

2.6 Flexibility

Definition of the skill

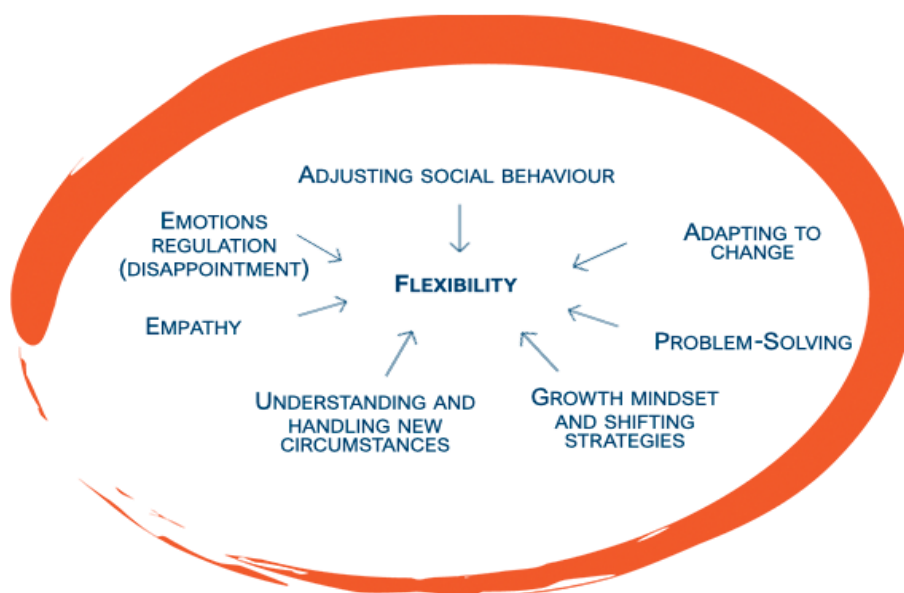
Flexibility is the ability to adapt to new situations and changes. It is the willingness to change. It involves being open to different ideas, adjusting to unexpected events, and finding new ways to solve problems. Flexibility is important because life is constantly changing, and being flexible allows us to cope with challenges in a calm and effective way. It's not just about accepting change, but also being able to adjust our thoughts, emotions, and actions to meet new demands or circumstances, whether they are in our personal life, work or social environment. Flexibility helps us move forward and make the best of difficult situations. There are three skills that are very close in meaning. Sometimes they are used interchangeably, but the difference between them should be clear. These three skills are: resiliency, adaptability and flexibility.

Resiliency is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.

Flexibility is willingness to change, ability to easily modify thinking and behavioural strategies while keeping core values in mind.

Adaptability is being able to adjust our thinking and behaviour to new conditions.

Complexity of the skill



- **Adapting to change:** children are able to quickly adjust to new situations, like a new teacher, a change in class activities, or a different daily routine.
- **Shifting strategies and handling new circumstances:** when faced with difficulties, such as struggling with a task, children show flexibility by trying different approaches to solve problems, rather than giving up. The flexible children are able to adapt to unfamiliar situations, such as going to a new place or meeting new people, without becoming overly anxious or upset.
- **Growth mindset and creative thinking:** Flexible children are able to think in a divergent way, seeking many different, novel/unusual solutions to a situation rather than thinking in terms of

one ‘good’ answer. In other words, they use their fantasy to discover new and unexpected connections and apply unconventional approaches.

- **Adjusting social behaviour:** children can adapt their behaviour to suit different social situations, understanding how to interact with peers or adults based on context and social norms.
- **Managing emotions:** if things don’t go as expected, children show flexibility by coping with the situation, adjusting their expectations, and continuing to engage with the task or situation.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Flexibility is crucial in every aspect of adult life, as it enables individuals to adjust effectively to life’s constant changes and challenges. In the workplace:

- Flexibility helps adults embrace new roles, technologies, and work environments, making it easier to adapt to shifting expectations or unforeseen circumstances.
- It also allows for better problem-solving in the face of unexpected challenges, whether it’s a change in workload or organizational restructuring.

In family life:

- Flexibility supports the ability to navigate relationship dynamics.
- Balance parenting demands.
- And cope with life transitions like moving or changes in family structure.

It plays a vital role in managing personal well-being, as it helps cope with challenges, reduce stress, and build resilience. In social interactions, it supports strong relationships by facilitating adaptability in communication and conflict resolution. During crises, flexibility allows individuals to adapt, process emotions, and find new paths. It also fosters personal growth by encouraging learning from mistakes, trying new things, and pursuing goals despite obstacles. Developing flexibility enhances the ability to navigate life’s complexities and maintain balance.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Flexibility in children aged 6-10 begins to develop as part of their ongoing growth process. At this age, children become more capable of adapting to new situations and changes, although the extent of their flexibility is influenced by factors such as their temperament, family support, and environmental influences.

At this age, flexibility can manifest in various ways, such as:

- **Adapting to change:** children are able to quickly adjust to new situations, like a new teacher, a change in class activities, or a different daily routine.
- **Shifting strategies:** when faced with difficulties, such as struggling with a task, children show flexibility by trying different approaches to solve problems, rather than giving up.
- **Handling new environments:** they are able to adapt to unfamiliar situations, such as going to a new place or meeting new people, without becoming overly anxious or upset.

- **Adjusting social behaviour:** children can adapt their behaviour to suit different social situations, understanding how to interact with peers or adults based on context and social norms.
- **Growth mindset and creative thinking:** Flexible children are able to think in a divergent way, seeking many different, novel/unusual solutions to a situation rather than thinking in terms of one 'good' answer. In other words, they use their fantasy to discover new and unexpected connections and apply unconventional approaches.
- **Managing emotion and disappointment:** if things don't go as expected, children show flexibility by coping with the situation, adjusting their expectations, and continuing to engage with the task or situation.

Developing flexibility helps children remain open-minded, adapt to social changes, and navigate friendships and conflicts with ease. They approach new challenges with curiosity, understanding that change can lead to growth. Flexible children handle life's uncertainties with confidence, staying positive and focused, which supports their emotional well-being, problem-solving skills, and social success, preparing them for future challenges.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: Children with low flexibility struggle to adapt to changes in routine, tasks, or environment. They may react with frustration or distress when faced with unexpected situations, like a new class schedule or unfamiliar activities. They often resist change, find it hard to shift strategies, and need significant support to cope with transitions.

Level 2: Children with moderate flexibility can handle some changes but may need support to adjust. They might feel frustrated or reluctant initially but can adapt with encouragement. They manage routine changes better than complex ones and may require guidance to fully engage with new tasks or environments.

Level 3: Children with high flexibility adapt quickly to new situations, changes in routine, and unexpected challenges. They approach new tasks positively, try different strategies, and adjust easily to changes in their environment. They handle transitions with minimal stress and remain motivated, showing resilience in the face of challenges.

Interconnections with other skills

- **Emotional regulation:** the ability to adjust emotional responses to changing circumstances, helping to stay calm and composed when facing new situations.
- **Adaptability:** a direct connection to flexibility, as being flexible means adjusting to new information, environments, or changes in expectations.
- **Problem-solving:** flexibility allows individuals to find new strategies or alternative solutions when things don't go as planned.
- **Open-mindedness:** willingness to consider different perspectives or approaches, which supports flexible thinking and actions in dynamic situations.
- **Self-confidence:** believing in one's ability to handle change, which encourages a positive approach and willingness to adjust.
- **Growth mindset:** viewing challenges as opportunities for learning, which supports flexibility by encouraging a willingness to try different approaches or strategies.

- **Stress management:** managing stress effectively allows one to stay flexible in difficult situations by preventing overwhelm.
- **Perseverance:** continued effort in the face of change or uncertainty is supported by a flexible mindset, enabling people to adapt and keep moving forward.
- **Resilience:** flexibility supports resilience by helping individuals bounce back and adapt to new or unexpected situations.
- **Collaboration skills:** the ability to work with others and adapt to group dynamics enhances flexibility in team-based tasks or situations.

Didactical tips for teachers

- Emphasize the importance of effort and learning from experiences rather than just the final result.
- Use role-playing exercises where students must adapt to changing situations, promoting flexibility in thinking.
- Encourage students to come up with different solutions for a single problem, highlighting that there are various ways to achieve success.
- Have students explore and discuss different viewpoints to understand and appreciate diverse ideas.
- Present incomplete stories or problems and ask students to brainstorm possible endings or solutions, helping them become comfortable with uncertainty.
- Teach students to use phrases like "I can try another way" to foster a resilient and adaptable mindset.
- Assign group tasks where students must collaborate and adjust their approaches based on team input and evolving situations.
- Demonstrate flexibility by showing students how you adapt to unexpected changes or challenges in the classroom.

