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## Adaptability

*Adaptability is the confidence and understanding to create and pursue a skillful outcome that best meets the challenge.*

**Why:** Those believing they have the ability to succeed are more likely to pursue a challenge as something to be mastered rather than as a threat to be avoided. Developing the skill to best adapt to a challenge gives you confidence and control. You are empowered — you own it!

**How:** Developing your skill can be a goal setting process that calls for planning, cooperation, persistence and control to fully define and develop.

- Consider your challenge and research the idea. Perhaps a skillful solution is already developed.
- Discuss the skill idea with others to be sure the idea is understood and can meet its intended purpose.
- Consider creating the skill as a goal that is reachable along with the steps necessary to reach the goal.
- Steps may include a definition *About* the skill, *Why* the skill meets the challenge, and *How* the skill meets the challenge.

**Example:** Using the idea of “Who am I going to call when ...,” I want to extend my social support system to include people who have abilities I may need. I will start with the simplest and move to the most essential members of my social support system. I further want to adapt my phone contact app to include these people in my contact list.

- The challenge is to extend my social support system using my phone contact list. (*About...*)
- Preparing for the future shapes me to adapt to the unexpected. (*Why...*)
- Research my phone contact app and begin with the easier contacts moving to more complex. (*How...*)
- Consider how the contact app searches for information such as by using name, roles people play, and quickly identifying the entire Social Support System using a unique identifier SSS.
- Consider services such as electricity, water, gas, plumber, and roadside assistance.
- Consider healthcare such as physician, dentist, and veterinarian.
- Consider emergency services such police, fire, and poison control.
- Consider family, associates, and friends and the roles they play in the social support system.
- Consider In Case of Emergency (ICE) contact.

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## Responder resilience flashcard ...

Our goal is to develop resilience by applying five positive-coping skills to personal challenges and by developing and sustaining a social support system. There are three steps to the learning. Relate past challenges to resilient positive-coping skills. Apply resilient positive-coping skills to current challenges in conjunction with a member of your social support system. And, redefine, in your own words, the meaning of each resilient positive-coping skill.

**1. Recall a past personal challenge:** Read the flashcard for the skill. Recall a past personal challenge where you successfully used the skill or something very much like the skill. Keeping that past challenge in mind, work on answering the bulleted instructions in the How section of the skill. Feel free to work individually or in collaboration with another person on this exercise. Refer to the Example to get a sense about how to write your response.

**2. Apply the skill to a current challenge:** We strongly encourage you to do this exercise with another person so that you become aware of how to work with people within a social support system—those people who will work with you on real life challenges. Consider a challenge either you or perhaps someone you know is facing. Write the challenge and your responses to the bulleted instructions in the How section of the skill. Reference the Example for help. If you are learning these skills with a group of people, a good way to see the power of a social support system is to post the written responses in a place where everyone can see how others have solved challenges.

**3. Reflecting on the skill:** You have applied the new skill format to an instance that had occurred in your past. You have also applied the skill as group problem-based-learning experience to a current challenge. Now, reflect upon the skill and in your own words summarize and write what this positive coping skill means to you. If you are learning these skills with a group of people, a good way to see how others have redefined a skill is to post your written responses in a place where the entire group can see the results.

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## Belief

*Perception is shaped by belief. Changing your belief changes your perception, giving you control, inner strength and courage to make change.*

**Why:** Your beliefs control your actions and the way you feel about something, your attitude. You can alter your belief to change your perception and better deal with your challenge. Positive beliefs and negative beliefs impact your physical and psychological health.

**How:** Approach your challenge with a realistic view. Can you change the challenge to make it more controllable? If the challenge appears not changeable, then a change of attitude is possible by changing a belief.

- Consider your challenge. Is the outcome changeable? If so, then identify a more positive yet realistic outcome.
- Or, if the outcome is not changeable, then identify your worst fear. There is a belief that is supporting that attitude. Identify a more positive belief. Consider the steps needed to bring about the change to a more positive belief.
- Sometimes a challenge may require a change of belief before a more positive outcome can be found. And, sometimes changing the outcome of a challenge may be necessary before finding the more positive belief.

**Example:** Because of a fracture, my arm is immobilized in a cast. This condition is not going away for several weeks and I can't change it.

- My challenge is how to deal with a cast on my arm for several weeks.
- The outcome is not changeable, so I will focus on a change of belief.
- My worst fear is that I can't do everything I want to do.
- I recognize that my belief is self-defeating because the belief appears to be “all or nothing” thinking.
- I seek the more positive belief that there is still opportunity to do some of what I need and want to do.
- I recognize now that I can also improve my outcome with a support system and attainable goals.

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## Persistence

*Persistence is facing a challenge with the belief you will ultimately succeed.*

**Why:** Persistence encourages you to make change, mark your progress, and build belief that you can reach your goal.

**How:** Consider creating a realistic goal and the steps needed to reach the goal so that when all of the steps are completed, you have attained your goal.

- Consider your challenge and recognize the importance of believing you can meet the challenge.
- Creating a goal is way to build the belief you can meet the challenge. The goal must be reachable within a realistic time limit.
- The steps describe the actions that are needed to reach your goal. Create as many steps as needed so that you can see the progress you are making. You persist by building belief in yourself.
- Remember to reward yourself as you persist.

**Example:** I have a project to do and need a plan to complete it on time.

- The challenge is to complete a project.
- The goal is to “Create a Project Time Plan.”
- Break the major parts of the project into smaller steps to better identify the tasks and how much time is needed to complete each part.
- Assign a due date to each project part.
- Assure there are enough steps so that progress can be easily seen.
- Monitor progress and remember to reward yourself as progress is made.

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## Strength

*Physical strength grows from proper nutrition, exercise, relaxation and sleep.*

**Why:** Practicing a healthy diet, physical exercise, relaxation, and good sleep habits improves physical, emotional, and mental well-being. When you feel good, challenges are more easily managed.

**How:** Find and practice plans for diet, exercise, relaxation, and sleep to fit your lifestyle while meeting the goals of good nutrition, aerobic exercise, stress reduction and adequate sleep.

- Consider your challenge and how it relates to diet, exercise, relaxation and sleep.
- Find and practice a healthy diet that fits your lifestyle yet lowers your health risks. Consider researched plans such as MyPlate, Healthy Eating Plate, Mediterranean, and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension).
- Find and practice a physical exercise plan that fits your lifestyle and provides at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity ideally spread evenly throughout the week.
- Find and practice a relaxation exercise, such as slow diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, social resilience, and mindfulness-based stress reduction.
- Practice good sleep hygiene by keeping a consistent sleep-wake schedule, exercising daily and eliminating long naps and naps within a few hours of bedtime.

**Example:** I get anxious before and during high-stakes tests and that prevents me from doing as well as I could do. I need to find and practice a relaxation exercise.

- The challenge is to be relaxed before and while taking tests.
- Consider an easy relaxation exercise, such as diaphragmatic breathing, an exercise of slow controlled breathing. I put one hand on my chest and the other on my stomach. I try to keep the hand on my chest from moving up and down. Rather, I slowly breathe so that the hand on my stomach moves up and down. Each time I exhale, I focus on the word “relax.” Like any exercise I need to practice diaphragmatic breathing for several weeks before I master it. My plan is to practice it for about ten minutes before I go to sleep.
- Consider also an exercise plan to further reduce stress, diet plan to increase my energy, and good sleep to support the relaxation and improve my likelihood of doing even better on the test.
- Adjust or change any of the plans that are not working and monitor the changes.
- Just before a test, I practice diaphragmatic breathing thinking of the word “relax.”

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## Trust

*Empathy develops by seeking to understand what another being is experiencing from their point of view. Trust develops by reaching out to engage and provide mutual support.*

**Why:** Social support is considered one of the best protections from the effects of stress and suicide. Trust is foundational to *all* relationships, whether personal, professional or organizational.

**How:** Develop your social support system by identifying the challenge or challenges you may be facing. Consider people who would be helpful dealing with a challenge and the role each would play.

- Consider your challenge and identify your strengths and weaknesses to better identify your needs and the support you bring.
- Consider people who best meet your needs while assuring you are comfortable reaching out to them and they are comfortable reaching out to you.
- Identify those individuals in your support system, roles they play, and how to contact them.
- Identify also the contributions you make to help sustain your support system.

**Example:** I have an uneasy feeling that one of my friends may be thinking about suicide. I am unsure how to handle this situation and need a plan on how to approach my friend.

- The challenge is to help a person who may be considering suicide.
- Recognize that I am now part of my friend’s social support system and I have a role to play.
- Recognize suicide is one of the leading causes of death for teens and young adults.
- Identify community resources.
- Contact resources to determine the best way to handle the situation.
- Be prepared to reach out to the person and listen.
- Question the person about the possibility of suicide.
- Persuade the person to get help.
- Refer the person to the identified resources for specialized help. Offer to get the person to assistance or call 911 if critical.
- Do a personal welfare check to best encourage a positive outcome.