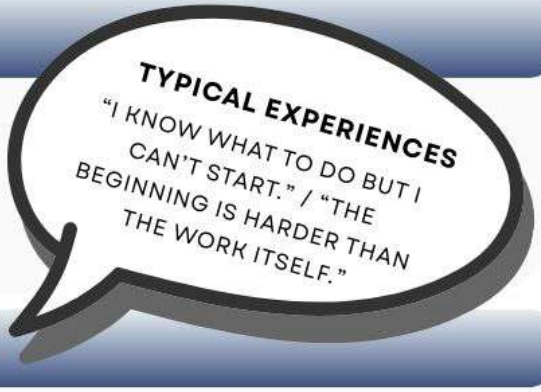
TASK INITIATION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Starting tasks requires disproportionate effort even when goals are clear due to friction at the point of initiation.



DESIGN RESPONSES

- Use body doubling formats so initiation happens with external presence rather than isolated effort.
- Define one visible first action so the entry barrier is lowered immediately.
- Separate start expectations from finish expectations so the first step is not psychologically overloaded.
- Allow assisted kickoffs such as templates, prompts, or co-start sessions to reduce activation friction.
- Replace open-ended tasks with initiation scaffolding so starting is structurally supported rather than willpower-dependent.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – START ONLY

1 One concrete first action is named explicitly so the entry point becomes small and doable. The action is designed to reduce friction rather than produce a full result. This makes initiation more likely.

2 Work begins in shared presence or with external structure such as a timer, checklist, or accountability cue. The nervous system receives a starting rail rather than an open field. This reduces resistance.

3 Pressure to finish is released and attention returns to starting only. Momentum is allowed to build before evaluation begins. This protects initiation from premature self-judgment.

Starting is about reducing friction, not increasing willpower.

Alexandra Robuste

COGNITIVE TRANSITIONS

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Switching between tasks or mental modes carries high cognitive cost that drains energy across fragmented days.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES

"INTERRUPTIONS RESET ME COMPLETELY." / "CONTEXT SWITCHING EXHAUSTS ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Batch tasks by cognitive mode so similar thinking demands are grouped rather than scattered.
- Reduce mid-task interruptions so continuity is not constantly broken by external input.
- Schedule transition buffers so switching is treated as real work time rather than invisible overhead.
- Signal work mode explicitly so others know when deep work is in progress.
- Park interrupted tasks visibly so restarting does not require reconstructing context from memory.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – TRANSITION BUFFERING

1 The previous task is closed with a brief note capturing the stopping point and next action. Open loops are externalized so they do not linger cognitively. This reduces restart cost later.

2 A short pause occurs without new input so the nervous system can reset. Transition is treated as regulation space rather than dead time. This lowers mode-switch strain.

3 The new task and mode are named explicitly before engaging. Attention reorients around a clear frame instead of drifting between demands. This improves re-entry quality.

Constant pivots drain capacity faster than work.

Alexandra Robuste

PRIORITIZATION CLARITY

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Multiple demands can feel equally urgent, blocking sequencing and creating paralysis without a clear selection rule.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Externalize all tasks explicitly so urgency does not compete inside working memory.
- Rank priorities using a shared rule so selection does not depend on stress.
- Limit active tasks in progress so attention is not split across too many open loops.
- Separate urgency from importance so time pressure does not override strategic value.
- Review priorities at set intervals so re-sorting becomes routine rather than constant negotiation.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – PRIORITY ANCHORING

1

All demands are listed outside the head so cognitive crowding reduces immediately. The list is treated as a working surface rather than a verdict. This creates room to think.

2

One single priority is chosen for the current window based on the agreed rule. The selection is made explicit so attention has a clear target. This reduces internal competition.

3

Work-in-progress is capped so focus is protected until the selected item moves forward. Remaining items are parked rather than mentally rehearsed. This restores momentum.

Clarity comes from choosing what not to do.

Alexandra Robuste

STRUCTURAL THINKING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Clear systems are often required before smooth execution is possible, while implicit or shifting processes block action.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Provide visible workflows so steps are observable, predictable, and stable during execution.
- Document processes explicitly so execution does not depend on guessing hidden or shifting rules.
- Allow time for system design so structure is built before speed is demanded.
- Avoid mid-process changes so cognitive maps remain reliable and progress is not disrupted.
- Name the process in simple, shared terms so orientation stays intact across participants.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – VISUAL SYSTEM FRAMING

1

The flow from input to output is mapped in a simple visible format. Key steps and handoffs are named explicitly. This turns confusion into a navigable path.

2

The structure is kept visible where work happens, such as in boards, templates, or shared documents. People can reference the map rather than hold it mentally. This reduces working memory load.

3

The structure is held stable during execution so progress is not constantly reoriented. Adjustments are batched and communicated intentionally. This protects momentum.

Maps unlock momentum.

Alexandra Robuste

NONLINEAR EXECUTION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Work can progress in jumps and parallel paths, which may look disordered despite producing strong outcomes.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Define outcomes rather than prescribing steps so multiple valid pathways remain possible.
- Allow flexible execution paths so work can proceed through parallel progress rather than forced sequence.
- Track milestones rather than linear order so progress is recognized accurately.
- Communicate nonlinearity early so stakeholders understand the execution logic.
- Create visible checkpoints so the pathway can vary while accountability stays clear.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – OUTCOME ORIENTATION

1

"Done" is clarified in concrete terms so the end state is stable even if the route varies. Success criteria are agreed before execution begins. This reduces conflict about process style.

2

Work proceeds in flexible order while milestones are tracked visibly. Progress is measured by completed units rather than continuous linear flow. This makes outcomes legible.

3

Milestones are reviewed and next steps are selected based on what is now enabled. The system adapts without re-litigating the process style. This sustains momentum.

Linear paths are not the only efficient ones.

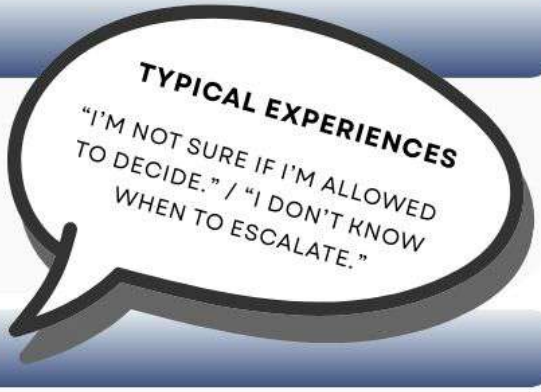
Alexandra Robuste

DECISION LATITUDE

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Unclear decision boundaries create hesitation, overreach, and delays, especially when escalation paths are implicit.



DESIGN RESPONSES

- Clarify decision rights explicitly so authority is not guessed under pressure or urgency.
- Define autonomous, consultative, and escalated decisions so action paths are predictable and delay is reduced.
- Document ownership clearly so accountability does not drift across roles or handoffs.
- Use decision ladders or RACI-style tools to make boundaries visible and decision logic explicit: Responsible → Accountable → Consulted → Informed
- Review authority when roles change so outdated assumptions do not persist and friction is avoided.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – AUTHORITY CLARITY

1 The decision is labeled as owned, shared, or escalated before work begins. Scope is clarified so people know how far they can go. This reduces hesitation.

2 If escalation is needed, the path and criteria are named explicitly. Required inputs are identified so escalation is not a vague handoff. This speeds resolution.

3 The decision is made within the defined boundary and recorded. Follow-through is assigned so closure is real. This prevents reopening cycles.

Authority clarity unlocks action.

Alexandra Robuste

COMPLEXITY MAPPING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Strong awareness of interdependencies increases cognitive load and can slow action without containment of scope.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Externalize system maps so complexity is held in a shared visual rather than individual cognition.
- Separate analysis from execution so thinking does not delay action indefinitely.
- Validate systems-thinking strengths so caution is recognized as insight rather than resistance.
- Limit scope per decision so only relevant interdependencies are considered.
- Define clear decision framing so action is taken within a bounded slice.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – COMPLEXITY CONTAINMENT

1 Key elements and connections are mapped visually in a simple format. The map is treated as a working tool rather than a perfect model. This reduces mental load immediately.

2 Only the dependencies that matter for the current decision are highlighted. Analysis is timeboxed so containment remains real. This prevents endless scanning.

3 Action proceeds within the bounded slice and outcomes are monitored. If new data emerges, the map is updated rather than redone from scratch. This preserves progress.

Seeing complexity prevents future failure.

Alexandra Robuste

WORKING MEMORY LOAD

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Holding multiple elements in mind under load increases errors and stress, especially when information remains verbal-only.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Externalize information systematically so memory is not the primary storage system.
- Embed cues and checklists so execution relies on visible prompts rather than recall.
- Provide written summaries so shared understanding remains stable after meetings.
- Use visual supports to reduce cognitive strain in complex workflows.
- Encourage "write first" norms so ideas and instructions become durable artifacts.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – LOAD EXTERNALIZATION

1 Key items are captured in writing immediately so they do not compete in working memory. Notes are treated as part of the work rather than extra work. This stabilizes recall.

2 Items are stored in one trusted, visible place so retrieval is consistent. A single source of truth reduces searching and re-asking. This lowers stress.

3 Work proceeds directly from the external system rather than internal recall. Steps are executed with reference to the artifact. This reduces errors under load.

Memory is not a filing cabinet.

Alexandra Robuste

PLANNING HORIZON

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Preference for short- or long-term planning can clash with role expectations when time-horizon assumptions are implicit.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES

"LONG-TERM PLANNING BLOCKS ME." / "I STRUGGLE WITH DISTANT GOALS."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Match planning to horizon strengths so work aligns with natural temporal orientation.
- Break long-term goals into near-term anchors so progress is tangible and cognitively accessible.
- Separate vision from operations so strategic thinking is not forced during execution time.
- Use visual roadmaps so horizons remain visible without becoming abstract.
- Pair complementary strengths across team members so horizons are covered without overloading one person.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – HORIZON ALIGNMENT

1 The time horizon is named explicitly at the start of planning. Expectations are aligned so the brain knows what kind of thinking is required. This reduces mismatch stress.

2 The horizon is anchored with concrete near-term steps and checkpoints. Abstraction is converted into visible progress markers. This supports follow-through.

3 Today's work is linked back to the larger timeline in a brief review. Meaning and direction remain intact without requiring constant long-range focus. This sustains engagement.

Different minds live in different timeframes.

Alexandra Robuste

DELEGATION MATURITY

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Delegation breaks down through overfunctioning, underfunctioning, or unclear boundaries, creating bottlenecks and mistrust.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Delegate outcomes rather than methods so autonomy is real and micromanagement decreases.
- Match tasks to capacity so delegation supports sustainability rather than overload transfer.
- Clarify decision room so the delegate knows what can be decided without approval.
- Use light check-ins so accountability exists without control.
- Adjust systems rather than blaming individuals when delegation repeatedly fails.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – DELEGATION STRUCTURING

1

Success is defined clearly including outcome, timeline, and quality bar. The boundary is stated so ownership is real. This reduces rework.

2

The task is matched to the right person and decision room is confirmed. Resources or context are provided before launch. This prevents downstream blockage.

3

Check-ins occur at sensible points focused on outcomes and obstacles. Support is added where needed without taking control back. This builds trust.

Delegation fails from unclear outcomes.

Alexandra Robuste

ERROR ANTICIPATION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

High vigilance for risk can slow execution and create anxiety when it remains unbounded and repetitive.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Separate risk review from execution so vigilance does not hijack momentum or stall progress.
- Timebox risk analysis so anticipation has clear limits and does not expand endlessly.
- Normalize early risk signals so caution is recognized as intelligence rather than framed as negativity.
- Use risk logs so concerns are parked externally instead of being rechecked mentally.
- Clarify decision thresholds so action proceeds unless new data crosses a defined line.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – RISK CONTAINMENT

1

Risks are scanned once within a defined window. Key concerns are named and recorded without solving everything immediately. This prevents looping.

2

Risks are parked externally in a log with an owner or next review point. The mind is released from repeated re-evaluation. This reduces anxiety.

3

Execution proceeds unless new information appears. Review occurs at the planned checkpoint rather than continuously. This preserves speed and safety.

Foresight needs boundaries.

Alexandra Robuste

ADAPTIVE SCALING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Systems that worked at small scale can break under growth, increasing cognitive friction unless redesign occurs.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Review system fit at growth points so emerging strain becomes visible before performance drops or workarounds form.
- Simplify before adding layers so complexity is reduced at the structural level rather than redistributed onto people.
- Add support with responsibility so capacity increases while ownership and decision paths remain clear.
- Retire obsolete practices so old systems do not compete with new ones or silently drain attention and time.
- Treat redesign as normal scaling work that accompanies growth cycles, rather than a failure of discipline or execution.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – SCALING RESET

1 The system is checked for where it is straining under new volume or complexity. Friction is named as a design issue rather than a personal one. This creates a starting point.

2 Elements are removed or simplified before new tools are added. The goal is clarity before expansion. This prevents compounding complexity.

3 Targeted supports are added where the strain is real and measurable. Roles and routines are updated to match the new scale. This restores flow.

Systems scale by redesign, not endurance.

Alexandra Robuste

ACCOUNTABILITY ANCHORING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Tasks drift when ownership is shared vaguely instead of being clearly assigned and tracked to closure.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Assign one clear owner per task so responsibility is unambiguous from creation to completion.
- Track actions visibly so ownership and deadlines are not lost in conversation or memory.
- Close loops explicitly so completion is confirmed rather than assumed or inferred.
- Follow up at the next touchpoint so unfinished items cannot disappear silently over time.
- Separate owners from helpers so support is available without blurring accountability.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – OWNERSHIP ANCHORING

1 One accountable name is assigned per task at the moment it is created. The owner confirms understanding of the outcome and deadline. This prevents diffusion.

2 Ownership and deadline are made visible in a shared system. Progress is tracked so work does not rely on memory or goodwill. This creates follow-through.

3 Completion is confirmed publicly and the loop is closed. If incomplete, the next action and date are reassigned. This prevents drift.

Shared ownership needs clear anchors.

Alexandra Robuste

REFLECTIVE INTEGRATION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION ⚠

Insights remain individual unless translated into systems, causing repeated inefficiencies and recurring friction.

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Schedule structured debriefs so learning is captured while memory is fresh and context is still available.
- Translate insights into small, concrete process changes so reflection produces operational improvement.
- Store learnings centrally so they are retrievable and reusable when similar work repeats.
- Review lessons intentionally before repeating work so patterns are interrupted rather than reinforced.
- Assign integration ownership so learning has accountability and follow-through.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – LEARNING INTEGRATION

1

One insight and one friction point are captured immediately after an event or cycle. The capture is concrete and brief so it is repeatable. This turns experience into data.

2

The insight is converted into a small system change such as a checklist, template, or rule. The change is designed to be implementable within existing workflows. This makes learning operational.

3

The change is embedded and communicated so it becomes shared practice. Adoption is checked in the next cycle and adjusted if needed. This turns learning into evolution.

Learning changes systems, not memories.

Alexandra Robuste