

FLEXIBILITY



★ What Does “Being Flexible” Mean?

Being flexible means being able to **cope when things change**.

Change can happen in lots of ways, like:

- your routine changing
- plans changing
- a new place
- new rules
- new people
- new feelings

For some young people — especially if you're neurodivergent (like autistic or ADHD) — change can feel extra hard.

That's because your brain might need more time to understand what's happening.

And that's okay.

★ Three Types of Flexibility

Flexible Thinking (Cognitive Flexibility)

This means your brain can:

- try a new idea
- solve a problem in a different way
- accept new information

If a plan changes suddenly, flexible thinking helps you try something else.

But if thinking in new ways feels tough for you, you're not alone — lots of young people find this hard.

Flexible Actions (Behavioural Flexibility)

This means being able to:

- switch from one activity to another
- follow new rules
- cope with a change in routine

For example: stopping a game to start homework.

For many kids, especially autistic or ADHD kids, this can feel stressful or frustrating.



Flexible Feelings (Emotional Flexibility)

This means being able to:

- handle disappointment
- stay calm when things change
- manage big emotions

Some young people feel emotions very strongly, so unexpected changes can feel overwhelming.

★ What “Adaptability” Means

Adaptability means being able to **cope in new places, with new people, or in new situations.**

It’s like flexibility, but even bigger.

There are three kinds:

Environmental Adaptability

Coping with:

- new classrooms
- new routines
- different noises
- unfamiliar places

Example: starting at a new school.

Social Adaptability

This means:

- understanding social rules
- knowing how to talk to different people
- coping with new friendships

This can be tricky if social clues feel confusing.

Emotional Adaptability

This means:

- handling stress
- managing worry
- calming yourself in new situations



It helps you bounce back when things feel tough.

★ Why Change Can Be Hard for Some Young People

Your brain might:

- take longer to process new information
- feel overwhelmed more quickly
- work harder to switch tasks
- need strong routines to feel safe
- struggle with noise, lights, smells, or crowds

This is not your fault.

It's just how your brain works — and it's completely okay.

★ Why Learning Flexibility Helps You

Becoming more flexible can help you:

- solve problems
- feel more confident
- make friends more easily
- cope with school changes
- feel less stressed or anxious

You're not expected to get everything perfect — every small step counts.

★ Tools That Can Help You Cope With Change

Small-steps practice

Start with tiny changes and build up slowly.

This makes change feel safer.

Visual supports

These can include:

- pictures
- schedules
- maps
- social stories
- photos of new places

They help you know what's coming next.

Warnings before change

Getting a heads-up helps your brain prepare.

Example:

"5 minutes until we pack up."

Calming tools

Things like:

- breathing exercises
- movement breaks
- fidget toys
- grounding activities
- quiet spaces

These help your body stay calm.

Social stories and conversations

These explain:

- what will happen
- how to handle it
- what to expect

They help change feel less scary.

Timers and apps

These can help you:

- switch tasks
- remember routines
- manage time

★ Important Message for You

If change feels hard, that doesn't mean you're being "stubborn" or "difficult".

It means:

- ♥ your brain is working really hard
- ♥ you might need more time



- ♥ you might need extra support
- ♥ you are trying your best

With:

- ✦ patience
- ✦ practice
- ✦ clear information
- ✦ and support from others

You *can* become more flexible — step by step.

You don't have to do it alone.

