



## Flexible Thinking and Adapting to Change

### **What are Flexible Thinking and Adapting to Change?**

- Flexible thinking is the ability to change behaviors and thoughts when faced with unexpected changes, challenges, or new situations.
- Adapting to change involves responding effectively and calmly when plans change.

### **Why Are These Skills Important?**

- a) Reduces Breakdowns: Inflexible thinking often leads to frustration when certain expectations are not met. Flexibility is a crucial skill that helps adolescents cope with unpredictability.
- b) Improves Social Relationships: When adolescents are adaptable they can navigate peer interactions more successfully (e.g. compromising on a decision)
- c) Builds Resilience: Learning to “go with the flow” prepares adolescents for real world challenges such as new environments or last minute schedule changes.
- d) Advanced Academic Success: Flexible thinking can help in problem solving quickly, and creatively to properly deal with the uncertainty of schoolwork.

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## What are CBT based strategies for flexible thinking and adapting to change?

### 1. Graded Exposure to Change

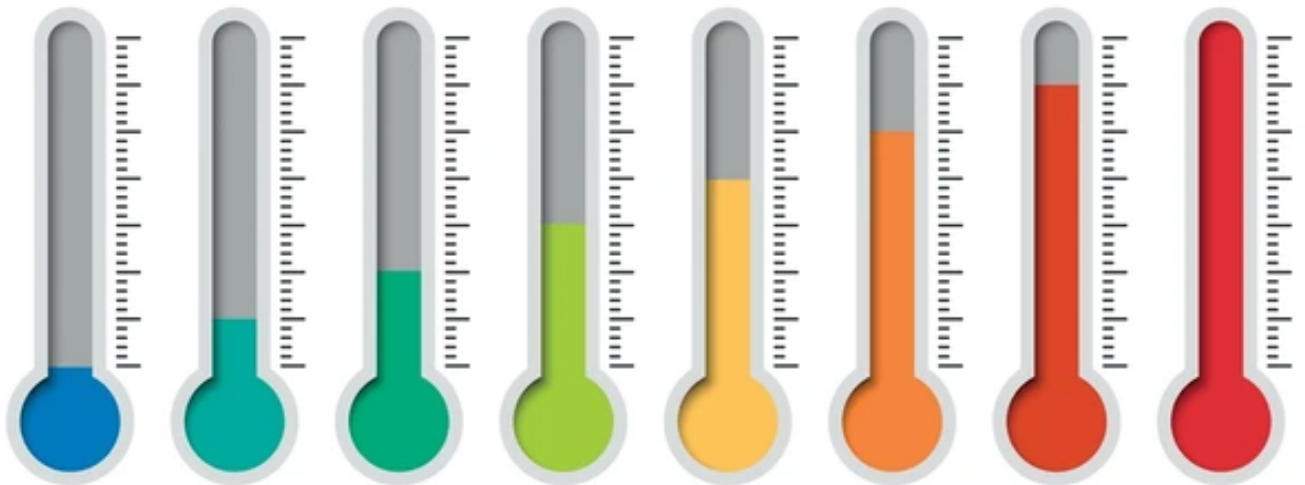
- *Method:* Introduce small, predictable changes to your routine to build adaptability
  - Examples: Waking up 30 minutes earlier so you don't have to rush every morning for school, spending two lunches a week socializing with friends, completing my reading every day rather than waiting to do it all on Sunday
  - Note: Use the Behavioral Experiments worksheet as a reference
- *Visual Aid:* Create a "Flexibility Thermometer" (1 - 5) scale to help adolescents rate their comfort with changes and track progress
- *Example:*
  1. Write a predictable small change that would be impactful towards your daily routine in the first column
  2. Rate your "temperature" or comfortability with the change over the course of 5 chosen dates and see how you adapt over time

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## *Temperature Key:*

- To rate your comfortability with a change on a specific date, color the area in the corresponding color:

NOTE: The left (blue) is “not comfortable at all” and the right (red) is “fully comfortable”



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Predictable, Small Change to Routine:	Date #1:	Date #2:	Date #3:	Date #4:	Date #5:

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## 2. Video Modeling

- *Method:* Video modeling is a powerful CBT-based strategy where adolescents can observe characters adapting to changes themselves to be flexible!
- *Instructions:*
  - a) Watch the following three video examples:
    - [Sesame Street: Grover and Zachary Quinto are Flexible](#)
    - [SEL - Flexible Thinking](#) 🧠 (0 - 2:00)
    - [Swift \(2020\) - Clip: Go With The Flow \(HD\)](#)
  - b) Discuss the following questions:
    - What were the specific steps the character took to be flexible?

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- How can I apply the same adaptation skills in my own life?

### 3. Plan B Modeling

- *Method:* Plan B Brainstorming is a problem solving technique focused on creating alternative solutions in case the original plan or Plan A is not possible. This method motivates individuals to always consider backup options in case they face uncertainties.
- *Key Features:*
  - **Proactive Thinking:** Anticipate challenges and create solutions before problems arise
  - **Flexibility:** Plan B encourages adaptability by exploring multiple ways to achieve a goal
  - **Open-mindedness:** Promotes the consideration of secondary ideas that might otherwise be overlooked.
- *Instructions:*
  - a) Identify the Main Plan (Plan A)
  - b) Brainstorm Alternatives: Consider “what if Plan A does not work?” and create a backup strategy or a plan B
  - c) Consider Outcomes of Plan A and Plan B
    - This step highlights that we can often take two different approaches to achieve the same goal!

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**Your Turn:** Practice responding to these three scenarios using the steps above

<u>Scenario:</u>	<u>Plan A:</u> <u>(Ideal Solution)</u>	<u>Plan B:</u> <u>(Backup Solution)</u>	<u>Outcome of Plan A:</u>	<u>Outcome of Plan B:</u>
Example: You sign up to sing your favorite song in the school talent show, but when you get there, you find out someone else has already chosen that song and is performing it.	Ask the teacher if you and the other student can perform the song as a duet.	Choose a different song to perform solo.	You and the other student sing together as a duet. You both get to perform your favorite song, and you make a new friend along the way!	You perform a different song by yourself. You still get to participate in the talent show and might discover a new favorite song.

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<p>You and your friend are creating a music video. You want to be the lead role, but your friend also wants to be the lead.....</p>				
<p>You've invited all of your best friends to your birthday party, and you planned to have it at the local pool. On the day of the party, it starts raining heavily, and the pool is closed.</p>				



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<p>You come home from school looking forward to your favorite snack, chocolate chip cookies. When you open the pantry, you realize your sibling ate the last one.</p>				
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