer several notable strengths that enhance their clinical utility. Their domain-level specificity allows clinicians to identify targeted areas for intervention, such as task initiation, emotional regulation, working-memory processes, and sustained effort, rather than relying on broad or diffuse descriptors of "attention problems." This structure aligns closely with the lived experience of many ADHD and AuDHD adults who describe executive functioning as shifting internal terrain, making Brown's multidimensional model uniquely resonant with neurodivergent phenomenology. The scales also demonstrate strong face validity; clients frequently report that the language "feels like me," which reduces shame and supports a more compassionate understanding of executive functioning challenges (Brown, 2017). Additionally, the EF/A is brief, accessible, and adaptable across counseling settings, making it a versatile tool for both initial assessment and ongoing treatment planning. Its clear domain structure further enhances its usefulness in psychoeducation by helping clients externalize internal processes, develop shared language with their counselor, and engage in collaborative meaning-making around their executive functioning patterns.

08. Limitations of the Instrument

Despite its strengths, the EF/A also presents several limitations. As a self-report measure, it is particularly vulnerable to masking, internalized stigma, perfectionism, or the desire to "seem fine," which may lead clients, especially women, autistic adults, BIPOC individuals, and other marginalized groups, to underreport executive challenges (Feldman, 2023). Its normative base is relatively narrow, with limited representation of autistic adults, low-SES populations, and individuals with chronic illness, reducing the generalizability of its findings (Hays, 2023). Scores on the EF/A are sensitive to contextual factors and may reflect trauma responses, long COVID–related cognitive fatigue, depression, anxiety, sensory overload, or systemic stressors rather than ADHD alone. Without contextualized interpretation, there is also a risk of over-pathologizing culturally normative behaviors or adaptive responses shaped by survival, oppression, or chronic stress. For these reasons, the EF/A should be used as one component of a broader assessment process rather than a standalone diagnostic tool.

Another consideration is that the EF/A's NLMB response format (No Problem, Little Problem, Medium Problem, Big Problem) may complicate accurate self-reporting for neurodivergent adults. Many individuals with ADHD, AuDHD, trauma histories, or chronic illness experience executive functioning difficulties that fluctuate significantly across contexts and internal states, making it challenging to categorize an item as a fixed level of severity. Masking, internalized stigma, perfectionism, and difficulty recalling consistent patterns may also lead clients, especially women, late-diagnosed autistic adults, and those socialized to minimize needs, to underreport impairment. As a result, NLMB response patterns may appear milder than the client's lived experience, underscoring the need for contextualized interpretation and multimethod assessment.

09. Multicultural Considerations

Executive functioning is deeply shaped by culture, context, and systemic forces. Expectations for productivity, emotional control, attentional style, communication pacing, or memory demands differ widely across communities, making culturally responsive interpretation essential. Hays (2023) emphasizes that assessment must consider environmental stressors, family systems, acculturation, systemic inequities, and clients' explanatory models. For neurodivergent clients from marginalized backgrounds, EF/A results must be understood within the broader landscape of racialized and gendered performance expectations, disability stigma and masking for safety, linguistic variations that affect working memory or processing speed, intergenerational trauma, cultural rhythms around rest and attention, and socioeconomic barriers that increase executive load. A culturally humble interpretation recognizes that many EF patterns reflect meaningful adaptive responses within oppressive, overstimulating, or resource-limited environments, rather than evidence of inherent deficit.

Culturally responsive assessment requires attention to environmental stressors, family systems, acculturation, inequities, and clients' explanatory models (Hays, 2023; Sue et al., 2022). A culturally humble approach further emphasizes attunement to power dynamics, identity, and the counselor's own positionality (Hook et al., 2013).

10. Legal and Ethical Considerations

Ethically, counselors must administer and interpret the EF/A within their scope of competence, provide clear informed consent about the measure's purpose and limitations, and avoid using it in isolation to diagnose ADHD or other neurodevelopmental conditions. Interpretation must follow ACA ethical guidelines and adhere to the test publisher's usage restrictions. Legally, EF assessment intersects with disability rights, including access to ADA accommodations, workplace supports, and educational services. Misinterpreting or misusing EF/A results can inadvertently limit clients' access to needed resources or reinforce deficit-based narratives. Counselors must avoid overlooking systemic and environmental contributors to executive strain and ensure that results are contextualized within a multimethod assessment approach. As Hays (2023) notes, ethical practice requires cultural humility, collaborative meaning-making, and an awareness of how assessment tools can both illuminate and obscure client experience.

Ethical assessment requires cultural humility and an awareness of how assessment tools can illuminate and obscure client experience (Hook et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2022).

11. Application to Counseling Practice

The EF/A offers a structured and clinically rich starting point for exploring a client's executive functioning patterns. Domain-level results can help clinicians identify specific intervention targets, normalize and validate neurobiological differences, and integrate EF insights into therapeutic modalities such as IFS, ACT, DBT (Linehan, 2015), or somatic regulation. The measure also supports exploration of how trauma histories, chronic illness, long COVID, sensory overload, or masking affect executive capacity. Results can be used to co-create personalized coping systems, identify environmental supports, and track progress over time. When paired with qualitative methods, such as narrative mapping, expressive arts, or the cartographic approaches used in this project, the EF/A becomes more than a score; it becomes a bridge into deeper understanding, agency, and meaning-making around executive functioning.

Counselors can use domain-specific patterns to collaboratively identify micro-interventions, such as initiation supports, sensory regulation tools, or emotion-mapping techniques. EF/A findings may also guide session pacing and structure, especially for clients who benefit from visual agendas, externalization tools, or stepwise decision-making scaffolds.

MODALITIES
Especially for clients who benefit from visual agendas, externalization tools, or stepwise decision-making scaffolds. ACT-based interventions may draw on EF/A findings to refine values-based action plans, especially around energy budgeting, initiation, or emotional modulation.

TRAUMA AND CHRONIC ILLNESS
For clients with trauma histories, EF/A results can highlight survival-driven attention patterns rather than deficits, supporting a more compassionate reframing. In chronic illness or long COVID cases, EF/A mapping helps normalize executive fatigue and identify adaptive functioning windows.

VISUAL MAPPING METHOD
When paired with visual cartography, EF/A results become accessible maps clinicians and clients can reference together, supporting co-regulation, shared language, and increased agency.

MULTICULTURAL
Culturally informed application requires counselors to contextualize EF/A patterns within systemic stressors, family rhythms, and sociocultural expectations, aligning with Sue et al. (2022) and Hook et al. (2013).

12. Cartography, A Metaphorical and Clinical Justification

Cartography offers a powerful, non-pathologizing metaphor for conceptualizing executive functioning, especially for neurodivergent adults who naturally think in spatial, visual, symbolic, or nonlinear ways. Mapping the Selfscape allows clients to externalize internal processes, transforming abstract executive cycles into navigable terrain. Informed by metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson) and expressive arts therapy (Malchiodi, 2020), this cartographic approach aligns with Hays' (2023) call for multimethod, integrative assessment practices. By representing executive functioning through landscapes, clients can see their patterns, such as overwhelm, depletion, hyperfocus, or cyclical activation, reflected in imagery that is compassionate and intuitive. Maps create distance from shame-based narratives and instead emphasize coherence, adaptation, and personal meaning. In this atlas, Brown's domains become ecosystems: activation deserts, emotional weather systems, hyperfocus constellations, working-memory archives. Through this process, EF difficulties shift from a list of deficits to a meaningful internal geography that can be explored with curiosity, agency, and self-compassion.

13. At the Close

In the end, Maps of the Self-scape is both an assessment companion and an invitation, a way of seeing executive functioning not as a fixed trait to be measured, but as a living terrain to be understood. The EF/A provides the structure, but the landscape itself belongs to each person: shaped by culture, history, embodiment, and the quiet negotiations of daily life. When we trace these internal geographies with curiosity rather than judgment, we begin to recognize the intelligence within patterns that once looked like problems. We see that overwhelm has weather, that memory has its own archives, that activation ebbs like tidewater against the demands of the day. Mapping these landscapes makes room for compassion, coherence, and shared language, offering counselors and clients a path toward deeper understanding of how a life is navigated from the inside. Ultimately, this project affirms that every mind carries its own ecosystem, and that honoring these internal worlds with care is an act of both clinical precision and profound humanity.

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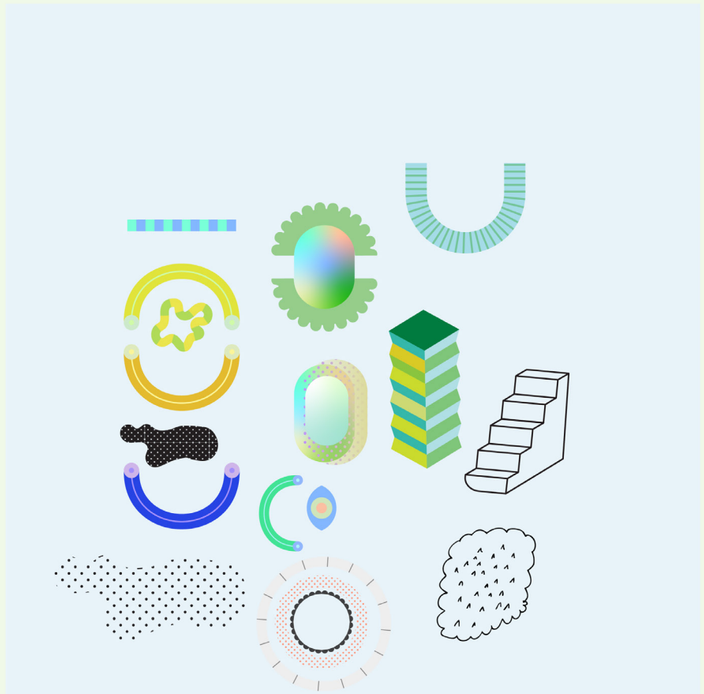

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01. Creative Theoretical Rationale

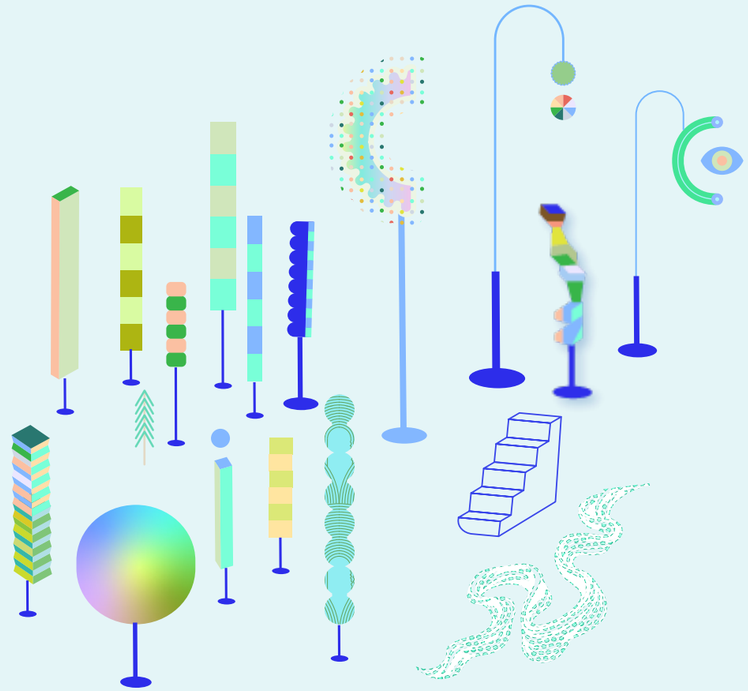
Executive functioning is both a neurocognitive architecture and a lived experience shaped by context, identity, culture, and meaning (Brown, 2013; Yalom, 1980). Integrating ecological and existential frameworks allows counselors to view EF not as isolated deficits but as multidimensional adaptations arising within real environments and lived worlds. This series integrates Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory with existential phenomenology to conceptualize executive functioning as a multilayered human experience. Bronfenbrenner (1979) situates behavior within nested environmental systems, and existential theorists emphasize the lived dimensions of embodiment (Umwelt), meaning (Lebenswelt), self-awareness (Eigenwelt), and relationality (Mitwelt). Executive functioning challenges, particularly in ADHD, are known to arise from interactions between biological regulation, environmental demands, and the meaning assigned to those challenges (Brown, 2013; Hays, 2023). By mapping EF through four ecological–existential lenses, this project highlights the interdependence between internal capacities, systemic contexts, and subjective experience.

02. Brown EF/A Creative Integration

The Brown EF/A Scales conceptualize ADHD and executive functioning impairments across six interconnected domains: activation, focus, effort, emotion, memory, and action. Each map in this series translates one of these domains into a metaphorical environment, offering a visual narrative that parallels Brown's neuropsychological framework. The River Realms emphasize physiological flow and regulation; the Constellation Realms emphasize cognitive orientation and meaning-making; the Internal Parts Control Room highlights intrapsychic dynamics of Self and parts; and the Forest of Systems contextualizes EF within sociocultural structures. This layered approach mirrors Brown's assertion that executive functioning arises from dynamic interactions between neural circuits, emotional regulation, working memory, and environmental fit, allowing clinicians and clients to understand assessment results in an integrative, holistic way.

03. Creative Artist / Clinician Statement

Executive functioning is not a set of isolated cognitive skills, it is an ecosystem, a choreography of body, attention, memory, emotion, environment, and culture. The Brown EF/A Scales offered a clinical structure, but what emerged for me was something more spacious: a constellation of interdependent forces that shape how we move through the world. These four maps reflect how I see people in the therapeutic encounter. A river system in the body. A constellation field in the sky of meaning. An internal control room of hardworking, protective parts. A forest of cultural and systemic conditions shaping what we call "functioning." Together they form a selfscape, a multidimensional atlas of how humans navigate energy, overwhelm, identity, and possibility. Assessments, to me, are not verdicts. They are thresholds. Openings into deeper compassion, curiosity, and understanding.



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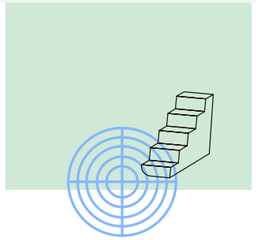
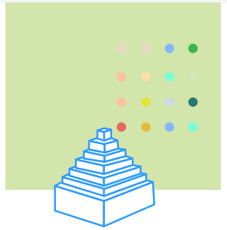
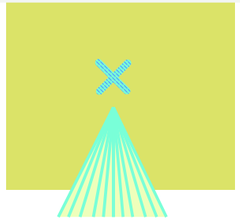
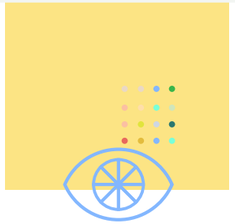
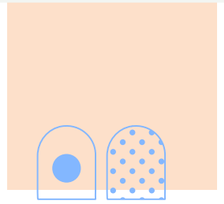
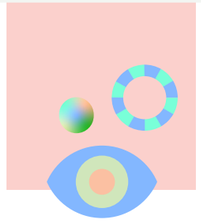
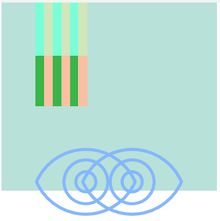
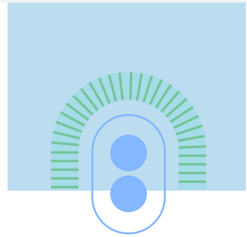

01. Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979)

Our inner worlds are not built in isolation, they form within layers of relationship, history, and environment that press in and shape us in ways both visible and invisible. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory offers a map of these layered influences, from the intimate micro-moments of daily life to the wide, atmospheric forces of culture, policy, and history. In the Self-Scape project, this framework functions like the "terrain key" that helps us understand how landscapes of self are formed.

The **microsystem** reflects immediate relational weather, family rhythms, friendship dynamics, daily interactions that carve the smallest but deepest grooves. The **mesosystem** captures where those worlds meet and collide. The **exosystem** holds institutions that indirectly shape us, workplaces, community systems, socioeconomic forces. And the **macrosystem** represents culture, norms, identity structures, and collective stories that define what is possible or forbidden. Finally, the **chronosystem** shadows everything with the element of time: developmental arcs, traumas, transitions, intergenerational patterns.

This theory anchors the Self-Scape in context, reminding us that executive function, identity, and coping are never merely "personal traits." They are ecological responses, adaptive, creative, and shaped by the ecosystems that surround us.

02. Existential Theory

Yalom (1980), van Deurzen (2012)

Existential theory helps us locate the deeper tectonic plates beneath our psychological landscapes. It holds that human beings continually navigate four fundamental dimensions of existence: the Umwelt (physical world), Mitwelt (relational world), Eigenwelt (inner world), and Überwelt (world of meaning, values, and spirituality). These dimensions offer a grounding structure for mapping a person's Self-Scape, revealing the forces that give shape, tension, and texture to lived experience.

In the **Umwelt**, we encounter embodiment, energy, limitations, illness, sensory life. In the **Mitwelt,** we meet attachment patterns, boundaries, and the complex terrain of interpersonal connection. The **Eigenwelt** reflects identity, parts, inner narratives, and the evolving sense of self-in-relation-to-self. And the **Überwelt** describes a person's ethos: beliefs, moral frameworks, cultural inheritance, rituals of meaning-making.

For individuals with ADHD, trauma histories, or neurodivergent processing styles, these existential dimensions illuminate how executive functioning is not just cognitive but deeply existential: How do I belong? Who am I becoming? What do I hold sacred? By integrating existential theory into the Self-Scape, we invite clients to explore both the practical and the profound, mapping not only how they function, but why they matter.

03. Feminist Theory

Sue et al. (2022) ; Williams et al. (2018); Feldman (2023)

Feminist theory brings a vital corrective to any map of self: it reminds us that psychology does not occur in a vacuum but within systems shaped by power, privilege, gender expectations, and socialization. In the Self-Scape project, feminist theory acts like a lens that sharpens the contours of these forces, showing how identity is shaped by cultural narratives and how oppression becomes embodied.

Feminist counseling emphasizes **agency, voice, empowerment,** and **systemic awareness**. It asks: Whose stories were you raised to center? What **roles** were you rewarded or punished for? How have **gendered expectations** sculpted your coping, your attention, your self-worth, or your silence? This theory also highlights how neurodivergent women and AFAB individuals often experience misdiagnosis, masking, perfectionism, and chronic self-blame shaped by gendered norms.

Within the Self-Scape, feminist theory helps map the **internalized "rules"** inherited from family, culture, and institutions, rules that often shape executive functioning, relationship patterns, and self-evaluation. By integrating this lens, the project becomes not just descriptive but liberatory, naming the forces that constrain and expanding the possibilities for agency, voice, and self-definition.

04. Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1991)

Intersectionality offers a framework for understanding identity as layered, interdependent, and shaped by overlapping systems of power. Originating from Black feminist scholarship, intersectionality illuminates how race, gender, disability, class, sexuality, and other embodied identities do not act separately but form a mesh of lived experience, sometimes protective, sometimes restrictive, always multifaceted.

In the Self-Scape, intersectionality functions like a "multi-layer transparency" placed over the map. It shows how different identities interact to shape emotional load, opportunity, stigma, and access to care. For neurodivergent individuals, especially those carrying trauma or marginalized identities, intersectionality helps contextualize why certain coping strategies formed and why specific barriers to support or belonging persist.

Rather than pathologizing responses, this pillar frames them as adaptive to the conditions of one's **identities within systems of power**. It helps counselors and clients understand **maladaptive patterns as survival strategies shaped by lived realities**, not personal deficits. This theory ensures the Self-Scape remains culturally responsive, politically aware, and grounded in real-world context rather than abstract individualism.

05. Individualism ----vs.---- Collectivism

Hofstede (2001); Triandis (1995)

Cultural orientation toward individualism or collectivism powerfully shapes how people understand identity, emotion, responsibility, and belonging. This pillar helps map the cultural "default settings" someone carries, defaults that deeply influence executive functioning, relational expectations, and help-seeking behaviors.

In individualistic contexts, **autonomy, personal achievement**, and **self-definition** are emphasized. This can cultivate confidence and independence, but it can also intensify shame, over-responsibility, and perfectionism, especially for neurodivergent individuals who feel they fall short of cultural ideals. In collectivist systems, **identity is interwoven with family, community, and interdependence**; this can feel grounding and connective, yet may also bring pressure to conform, mask distress, or suppress difference.

Including this theory helps situate a client's Self-Scape within cultural mapping, naming the implicit cultural rules they may be negotiating. It highlights how values around belonging, self-sacrifice, boundaries, and expression shape both their inner world and their external navigation strategies. This pillar supports culturally sensitive conceptualization and recognizes that identity is always held within cultural terrain.

06. Narrative Identity Theory

McAdams (2001)

Narrative Identity Theory views the self as a **story we are continually authoring**, full of characters, turning points, themes, ruptures, and redemptive arcs. This perspective aligns perfectly with the ethos of Maps of Self-Scape, treating identity as a living landscape shaped not only by events but by the **meaning we give those events**.

McAdams teaches that people make sense of their lives through narrative coherence, emotional tone, and recurring motifs (e.g., agency, communion, redemption, contamination). For neurodivergent or trauma-impacted individuals, these narratives often contain themes of being **"too much," "not enough,"** or "out of sync", themes that can be understood, softened, and rewritten through therapeutic mapping.

Integrating this theory allows each map to function like a chapter: relational forests, executive-function rivers, trauma fault lines, existential horizons. It emphasizes that identity is not fixed but continually revised, and that storytelling is both diagnostic and deeply healing. This pillar turns the Self-Scape project into a narrative intervention, an act of reclaiming authorship.

07. Constructivism / Personal Construct Theory

Kelly (1955)

Personal Construct Theory suggests that people make meaning through the mental frameworks, or constructs, they develop over time. These constructs form the interpretive filters through which experience is understood, predicted, and navigated. In the Self-Scape, this theory underlines how individuals build internal "maps" long before we ever put them on paper.

Constructs are shaped by early attachment, cultural messaging, trauma, relational experience, and neurodivergent processing. They guide assumptions like **"I must be competent to be safe," "Emotions are dangerous," or "Connection requires masking."** When these constructs become rigid, they limit movement; when flexibly explored, they open new pathways.

Integrating this theory allows the Self-Scape to serve as an externalization of internal logic: how a person categorizes experience, how they anticipate threat or support, and how they understand self and other. It positions mapping as a process of discovering, challenging, and reconstructing meaning, supporting therapeutic change through gentle curiosity rather than pathologizing.

08. Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1988), Ainsworth (1989),

Attachment theory offers a framework for understanding how early relational patterns shape internal working models of safety, closeness, and self-worth. These patterns continue to influence how we regulate emotion, connect with others, seek support, and interpret relational cues across the lifespan.

In the Self-Scape, attachment becomes a foundational layer, a kind of geological formation beneath the surface terrain. **Secure, anxious, avoidant, or disorganized patterns** reveal themselves in the structure of pathways between maps: how someone moves toward or away from intimacy, how they respond to overwhelm, and how they experience connection during stress. For neurodivergent individuals, attachment patterns often intersect with **masking, rejection sensitivity, and sensory vulnerability, shaping relational landscapes** in complex ways.

By integrating attachment theory, the Self-Scape becomes a multidimensional exploration of both past and present relational patterns. It helps clients trace how early caregiving environments influenced coping, identity, and emotional wiring, while highlighting the potential for earned security, new relational experiences, and re-mapping toward safety and connection.

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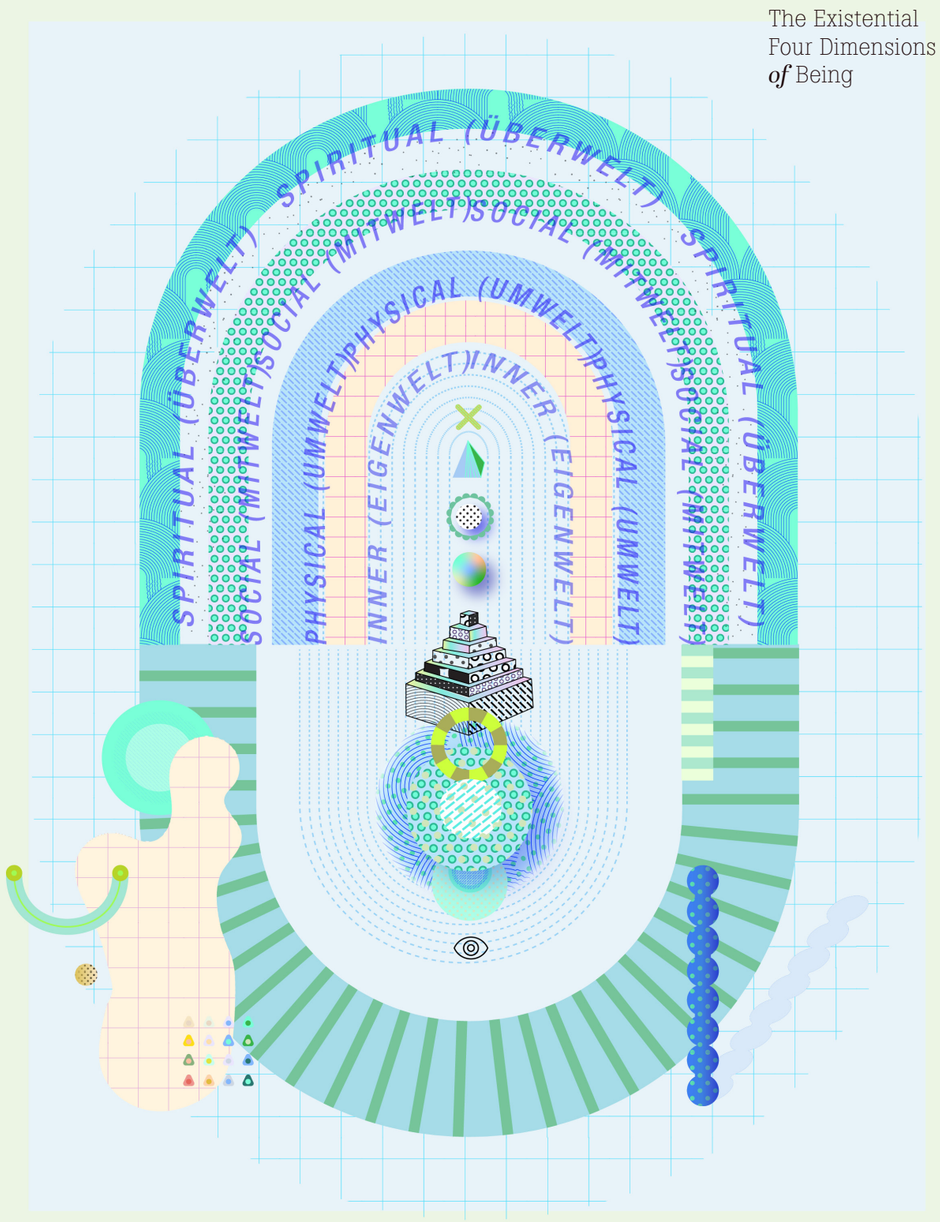

Dimensions *of* Being

/ Brown's EF Model +
The Four Dimensions of Being

Executive Function is often described as a set of mental skills, but Brown's model reminds us it is far more lived than that, an embodied, relational, meaning-making process woven through every layer of human existence (Brown, 2013, 2017). When viewed through the existential dimensions of Umwelt, Mitwelt, Eigenwelt, and Überwelt, Brown's EF scales become not just a clinical tool, but a map for understanding how we inhabit the world.

In the Umwelt, EF lives in the body: sensory thresholds, arousal states, fatigue, hunger, pain, movement. Brown's domains, activation, alertness, effort regulation, are shaped here first, deeply intertwined with the nervous system's response to the physical world (Brown, 2017). In this dimension, the ability to initiate a task, shift attention, or maintain focus emerges from the organism's basic dialogue with its environment. Umwelt becomes the soil where executive functioning grows or strains.

In the Mitwelt, EF becomes relational. Emotional regulation, frustration tolerance, flexibility, and task completion unfold within webs of interaction, family dynamics, cultural pressures, social expectations, and the interpersonal signals of safety or threat. Brown's emotion and action scales can be read through this lens: EF capacities often shift depending on relationships, belonging, and the implicit rules of connection (Brown, 2013). As Yalom (1980) describes, Mitwelt is where we encounter others, experience closeness and distance, and navigate the tension between authenticity and acceptance, all of which shape how one organizes, plans, or avoids.

In the Eigenwelt, EF becomes deeply personal, the inner world of identity, perception, self-talk, and self-understanding. Brown's domains of working memory, self-management, and internal organization intersect here with existential questions: Who am I when I forget? Who am I when I can't keep up? What meaning do I assign to struggle or slowness? This is the dimension van Deurzen (2012) describes as the realm of inner dialogue, self-awareness, and personal truth. Executive Function within Eigenwelt is not merely cognitive, it is interpretive and narrative, shaped by the stories we tell about our abilities and worth.

And in the Überwelt, EF meets meaning. Activation becomes tied to purpose, focus is nourished by values, and regulation becomes a spiritual practice of coherence. In this dimension, Yalom's (1980) realm of transcendence and van Deurzen's (2012) domain of meaning, EF is no longer about productivity but alignment. A sense of calling, wonder, or connectedness can soften overwhelm and stabilize attention. Here, executive functioning reflects not just capacity, but orientation toward what matters.

Together, Brown's EF model and the existential dimensions reveal a single truth: Executive Function is not only a cognitive process, it is an existential one. It expresses how we inhabit our body, our relationships, our inner landscape, and our sources of meaning. To support EF is to support the whole person across all four dimensions of being.

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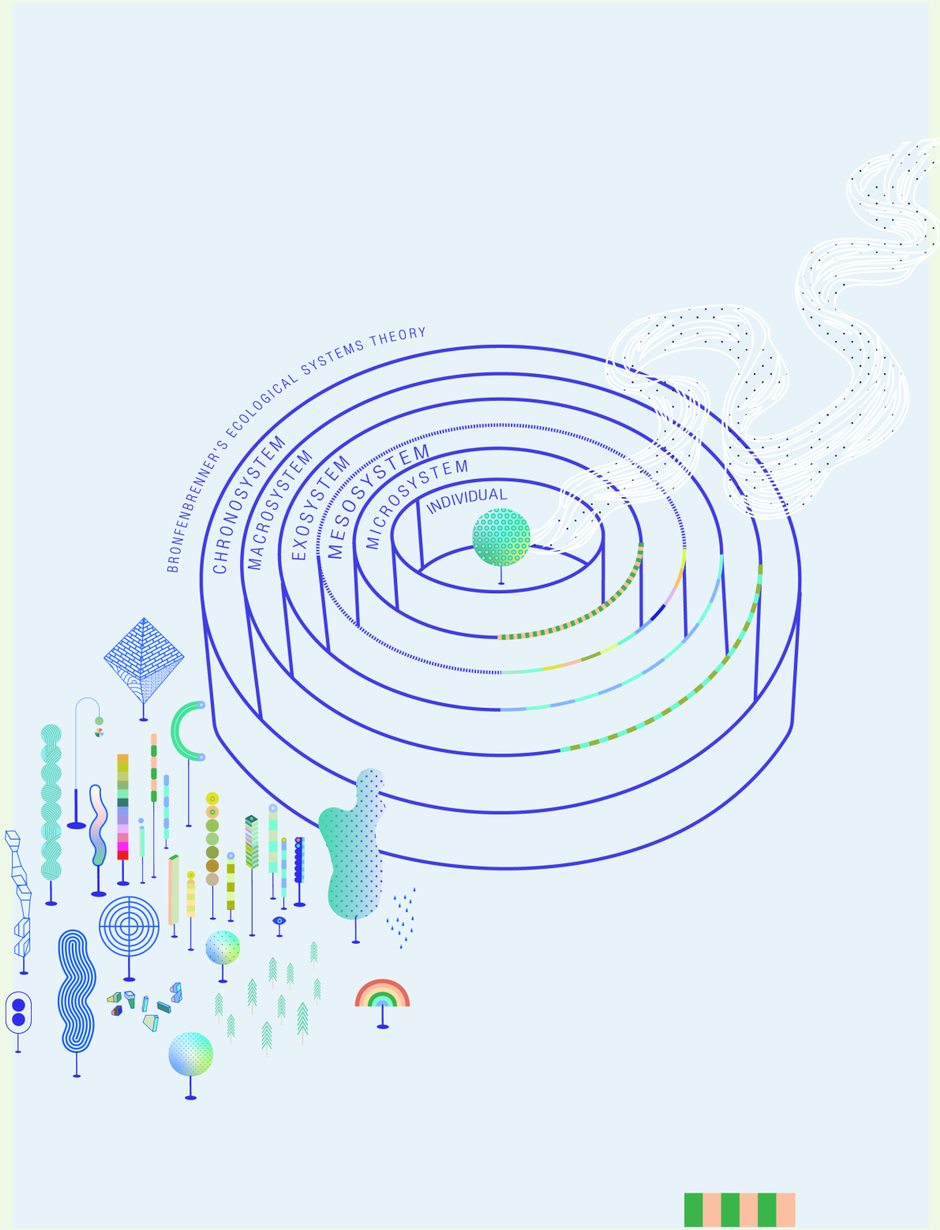

Layered Environments

Executive Function (EF) doesn't live inside a single neuron or personality trait, it lives inside an ecosystem. Thomas Brown's model teaches us that EF is not one monolithic skill but a constellation of interdependent capacities, activation, focus, effort, emotion, memory, and action, nested within attentional regulation (Brown, 2013, 2017). These are not simply "in the head." They are grown, shaped, constrained, and liberated within the layered environments Bronfenbrenner described.

In the microsystem, EF emerges in the rhythms of daily life, the sensory landscape of a childhood bedroom, the tone of a caregiver's voice, the pace of a classroom, the cultural rules hidden inside home routines (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem links these worlds together; a child's EF capacities shift depending on the relationships between home, school, peers, and supports.

In the exosystem, forces the child never chose, parent work schedules, school policies, healthcare access, set the stage for whether EF is stretched, scaffolded, or chronically overwhelmed (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). And at the level of the macrosystem, culture scripts what "good functioning" means: productivity as morality, speed as competence, perfectionism as survival, "self-control" as worth. For neurodivergent individuals, these messages can become a kind of weather, shaping nervous systems long before awareness ever forms (Brown, 2017).

EF, then, is not a personal failure or flaw. It is a relational and ecological phenomenon. Brown reminds us of the inner architecture, activation, working memory, emotion regulation, while Bronfenbrenner reminds us of the forest those structures grow within. When we map EF through both lenses, we see the self not as broken, but as shaped by context: a person whose capacities reflect not just innate wiring, but the ecosystems, demands, and narratives they have moved through.

Together, these theories offer a more compassionate and liberating truth: Executive Function is not a character judgment, it is a story of environments, supports, nervous systems, and culture. It is ecological. It is relational. It is human.

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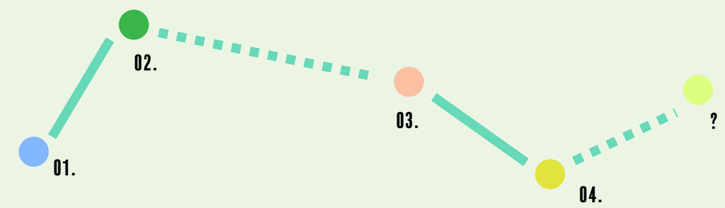
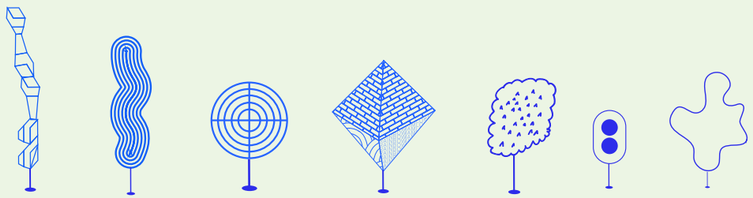
THE
Five
Maps

HOW TO USE THESE MAPS





How to Use These Maps

Reading the Self-scape as an internal navigation tool

01. Start by locating yourself:

/ What realm am I in right now? Before changing anything, pause and orient. Ask yourself:

__. *Where am I in the Self-scape?*
__. *What does this part of me feel like, fast, foggy, scattered, narrow, flooded?*
__. *What signals is my body giving?*

> This builds awareness without demanding performance. It helps neurodivergent nervous systems name the state before the strategy.

2. Get curious about the terrain, not the "problem."

/ Every realm has its own logic:

__. Energetic surges
__. Hyperfocus cliffs
__. Overwhelm storms
__. Delta-fog days where nothing feels linear
__. Dry riverbeds of executive fatigue

> Instead of "Why am I like this?", the map invites: "What is the terrain asking of me?" This shifts the stance from self-blame to self-compassion.

03. Identify which "parts" are active in this terrain.

/ IFS work lives beautifully here. You might notice:

__. A Protector scanning the horizon
__. A Creative Eagle soaring with too many ideas
__. A Planter who wants order and safety
__. A Younger Part reacting to uncertainty
__. A Manager trying to prevent chaos

> Naming the part helps you understand the why beneath the reaction.

04. Match the realm to the right regulation or support strategy.

/ Each realm includes strategies that pair with that terrain's needs.For example:

__. **Rapids Realm:** grounding, slowing, sensory containment
__. **Delta Realm:** widening attention, values-based micro-steps
__. **Overwhelm Realm:** bilateral stimulation, pacing, body-first regulation
__. **Fog Realm:** external structure, co-regulation, gentle sequencing

> The goal isn't to force yourself out of the realm but to move skillfully within it.

05. Use the maps during moments of transition.

/ The Self-scape is especially useful when:

__. you shift tasks
__. you feel dysregulated
__. you enter or exit social situations
__. your thoughts become scattered or sticky
__. you're deciding what to prioritize next

> A quick glance, Where am I? What's needed?, can interrupt spirals.

06. Track patterns over time.

/ For some, certain terrains appear:

__. with sensory overload
__. during executive fatigue
__. around shame triggers
__. after conflict or transitions
__. when nervous system states collapse or spike

> Noticing patterns builds predictive awareness, a huge relief for ADHD and ND nervous systems that often feel blindsided by internal shifts.

07. Use the maps as shared language in therapy.

/ These maps offer a non-pathologizing shorthand between therapist and client:

__. *I think I'm in the Rapids again.*
__. *Something in me moved into the Fog Realm during that conversation.*
__. *A Protector part showed up with a storm front.*

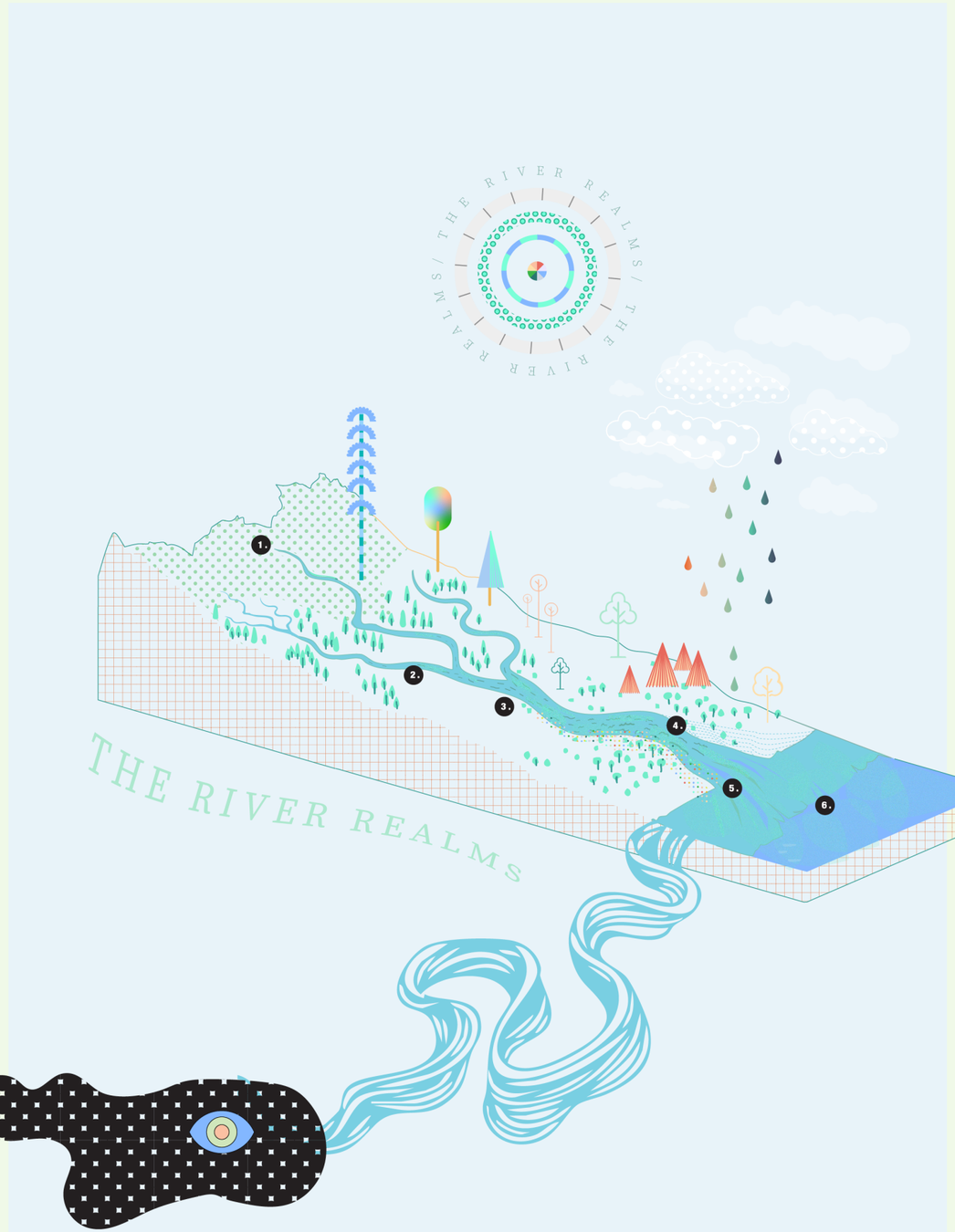
> This makes internal experience easier to name, especially for clients who struggle with verbal emotional labeling.

08. Most important: the purpose isn't control.

/ It's companionship. These maps aren't about fixing dysregulation, forcing flow, or *optimizing performance.* They're about witnessing the living ecosystem inside you with:

__. compassion
__. curiosity
__. contextual awareness
__. and choice

> The goal is to help you become a better companion to your own internal world.



MAP 01:

The River Realms

/ A MAP OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF) THROUGH THE ECOLOGY OF THE BODY

> ADHD & Executive Function (EF) in the Lived Body
> Umwelt + Microsystem

/ In this Map:

Here, the river falters. Energy thins into drought, overwhelm gathers like sudden storms, and debris from trauma collects in the channels. What the world misreads as "laziness" is more often the river searching for steady flow.

/ The Six River Realms

[EF Domains Mapped]

1.	**HEADWATERS REALM**	**Activation**	> The source. Where impulses begin or freeze.
2.	**NARROWING CHANNEL REALM**	**Focus**	> Where attention can either stay steady or scatter.
3.	**CURRENTS & RAPIDS REALM**	**Effort / Sustained Energy**	> Where stamina rises, crashes, or rushes ahead unsustainably.
4.	**EMOTIONAL WEATHER WATERS**	**Emotion Regulation**	> Where ripples become waves; storms rise or quiet.
5.	**THE SEDIMENT ARCHIVE BASIN**	**Working Memory**	> Layers of experience deposit, settle, or wash away.
6.	**THE DELTA OF DIRECTION**	**Action / Monitoring**	> Where choices form paths and plans meet movement.

/ Legend

>	**FLOW LINES**	represent clarity, momentum, regulation
>	**DEBRIS**	represents trauma triggers, sensory overload, shame-based blocks
>	**FLOOD ZONES**	represents dysregulation, overwhelm
>	**DROUGHT LINES**	represents burnout, shutdown, hypoarousal
>	**TEMPERATURE SHIFTS**	represents emotional intensity
>	**SEDIMENT LAYERS**	represents short-term memory, trace memories, forgotten threads
>	**CONFLUENCE POINTS**	represent how domains interact

/ Visualization:

Executive functioning begins in the nervous system. Here, activation trickles into motion at the headwaters. Attention narrows into a focused channel, or disperses across competing currents. Effort crashes through rapids or slows into still pools. Emotion becomes weather, shifting tides and storms. Memory settles in layers of sediment, shaping what can be recalled. Action unfolds at the delta, where movement fans into direction.

/ EF struggles in this realm are bodily

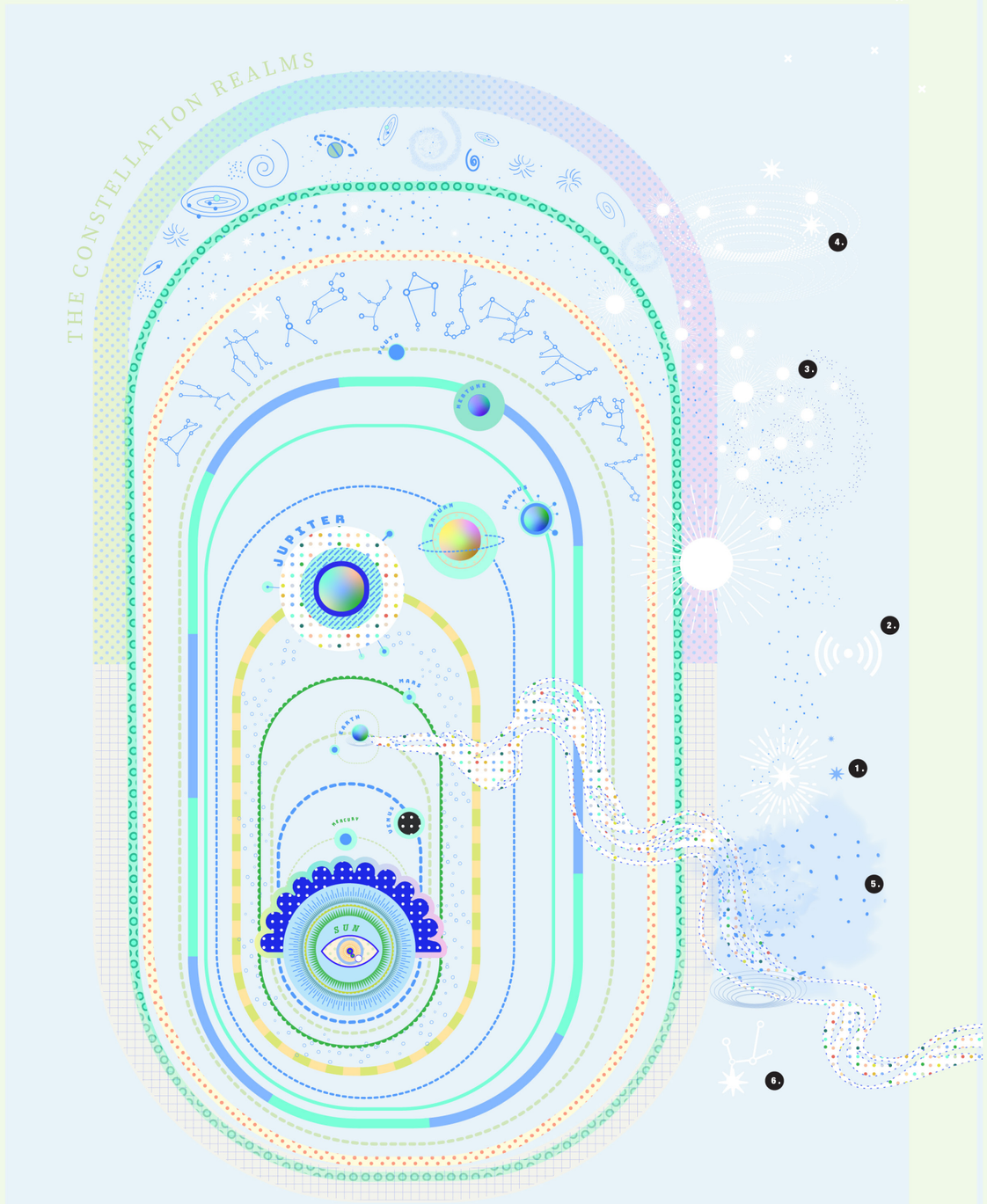
Droughts of energy, floods of overwhelm, tangled debris of trauma. What looks like "laziness" is often a river searching for flow.

/ Purpose of the Map

This map grounds executive functioning in the somatic, energetic, and physiological layer of being. Where the nervous system meets the world. Where overwhelm is felt as flood, fatigue as drought, RSD as sudden storms, and trauma as debris that disrupts flow.

/ Why it Matters Clinically

ADHD is a nervous-system condition, not a moral failure. This map visually reframes EF struggles as ecological forces, not laziness. It gives clients language for what they feel.



MAP 02:

The Constellation Realms

/ A MAP OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF) IN ORIENTATION AND MEANING

> ADHD & Executive Function (EF) in orientation and meaning
> Lebenswelt + Mesosystem

/ In this Map:

Here, attention becomes sky. Threads of focus stretch like constellations connecting points that seem unrelated on the ground. Some stars burn bright in hyperfocus, while others dim or disappear. The mind drifts across galaxies, following patterns only it can see.

/ The Constellation Realms

[EF Domains Mapped]

1.	**SPARK CONSTELLATION**	**Activation**	/ Moments of ignition. Where ideas flicker into awareness or fail to light.
2.	**BEACON CONSTELLATION**	**Focus**	/ Guiding stars that orient attention. Some burn steadily; others blink or are drowned out.
3.	**STAMINA CLUSTER**	**Effort / Sustained Energy**	/ Dense groupings of light that hold momentum. May scatter under fatigue or overload.
4.	**EMPATHOS CONSTELLATION**	**Emotion Regulation**	/ Patterns shaped by emotional gravity. Storm-bright or faint, influencing navigation.
5.	**ARCHIVE NEBULA**	**Working Memory**	/ Clouds of stored experience. Memories cluster, drift, or dissolve at the edges.
6.	**PATHMAKER CONSTELLATION**	**Action / Monitoring**	/ Lines drawn between stars. Where intention becomes trajectory.

/ Legend

STARS	:	points of activation or attention
CONSTELLATION LINES	:	meaning-making and coherence
NEBULA FOG	:	memory diffusion, uncertainty
FLICKER MARKS	:	distractibility, shifting salience
GRAVITY FIELDS	:	emotional pull shaping cognition
DIRECTION ARROWS	:	intentional movement and planning
ORBIT LINES	:	cycles of attention, repeated returns

/ Visualization

Meaning forms its own sky. Activation appears as a lone ignition star. Focus becomes a steady beacon, or a flickering point competing with brighter or louder ones. Effort rises and dims across the stamina cluster. Emotion becomes cosmic weather. Memory gathers in the archive nebula, drifting, clustering, dissolving. Action connects stars into pathways of intention.

/ EF struggles in this realm are celestial

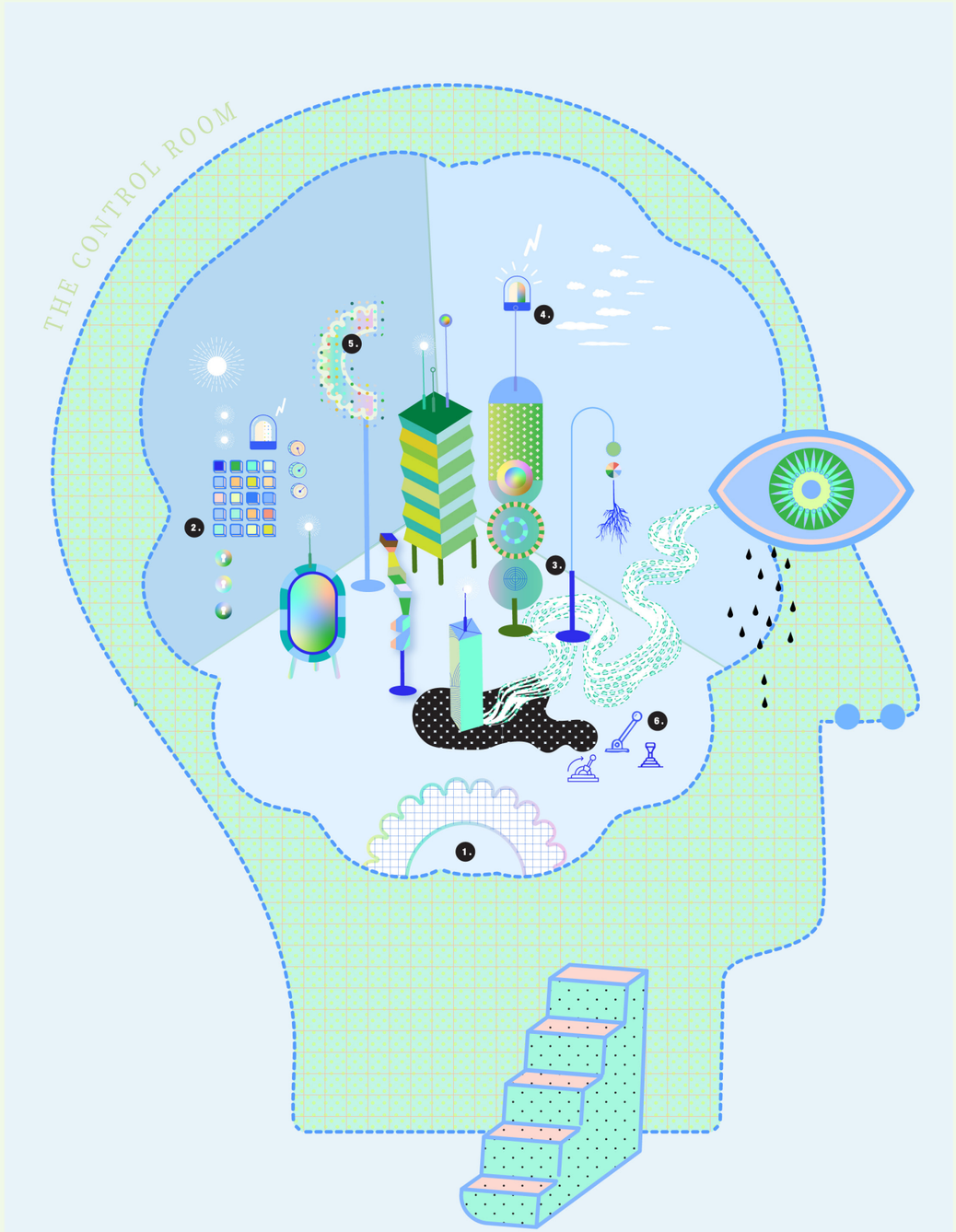
Focus scatters like diffused light. Thoughts streak across the mental sky. Tasks drift out of orbit. What looks like distraction is often a mind mapping constellations that are meaningful, but invisible to others.

/ Purpose of the Map

This map situates executive functioning in orientation, meaning-making, and identity. It reflects how attention, memory, emotion, and action organize themselves in the inner sky of lived experience. Where activation appears as sparks, focus as guiding stars, effort as clustered light, emotion as shifting constellations, and memory as drifting nebulae. When executive functioning falters, the sky does not disappear, it loses coherence.

/ Why it Matters Clinically

Reframing attention patterns as star-maps helps clients reclaim agency and recognize strengths in hyperfocus, associative thinking, and wide-angle awareness. It supports strength-based conceptualization and reduces internalized stigma around "wandering minds."



MAP 03:

The Internal Architects

/ THE INTERNAL CONTROL ROOM
/ A MAP OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF) AS INNER MULTIPLICITY

> ADHD & EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF) as Inner Multiplicity
> Eigenwelt + IFS

/ In this Map:

Inside each person lives a system of parts, protectors, managers, helpers, each attempting to keep the whole system safe. At the center sits Self: steady, compassionate, unblended. Executive-function challenges emerge not from failure, but from parts working overtime to maintain order within the system. The Initiator longs for clarity; the Focus Keeper monitors noise and distraction; the Regulator manages overwhelm and pressure; the Guardian of Feeling attends to emotional weather; the Tracker holds threads of memory; and the Organizer tries to maintain order amid flux.

/ The Control Room

[EF Domains Mapped]

__1.	**SELF SEAT** →	**Regulation & Clarity**	The grounded center. When accessible, the system coordinates with calm and choice.
__2.	**ACTIVATION PANELS** →	**Initiation**	Where impulses are greenlit or blocked, often guarded by protectors.
__3.	**FOCUS CONSOLES** →	**Attention Management**	Switchboards toggling between tasks, frequently hijacked by urgency or threat.
__4.	**EMOTIONAL ALARMS** →	**Affect Regulation**	Warning systems designed to alert, sometimes overwhelming the room.
__5.	**MEMORY VAULTS** →	**Working Memory**	Storage areas holding experiences, beliefs, and implicit learning.
__6.	**ACTION LEVERS** →	**Follow -Through & Monitoring**	Mechanisms that translate intention into behavior, easily frozen under pressure.

/ Legend

>	**Panels**	: EF functions under parts influence
>	**Alarm Signals**	: emotional flooding or hypervigilance
>	**Locked Doors**	: protective inhibition
>	**Override Switches**	: impulsive or reactive responses
>	**Observer Lights**	: Self-awareness moments
>	**Repair Zones**	: integration and unburdening

/ Visualization

Executive functioning is illustrated as a living control room, a network of parts, each with its own voice, job, and rhythm. The Self Seat sits in the center, steady when accessible, but easily crowded out by urgency, overwhelm, or protective activation. Buttons, levers, lights, and consoles mirror the internal negotiations of daily functioning. When parts blend or overactivate, the system becomes louder, faster, or more chaotic. When Self is present, the whole room softens into clarity and cooperation.

/ EF struggles in this realm are celestial

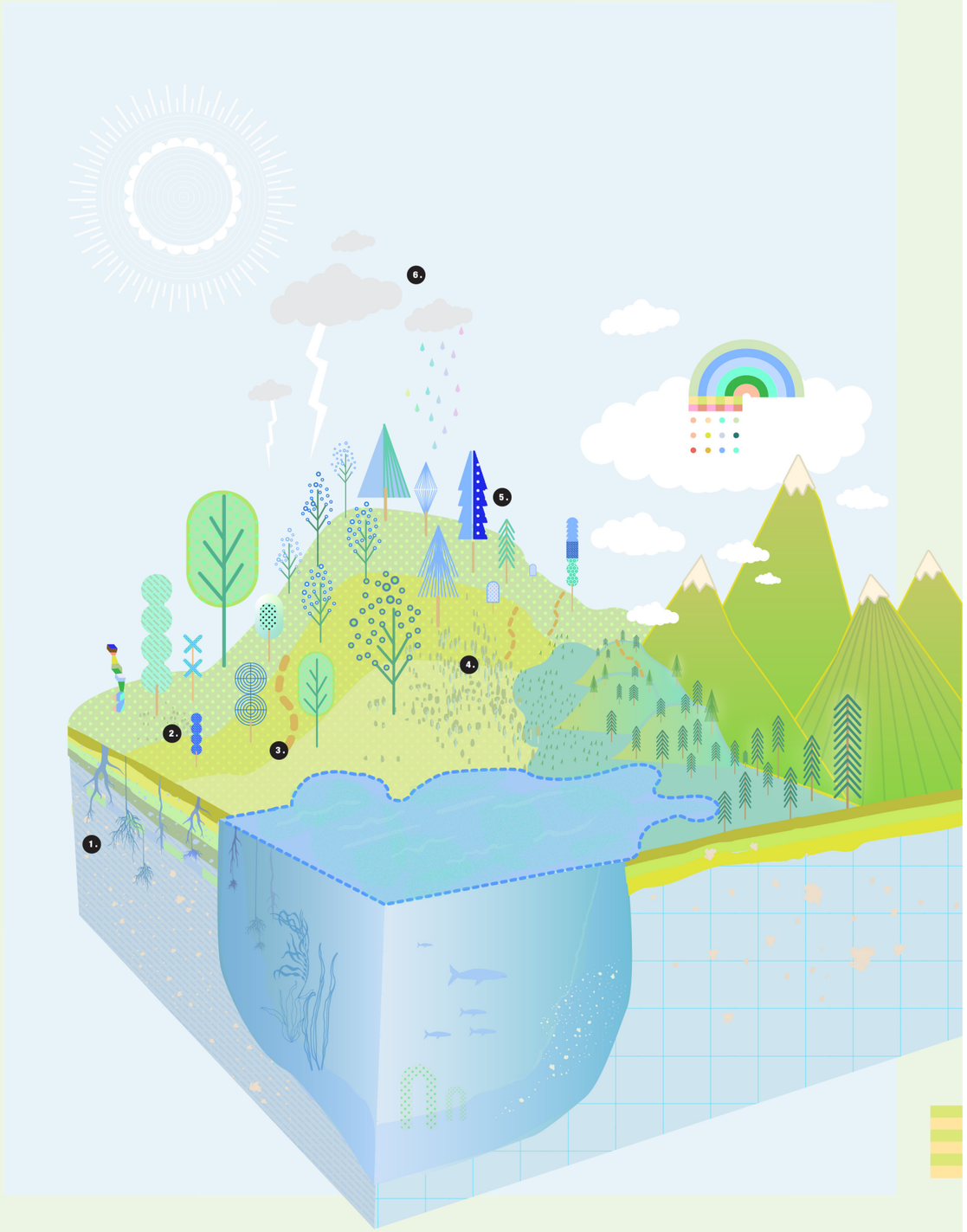
Dysregulation arises when protective parts work too hard, managers become rigid, or overwhelmed exiles push for relief. Activation stalls when the Initiator is blocked. Focus dissolves when the Tracker or Gatekeeper is consumed by noise. Action becomes scattered when multiple parts try to steer at once. What looks like inconsistency, avoidance, or "not trying hard enough" is often a system stretched thin by competing internal demands.

/ Purpose of the Map

This map reframes executive functioning as a dynamic internal system rather than a single cognitive "center of command." It invites clients to see EF challenges through the lens of parts: each with needs, strategies, histories, and protective logic. By visualizing regulation, attention, memory, and action as relational processes among parts, the map supports clarity, compassion, and deeper insight into the internal negotiations shaping daily functioning.

/ Why it Matters Clinically

This map normalizes that EF struggle often reflects understandable protective strategies, not character flaws. It supports self-compassion, reduces shame, and enhances the ability to identify which parts are activated and why. It encourages clients to work with, not against, their inner system. This perspective also integrates well with trauma work, IFS, and neurodivergent-affirming care, helping clients understand their internal world with nuance rather than self-criticism.



MAP 04:

The Forest of Systems

/ A MAP OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF) IN THE WORLD OF POWER & CULTURE

> ADHD & EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF) in the World of Power & Culture
> Mitwelt + Exosystem / Macrosystem

/ In this Map:

Executive functioning grows within a forest of systems. Roots are shaped by biological needs. The soil is shaped by early family patterns. Undergrowth is formed by school, work, and community. Trunks rise within institutional demands. The canopy is structured by cultural narratives, productivity, perfectionism, stillness as virtue, time as linear. Weather is shaped by economic pressure, trauma, racism, capitalism, and patriarchy. Here, EF challenges are contextual, not character flaws; environment matters, systemic forces matter, culture matters.

Roots → Microsystem
Undergrowth → Mesosystem
Trunks → Exosystem
Canopy → Macrosystem
Weather → Chronosystem / systemic forces

/ The Forest Regions
[EF Domains Mapped]

__1.	**ROOT NETWORKS**	**Early Conditioning**	Attachment, trauma, and early learning shaping regulation.
__2.	**UNDERSTORY**	**Daily Demands**	Invisible labor, sensory load, and routine stressors.
__3.	**PATHWAYS**	**Supports & Accommodations**	Clearings created by connection, resources, and understanding.
__4.	**THICKETS**	**Barriers & Constraints**	Systemic oppression, unrealistic expectations, chronic stress.
__5.	**CANOPY**	**Cultural Narratives**	Messages about productivity, worth, and "normal" functioning.
__6.	**WEATHER SYSTEMS**	**Environmental Stressors**	Economic strain, health, transitions, and uncertainty.

/ Legend

>	**Roots**	developmental and historical influences
>	**Trails**	access and support
>	**Dense Brush**	overwhelm and obstruction
>	**Clearings**	regulation and relief
>	**Weather Patterns**	systemic pressure
>	**Boundary Lines**	limits and containment

/ Visualization

Executive functioning appears here as an ecological system. Early roots represent physiological needs; undergrowth mirrors daily demands; trunks symbolize task-support structures; and canopy layers reflect cultural and institutional expectations. Weather represents systemic stressors that strike unpredictably. When the ecology is balanced, EF feels steady and navigable. When stressors intensify, the forest floods, dries out, or becomes choked by competing demands. What looks like "struggle" is often the forest responding to pressure.

/ EF struggles in this realm are celestial

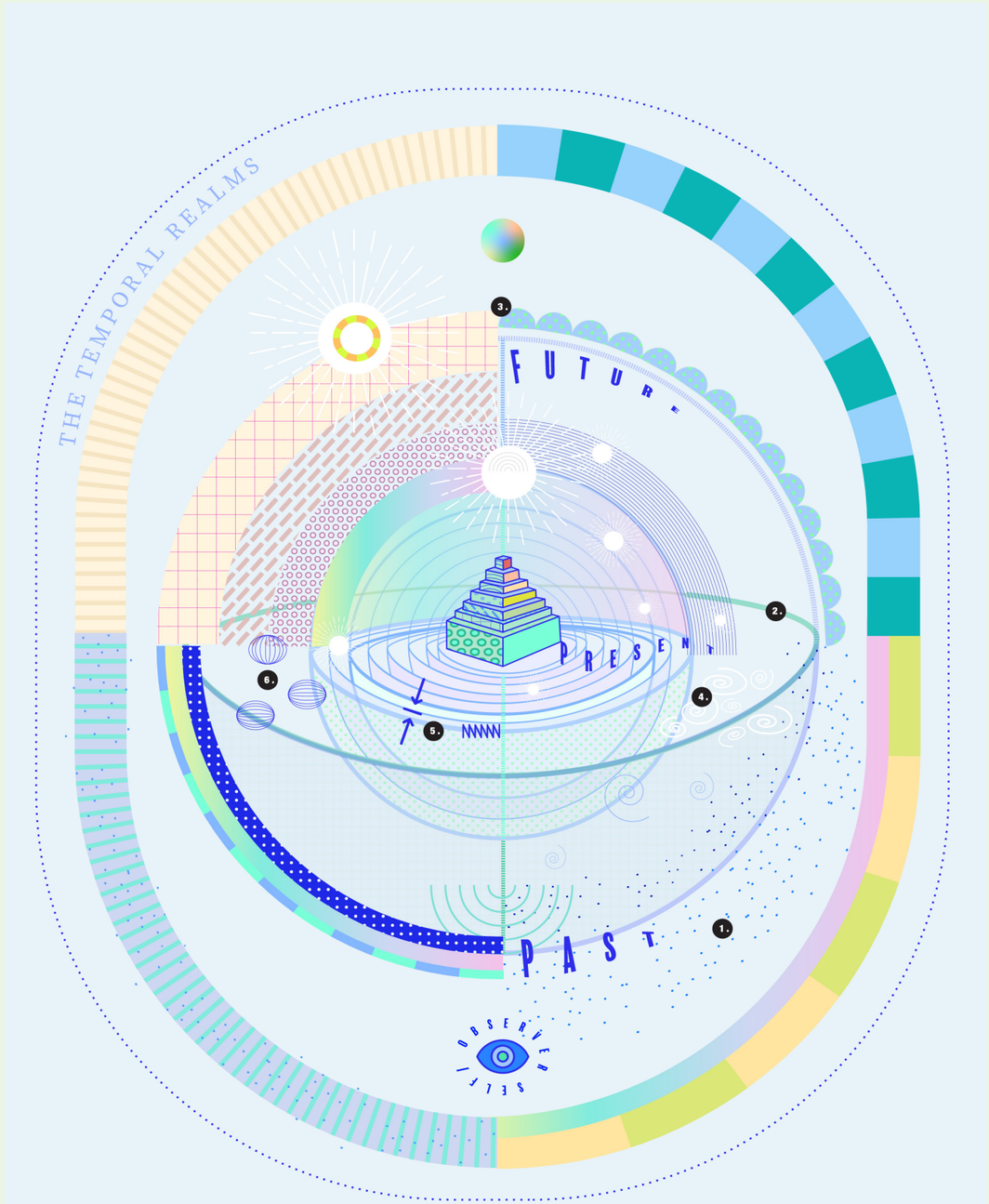
Dysregulation emerges not from internal flaw but from mismatched ecosystems. Productivity storms, scarcity winds, and trauma lightning alter the landscape. Focus scatters when canopy pressures block the light. Initiation stalls when the Gatekeeper part cannot access safe ground. Working memory slips when the Archivist becomes overwhelmed or retreats. Inconsistency is often the forest recalibrating to survive.

/ Purpose of the Map

This map situates executive functioning within social, cultural, and environmental contexts. EF does not exist in isolation; it grows within systems. The forest reveals how relationships, expectations, trauma histories, and resource access shape how attention, memory, and regulation move through a person's life. It reframes EF as adaptive, contextual, and deeply intertwined with the environments that hold or strain it.

/ Why it Matters Clinically

Viewing EF as a system of interlocking environments reduces shame, supports self-compassion, and deepens insight into how context drives functioning fluctuation. It aligns with trauma-informed, neurodivergent-affirming practice by validating adaptive survival strategies instead of labeling them as deficits. This perspective provides a path toward working with systems, internal and external, to create conditions in which clients can grow with stability, clarity, and support.



MAP 05:

The Temporal Map

/ A MAP OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTION (EF) IN THE LANDSCAPE OF TIME

> ADHD & Executive Function (EF) in the Landscape of Time
> Eigenzeit + Chronosystem

/ In this Map:

Time is not a neutral line but a living landscape. For many neurodivergent and trauma-impacted minds, time stretches, collapses, loops, or disappears. The past arrives as flash floods; the present narrows into a pinpoint; the future expands into fog or urgency. Executive functioning unfolds within this shifting temporal terrain. EF struggles are temporal, not moral. Time perception matters. Nervous-system tempo matters. Trauma time matters.

/ The Temporal Regions

[EF Domains Mapped]

1.	**Past Echo Fields**	**Memory & Conditioning**	Experiences that reverberate forward, shaping present responses.
2.	**Present Band**	**Attention & Regulation**	Where sensory input, emotion, and demand converge.
3.	**Future Horizon**	**Planning & Anticipation**	Often faint, foggy, or overwhelming.
4.	**Time Spirals**	**Repetition Patterns**	Cycles of burnout, hyperfocus, or avoidance.
5.	**Compression Zones**	**Urgency & Crisis**	Where everything feels "now" or "never.
6.	**Integration Arcs**	**Meaning Over Time**	Moments when past, present, and future align.

/ Legend

>	**BANDS**	pres-ent-moment awareness
>	**SPIRALS**	recurring EF patterns
>	**FOG ZONES**	future uncertainty
>	**FLASH POINTS**	trauma activation
>	**ARCS**	narrative coherence
>	**MARKERS**	insight and choice

/ Visualization

Executive functioning unfolds inside the architecture of time. Rhythm shaped by the nervous system. Pace shaped by attention cycles, drift formed by trauma, memory, and urgency. Moments stretch or compress under internal demands. Days shaped by chronic patterns and emotional load. Weeks shaped by demands, deadlines, and survival logic. Time is not a fixed horizon; for many with ADHD and trauma histories, the timeline bends: the past rushes in like a river; the present becomes a flood; the future dissolves into fog or sharpness. Planning fractures. Sequencing blurs. Initiation stalls while urgency snaps the system forward.

/ EF struggles in this realm are celestial

Moments slip out of sequence. Urgency overrides intention. The present collapses into overwhelm or drifts into distance. Plans dissolve when time bends or expands. Working memory falters when the Archivist cannot hold multiple temporal layers. What others read as avoidant or inconsistent is often a disrupted relationship with time itself.

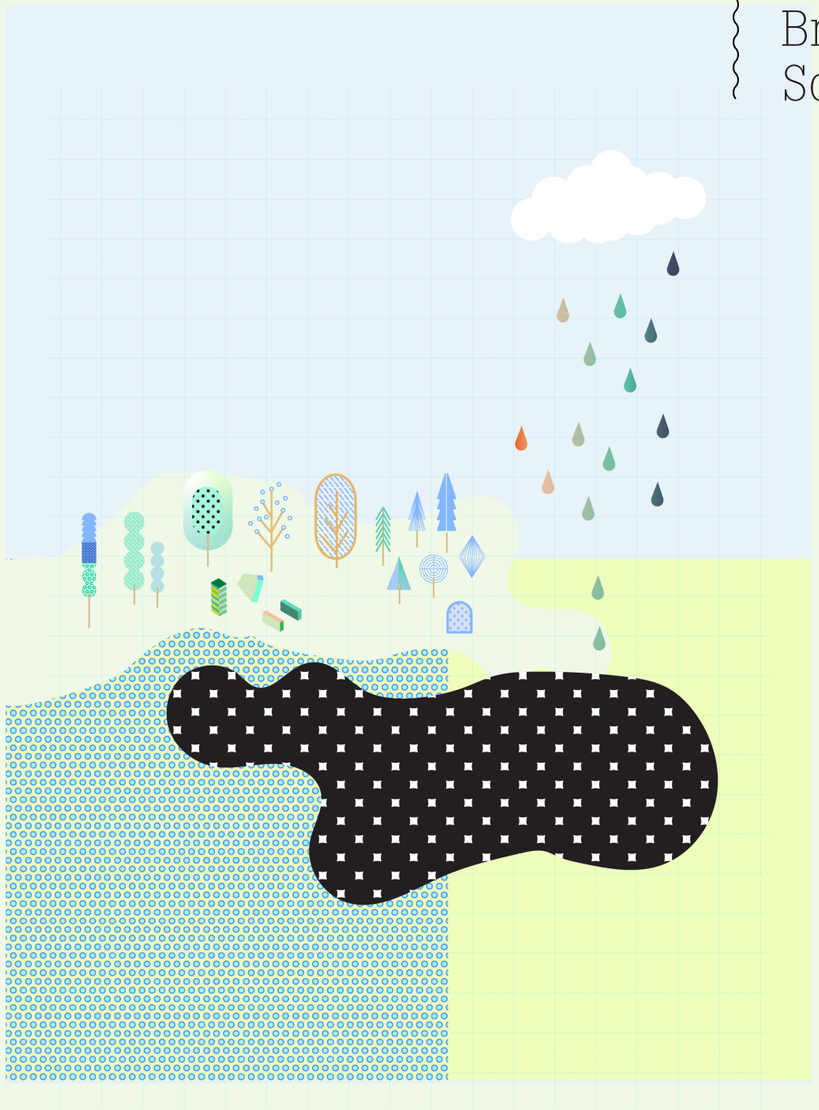
/ Purpose of the Map

This map situates executive functioning within the lived, nonlinear experience of time. It reveals how temporal perception shapes action: urgency collapses the future, memory pulls the past forward, and trauma time interrupts sequencing. By mapping these distortions, the atlas helps clients locate themselves in the terrain. Time becomes visible.

/ Why it Matters Clinically

Many EF challenges are temporal, not motivational. This map reframes struggle as a mismatch between internal time rhythms and external demands. It validates ADHD time blindness, trauma timelines, and neurodivergent pacing. This perspective supports self-compassion, reduces shame, strengthens emotional regulation, and enables clinicians and clients to co-create strategies anchored in realistic, neurobiologically aligned pacing.

Integrating the Maps with the Brown EF/A Scales



Brown's six domains, activation, focus, effort, emotion, memory, and action, appear across these maps as interconnected ecological forces. The River Realms show the somatic foundations of EF; the Constellation Realms reveal its meaning-making dimension; the Control Room reflects inner collaboration; and the Forest of Systems reveals the cultural and structural conditions that shape functioning.

Executive functioning, viewed this way, becomes a multidimensional ecology, one that honors complexity, context, and human dignity.

These maps are conceptual metaphors, not empirical models. Their purpose is to complement, not replace, standardized assessment procedures.

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