

Brain Basics:

Classroom Strategies Supporting
Executive Function

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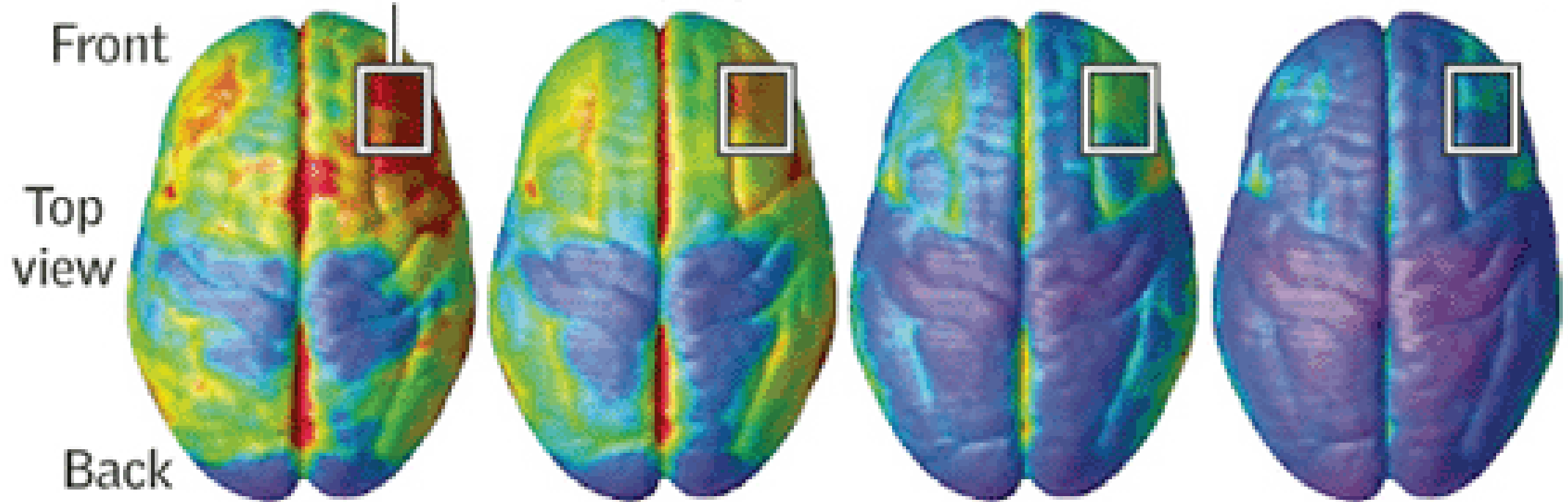
5-year-old brain

Preteen brain

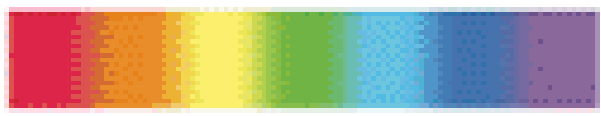
Teen brain

20-year-old brain

Dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex ("executive functions")



Red/yellow: Parts of brain less fully mature



Blue/purple: Parts of brain more fully matured

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging

Thomas McKay | The Denver Post

People with immature executive skills struggle with problem solving and are often labeled unmotivated, lazy or scatter-brained.

What they really need is support with executive function skills.

Organization involves:

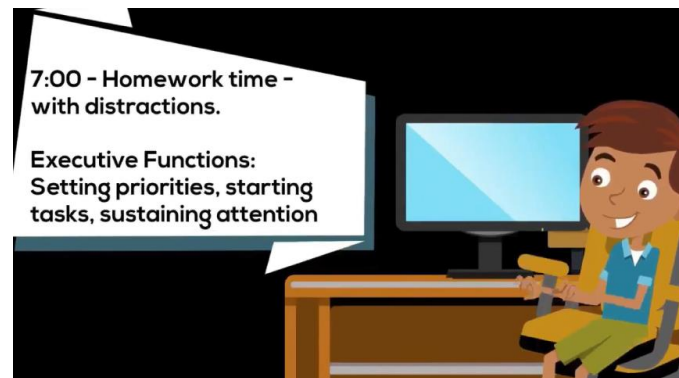
- * Seeing patterns
- * Making choices
- * Forming habits



Organize my stuff



Organize my time



Organize my ideas

Organization Allows Us To...

1. Feel more in control
2. Make better decisions and predictions
3. Be more productive
4. Experience less stress and have fewer meltdowns



Dr Joel I. Kimmel

A glass surface, possibly a window or a door, is covered with several colorful sticky notes in shades of orange, yellow, pink, and green. The notes are scattered across the surface, some overlapping. In the background, a brick wall is visible, adorned with several framed pictures or photographs. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.

Setting Priorities

Pareto Principle (Less Is More)

For most people, this is true...

- You wear 20% of your clothes 80% of the time.



Pareto Principle

- 20% of your day is when you are the most mentally productive (Which 5 hours work best for you?).
- 20% of your textbook contains 80% of what will be on the exam.
- 20% of your students cause 80% of your stress.



Teaching Josh the Pareto Principle (Prioritize)

Josh and his classmates could...

- Make a list of the key ideas covered during class. Circle the 20% that are most important.
- Choose the 20% of things that you really need in your backpack and remove most of the rest.
- Make a “To Do” list and circle the 20% that will make your life easier and happier if you focus your energy there. What is the frog that you must do first?



People who spend 2-5 hours a day doing things they find to be satisfying and joyful tend to be more productive...

Sharif, Mogilner & Hershfield, 2021





Organize Time

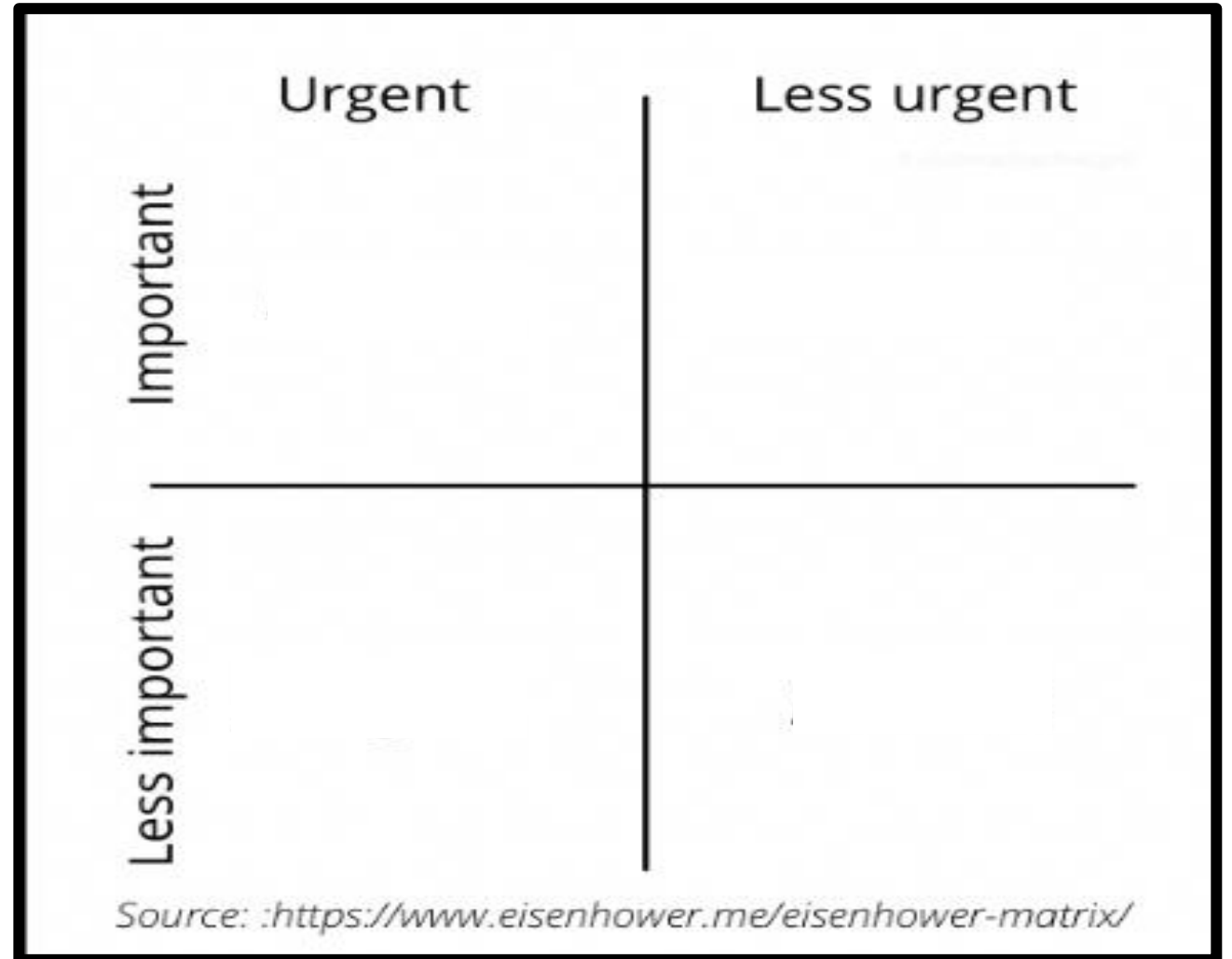
People who spend 2-5 hours a day doing things they find to be satisfying and joyful tend to be more productive...

Sharif, Mogilner & Hershfield, 2021

So, how do people find the time to do that?

Pareto Principle?

Setting Priorities



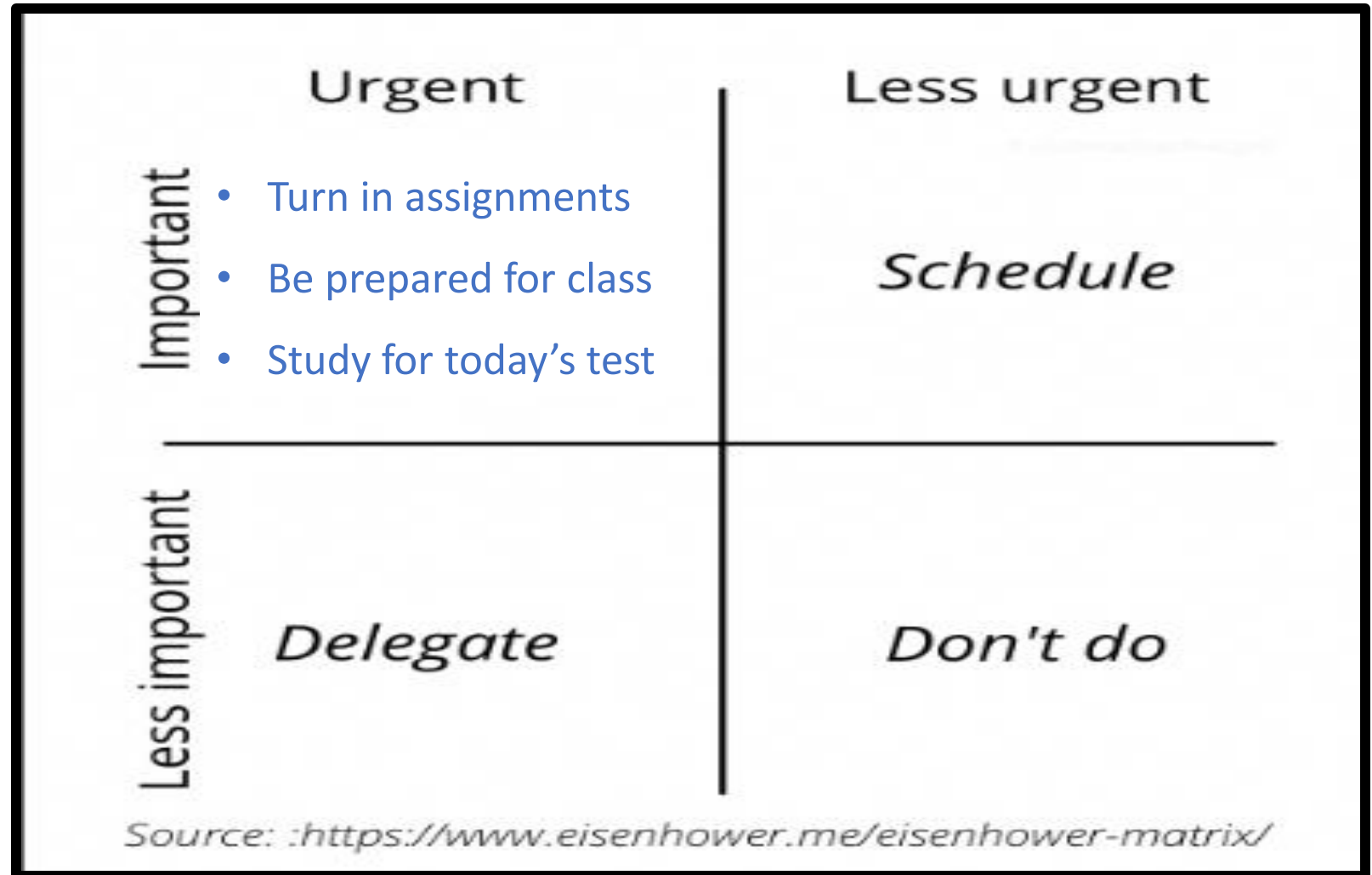
Covey's Definition of Quadrant 1

Q1: Urgent and Important: Requires immediate attention and has a direct impact on your long-term success.

- Deadline is today
- Return a call to your superintendent
- An injured student
- Discipline problems



Teaching Students To Sort & Prioritize Time



Covey's Definition of Quadrant 2

Q2: **Not Urgent but Important:** Doesn't have tight deadlines, but significantly contributes to your joy and success. (Spend 2-5 hours a day here*)

- Relationships
- Hobbies
- Exercise & diet
- Planning & learning
- Volunteering

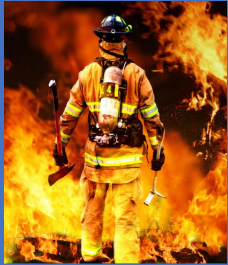


* Sharif, Mogilner & Hershfield, 2021



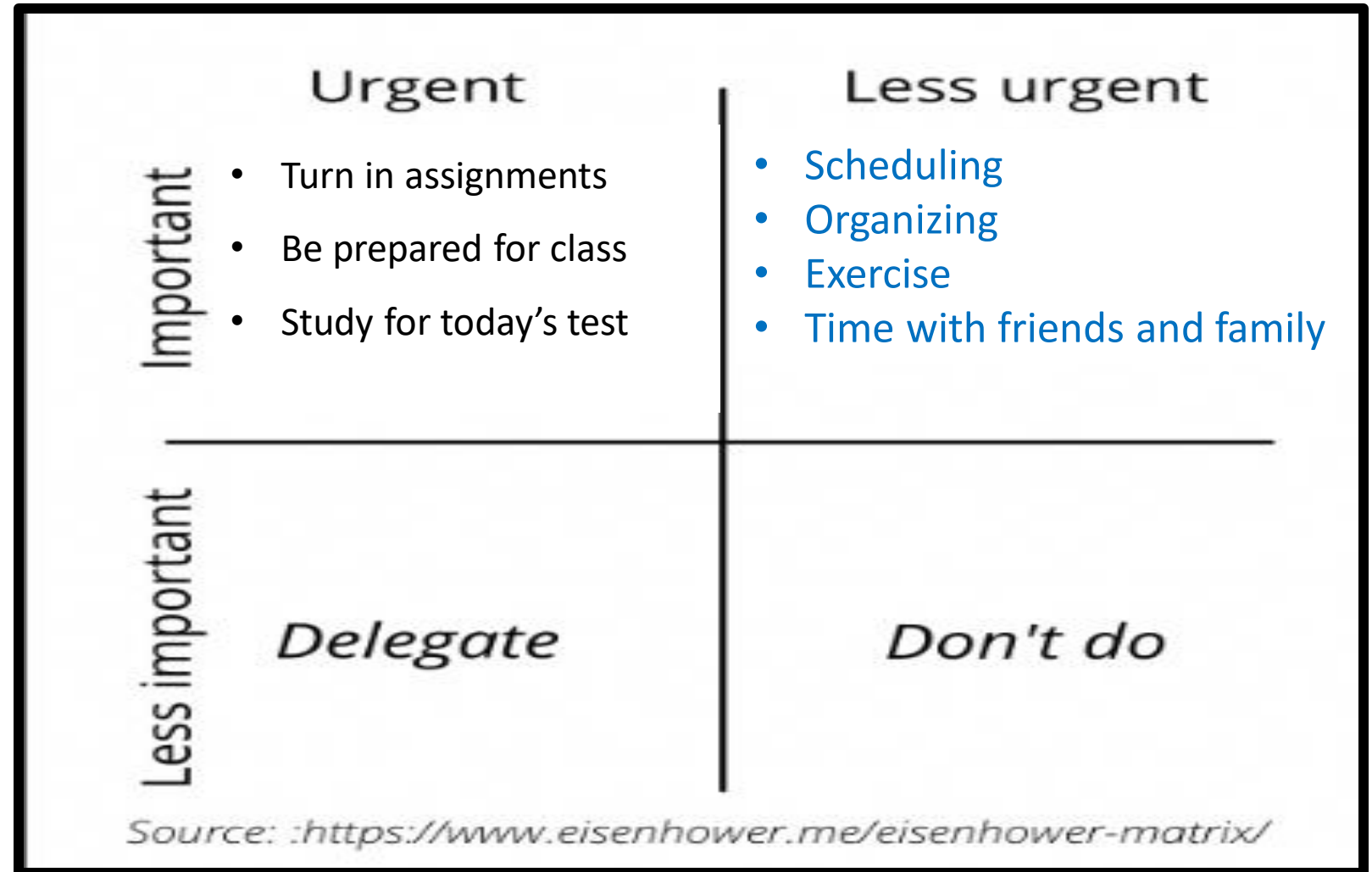
If You Neglect Q2, Q1 Grows like Crazy

Quadrant 1



Quadrant 2

Teaching Students To Sort & Prioritize Time





When you have poor time management skills you depend upon coincidence or luck to get you through.

Chart For Scheduling

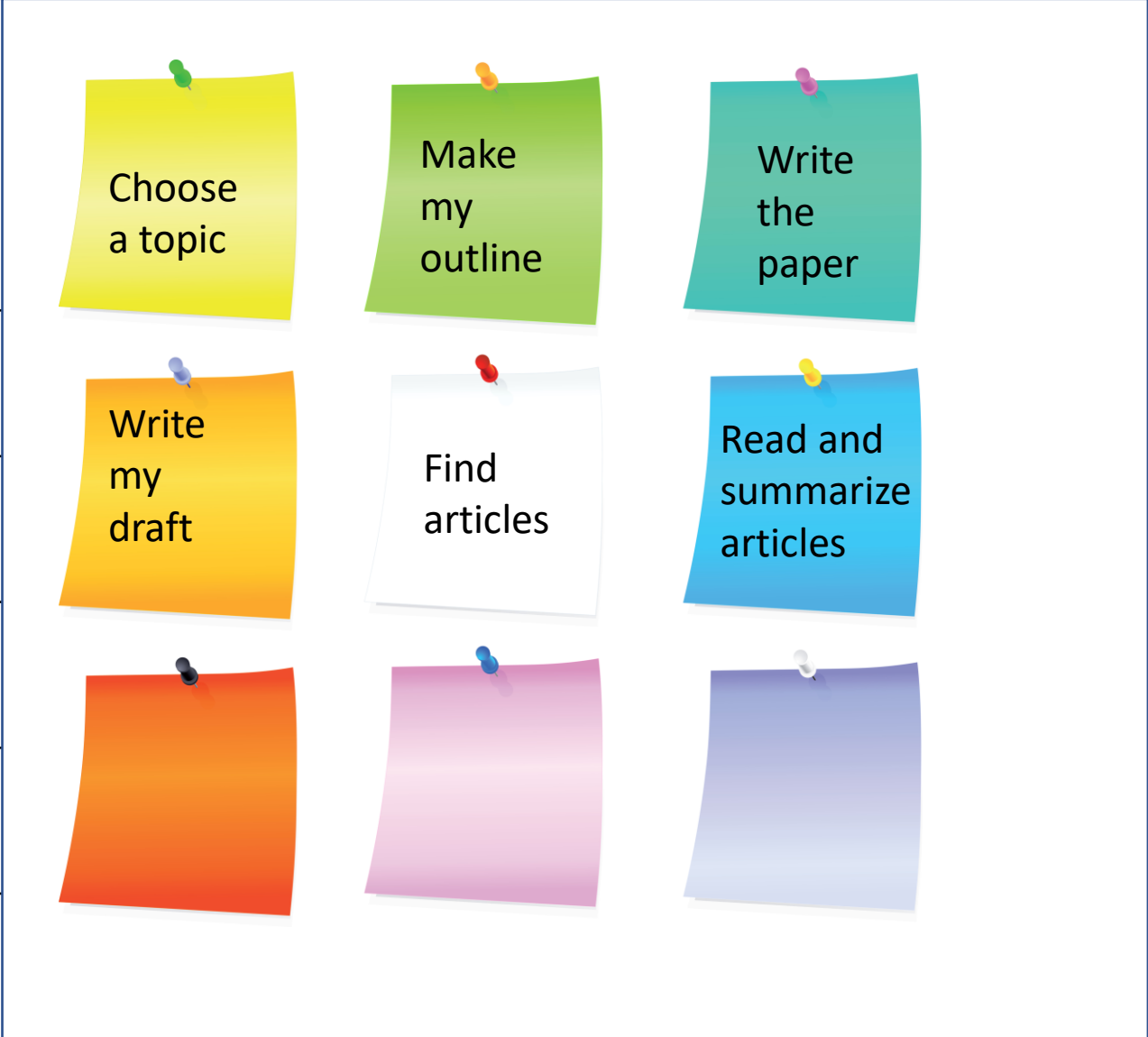

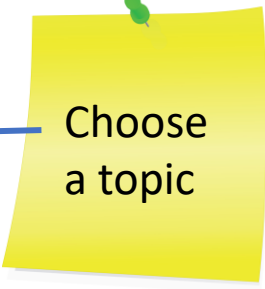










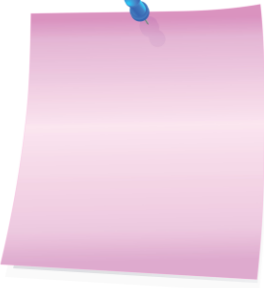


Steps	In What Order?	 <p>The chart displays nine steps on sticky notes arranged in a 3x3 grid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Step 1: Choose a topic (Yellow note)Step 2: Make my outline (Green note)Step 3: Write the paper (Teal note)Step 4: Write my draft (Orange note)Step 5: Find articles (White note)Step 6: Read and summarize articles (Blue note)Step 7: (Red note)Step 8: (Pink note)Step 9: (Purple note)		

Chart For Scheduling







Steps	In What Order?			
	today			
	today			
	Monday			
	Soccer Tuesday			
 	Wednesday			
	Thursday			

Awareness of Time

- Deadlines help you feel a sense of urgency to get started.
- Estimating times and setting timers help you see what's possible.



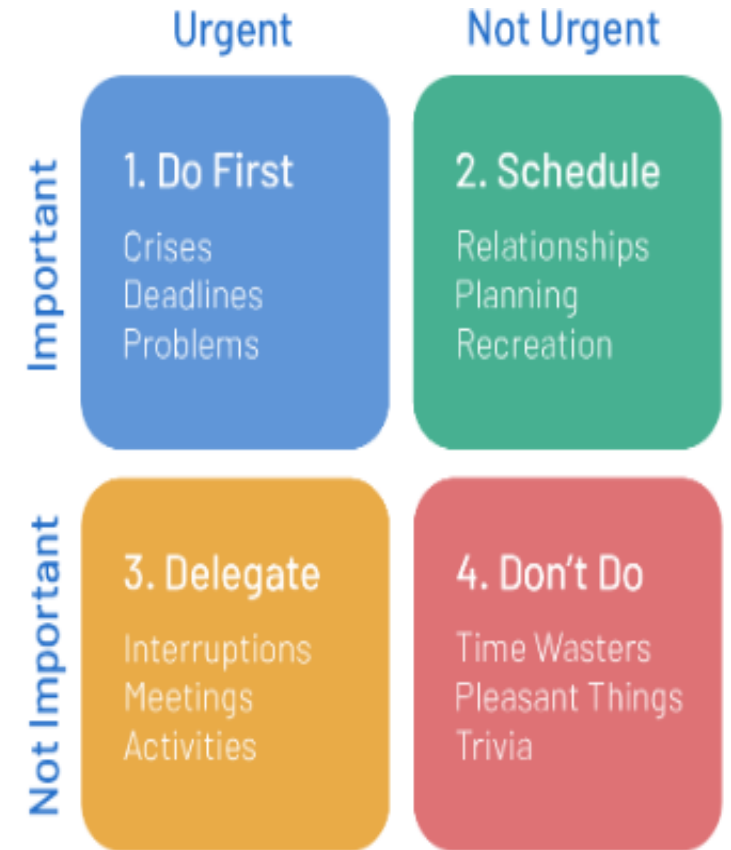
Chart For Scheduling

Steps	In What Order?	Estimate	Real time	What materials or supports?
	today	3 min		
	today	5 min		
	Monday	15 min		Journals in media center
	Soccer Tuesday			Note cards and computer
 	Wednesday	15 min		Teacher and media specialist help on this
	Thursday	30 min		

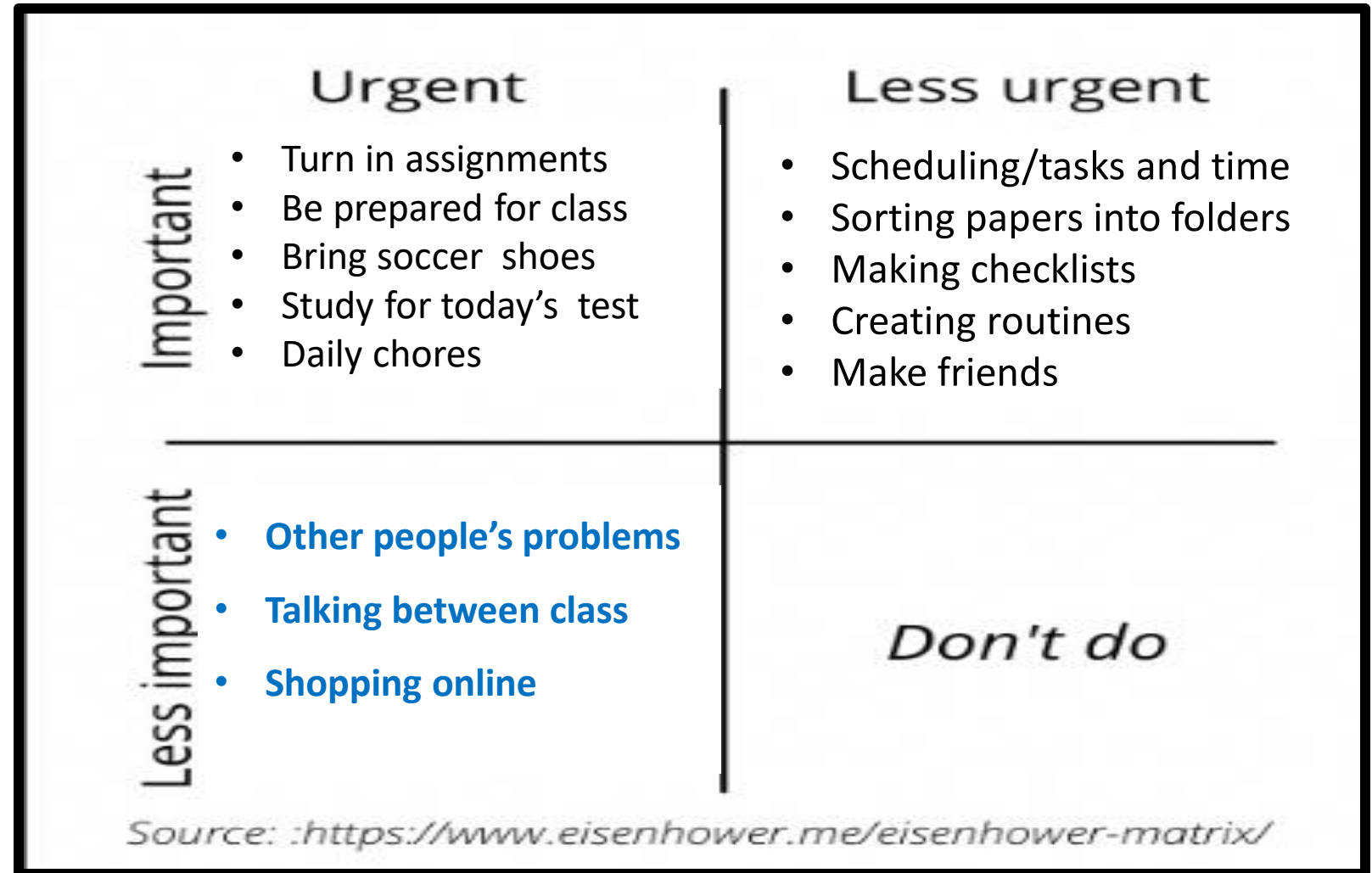
Covey's Definition of the Quadrants

Q3: Urgent/Not Important: Demands immediate action but contributes little to long-term goals. Distracts from more important activities.

- People want you to solve their problems
- Meetings that make no decisions
- FYI texts and calls
- Discussions out of your circle of influence



Teaching Students To Sort & Prioritize Time



Covey's Definition of the Quadrants

Q4: Not Urgent/ Not Important: Low-priority tasks that neither impact your long-term success nor require immediate attention.

- Gossiping
- Scrolling on social media
- Excessive TV
- Excessive anything



Teaching Students To Sort & Prioritize Time



	Urgent	Less urgent
Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn in assignments• Be prepared for class• Bring soccer shoes• Study for today's test• Daily chores	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scheduling/tasks and time• Sorting papers into folders• Making checklists• Creating routines• Make friends
Less important	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solving other people's problems• Talking to friends between class• Shopping online	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responding to gossip• Blaming• Hours of video gaming• Scrolling on the phone

Source: <https://www.eisenhowe>



Pareto Principle

If 20% of your effort produces 80% of your meaningful results.

What should you cut out or cut down on?

Figuring Out Where To Spend Your Time



	Urgent	Less urgent
Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan and deliver lessons• Deal with student behavior• Return call from upset parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diagnosing the root causes of problems• Getting to know your students• Generating team interventions
Less important	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solving other people's problems• Micro-managing• Admiring problems in meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responding to spam• Figuring out who is to blame• Writing lots of comments on papers already graded

Source: <https://www.eisenhower.me/eisenhower-matrix/>

Would you ask a 10-year-old to plan your wedding?



6 months before

- Announce your engagement to friends and family
- Create a budget
- Choose a wedding party
- Start dress and veil shopping
- Buy a wedding dress
- Create a guest list (start by who is for sure)
- Plan to Plan: set order of events and floor plan

5 months before

- Order bridesmaids gowns
- Start alternate plan
- Tell engagement story
- Meet with photographer, band, officiant and caterer
- Send out save the dates

4 months before

- Gift Registry
- Order groom attire
- Order Wedding Cake
- Book hair & Makeup artist for the big day
- Finalize menu selections
- Book final venue for you and rest of your guests
- Finalize schedule of events

3 months before

- Send out invitations
- Confirm final wedding arrangements
- Schedule honeymoon
- Create seating plan
- Visit the Venue
- Buy wedding shoes

2 months before

- Write wedding vows
- Start on DIY projects
- Final wedding dress fitting with shoes
- Travel to wedding location
- Confirm with all vendors

1 month before

- Finalize all DIY projects
- Arrive for trial and final hair and makeup
- Finalize honeymoon
- Create storage boxes
- Enter favors and guest book

1-2 weeks before

- Cut and sew hair
- Pack for wedding day
- Confirm date and time with vendor
- Set table arrangements with tips for vendors

1 day before

- Makeup and hair
- Drink lots of water
- Save Ties (if needed)
- Organize gifts, shoes and accessories
- Pack for groom (if needed)

Nearsightedness To Time

- They live in the present so organization across time is difficult.
- Can't sequence thoughts, time or things.
- Every big project becomes a crisis situation.



Our Internal Clock Changes



- **A few hours in elementary**
- 8-24 hours in junior high
- **2-3 days in high school**
- 8-12 weeks for adults



Internal Clock Is Missing?

Substitutes for visual memory:

- Charts and calendars
- Daily detailed checklists



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday



Cueing Notes

Place post-it notes on the mirror or door

Internal Clock Is Missing?



Substitutes for memory:

- Watch reminders, timers, stopwatches



Organize



Work for...	Break options	Break for...	Remember to come back
<p>___ minutes</p> <p>(Based on student's pattern and the difficulty of the task)</p>		<p>___ minutes</p>	<p>Use a Timer</p> 



We Organize

- Things



How do you clean a messy closet?



Simple & Consistent

Give everything a well-defined home

- ✓ Labeled bins and drawers
- ✓ Color-coded containers



Keep It Simple & Consistent

For Young Students...

- ✓ Clean-up one category at a time (books, papers, blocks,...)
- ✓ Daily, predictable routines



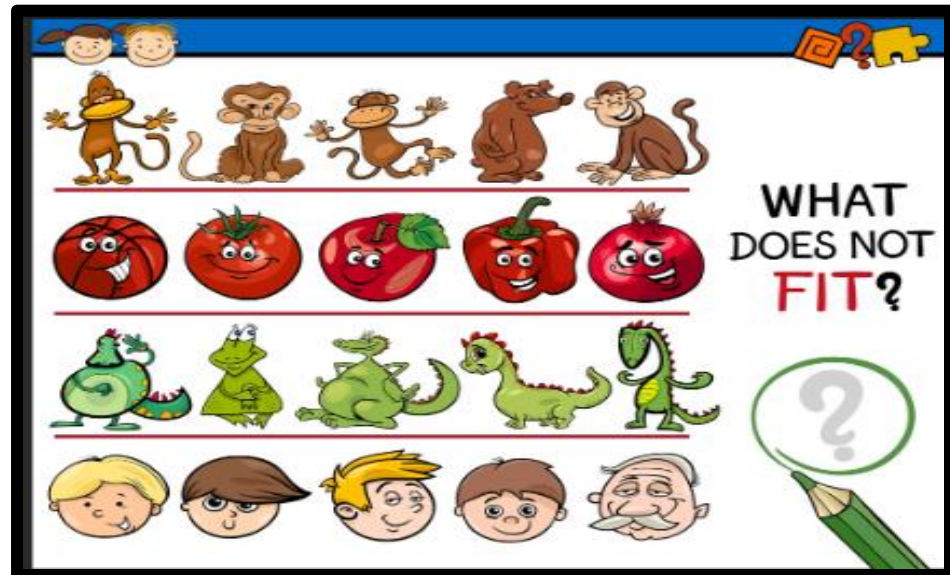
Elementary: Add Categorization

Students learn to sort

- By color
- By size
- By function



Play “Name this group”
or “What doesn’t fit”





For 10 +
Create The System

- Create and explain their rule for sorting and categorizing.

Teaching Sorting and Categorizing

The Sorting Game

1. Divide students into groups and give each group 8 or 9 things to sort into three categories.

2. Ask the groups to write their “rules for sorting” (categories) on a slip of paper.



Things that begin with A

3. Have the groups change tables and guess the three rules (categories) created by the original team. (Answers are sealed & on the table)

4. Then rearrange the items into three new groups (categories) for the original group to figure out.



Things used in the kitchen

Arrange these items into three categories



Arrange these items into three categories

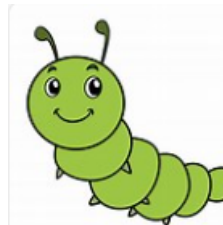
Things you could find in a purse



Toys



Things that are or have been alive

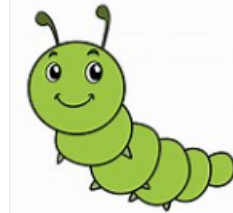


Arrange these items into three categories

Things that are used for market day



Animals



Thing that we use to drive



Decluttering

- If you cannot see the patterns of sorting and classifying, your backpack will look like this.



Declutter

- The more stuff you have to manage, the more stressful and difficult it is to be organized.

Pareto Principle



Apply the Pareto Principle

1. Take **everything** out
2. Sort
 - Things I need/ Things I do not need
 - Big things/small things
 - Science/Soc.studies/LA ...
 - Tools
 - Papers I am working on
3. Do not put anything back that you don't really need to carry around





Josh Needs To Organize

- Time
- Things
- Ideas

How many students' understanding of the US Constitution looks something like this . . .

Legislative Branch
Amendments
Articles
Checks and balances
Judicial Branch
Freedom of assembly
Veto power
States' rights
Impeachment
Right to vote
Right to bear arms
Executive Branch



Organization
makes it more
manageable

The Constitution has 3 parts:

- The **Preamble** is the beginning of the Constitution and explains why we have a Constitution.
-

Graphic Organizers
And Note Taking
Strategies
Help Students See
Patterns Of
Organization

Graphic Organizer





Note-taking

Window Notes

HOW TO MAKE MEANINGFUL NOTES

FACTS

What are the big ideas and important details?



FEELINGS

What reactions or emotions are you experiencing?



QUESTIONS

What questions do you have about the content?



CONNECTIONS

How does this connect to your experiences or knowledge?



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Let's Summarize With Window Notes

<p>Facts (what you already have in place)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pareto Principle4 Quadrant PrioritizingSequencing ChartInternal Clock SupportsDeclutteringKWHLTop HatWindow Notes	<p>Feelings about teaching organization skills</p>
<p>Questions about teaching students to be organized</p>	<p>Connections</p> <p>How much of this do I already do?</p> <p>How will I integrate this into my work?</p>

Organization

Sorts and Categorizes

I see and describe patterns that help me match things that go together

I separate things into groups and pick out things that don't fit

I sort by more than one likeness or detail

I sort important from unimportant ideas and things

I describe patterns and rules for how things are alike and different

Sequences Materials and Ideas

I can visualize the order of steps for directions, sequence of stories or steps for decision-making

I rank ideas or tasks by how important or urgent they are, to help me decide what to do next and what to put off

I have daily routines and procedures that help reduce my stress and find things easily and fast

I look for patterns that will help me predict what comes next and I can explain what clues I used to decide

Makes Tasks Manageable

I break big tasks down into small steps to make things easier

I know what I want to achieve and I create a plan for how to get started

I figure out how much time is needed for each step and create a sequenced plan

I make changes to the plan as needed so I can finish on time and with quality

I keep track of information and materials by using reminders and checklists

I see how organizing strategies I have used in the past can be useful in new situations.

Follows Through

I know why it is important to organize and I see how it will help me

I practice organizing things in easy ways first and then think of new ways that also could work

I know what strategies work for me and which ones do not

I have a system for double checking how well I have paid attention to and handled details

I know how to get help when I am stuck but I don't depend on others too much

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