

Flexibility

Willingness to change plans or ideas without getting upset

What is Flexibility?

Your body has more than 200 bones and 600 muscles that enable you to stand, sit, walk, run, and jump. Nerves link the muscles to the brain and spinal cord which signal the correct muscles to contract or relax.

Physical flexibility helps you avoid injury, and willingness to change plans or ideas can help you avoid frustration and setbacks. Adjust to change as smoothly as possible instead of being stubborn or stiff-necked.

Flexibility Introduction

Twists and Turns

A good driver adjusts to changing road conditions. Drivers who refuse to alter speed or direction will face disaster.

You can plan to see your friends this afternoon, but something might happen that requires you to change your plans. Practice flexibility by doing what is important. Think how you can respond positively instead of complaining.



Five Keys to Flexibility

1

Anticipate Change

Recognize change will come—at home, at school, and in every other aspect of life. Change can create fear because no one knows what lies ahead. Make wise plans, invest in good relationships, and develop the character to respond correctly.

2

Adjust the Plan

When plans change, the mental adjustment might require extra effort. A flexible person adapts to new situations by focusing on the original goal and finding a workable solution. Remain open to new ideas, and work with your options.

3

Look for the Benefits

Changes often push you to find new and better ways to reach your goals. Remember your purpose, look for new opportunities, and determine what you can do next to move in that direction.

4

Respect Authorities

Work with your leaders, and know what they want to accomplish. Try to understand their goals, and ask questions when you do not understand. Do what you can to help your authorities succeed.

5

Get It Done

Do not make excuses or whine when your plans change. Have a “will-do” attitude despite inconveniences. Press on until you finish the job.

Think about it

After reading this lesson, discuss the following questions with a parent, guardian, or teacher who can sign below.

1. Why is change hard to accept?
2. How should you respond when a teacher changes your assignment?
3. What are some benefits of a recent change in your life?

Signature & Date _____

Flexibility in History

James Madison 1751–1835

Prepare Yourself

After graduating from the College of New Jersey at Princeton, James Madison pursued his interest in public affairs by studying law. He wrote to his friend, William Bradford, "The principles and modes of government are too important to be disregarded by an inquisitive mind and I think are well worthy of a critical examination by all students that have health and leisure."

In 1776, the people of Orange County, Virginia, chose Madison to represent them at Virginia's general convention. After the convention severed Virginia's ties to Great Britain, the governor appointed Madison to a committee assigned to prepare "a plan of government as will be most likely to maintain peace and order in this colony, and secure substantial and equal liberty to the people."

In December 1779, Madison accepted an appointment to represent Virginia in the Continental Congress. He served in Philadelphia until the end of 1783, and then returned to Virginia to serve in the state legislature and continue studying law.

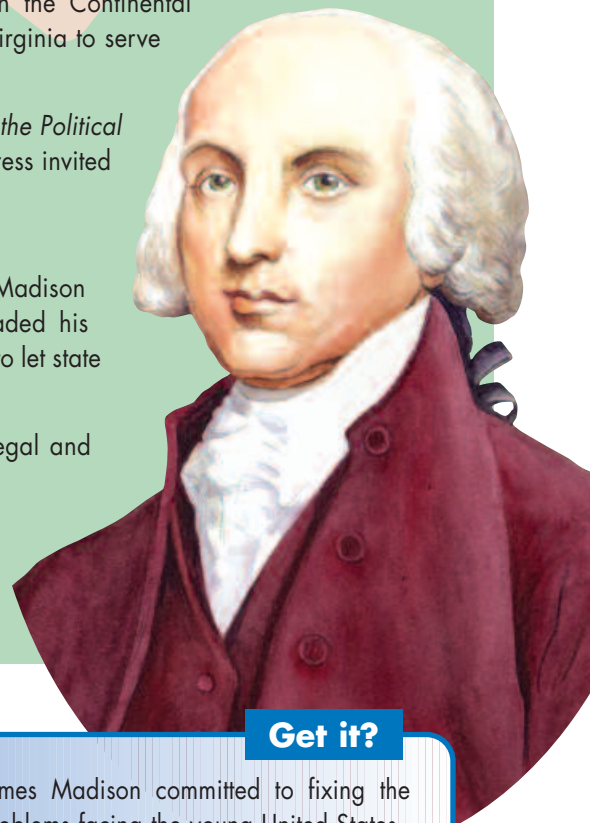
As the federal government became increasingly ineffective, Madison wrote *Vices of the Political System of the United States*, listing the problems he observed. The Continental Congress invited the states to send delegates to a convention in May 1787.

Work With Others

From his observation of the United States and his study of historic confederations, Madison formed the ideas that became Virginia's proposal to the convention. He persuaded his colleagues to let the people elect members of the House, but his colleagues decided to let state legislatures determine how Senators would be elected.

Though he first saw this compromise as unwise, he eventually saw the value of legal and structural restraints on government, and he helped draft the Bill of Rights.

Madison served as secretary of state in the Jefferson administration and became the fourth president of the United States. His clear vision and flexible leadership at the constitutional convention distinguish him as a central figure in American history.



James Madison contributed many ideas during the Constitutional Convention of 1787. He is known as the "Father of the US Constitution."

Get it?

James Madison committed to fixing the problems facing the young United States.

- Prepare yourself so that you will know how to face new situations.
- Contribute to the group.
- Change your perspective when presented with new evidence or a better solution.
- Stand for what you know is right.

Flexibility Application



Hold On!

A flexible person changes plans or ideas within the boundaries of what is legally and morally right. Without these standards, a person is like a tree with no roots, blown over by the wind.

Practice flexibility while standing up for principles of character that do not change.

- Make sure changes are approved by the proper authorities.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs, even if someone asks you to "just try it."
- Tell the truth and do not change the facts.
- If a change is legally or morally wrong, appeal the decision and do what is right.

Recover and Rebuild

Once damage is done, flexibility is accepting the reality of what occurred and making the most of what remains.

A Grim Reality

The summer of 1871 was unusually dry in Chicago. On the evening of October 8, a fire started in the southwest part of the city and spread quickly to the wooden buildings of downtown Chicago.

The fire blazed for 24 hours, consuming homes, buildings, and factories. Three hundred people died, and 100,000 were left homeless.

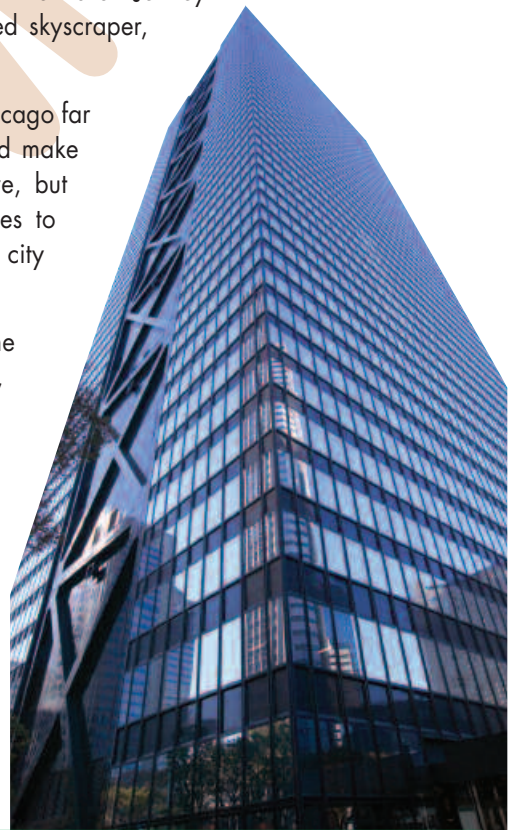
A Fresh Start

In the aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire, architects designed bigger, better, and safer buildings. In 1885, William Le Baron Jenney built the world's first metal-framed skyscraper, the Home Insurance Building.

Within two decades, the new Chicago far surpassed the old. Nothing could make up for the loss of life in the fire, but Chicago emerged from the ashes to become the nation's third largest city and architectural capital.

When disaster strikes, face the reality of what occurred, acknowledge what was lost, and determine to recover and rebuild.

A skyscraper's design allows it to give slightly instead of cracking in high winds. Similarly, you can reduce stress and accomplish your goals by practicing flexibility.



Think about it

After reading this lesson, discuss the following questions with a parent, guardian, or teacher who can sign below.

1. What are some positive outcomes of the Great Chicago Fire?
2. How can you recover from failure or mistakes?
3. Why is it important to stand up for what is right?

Signature & Date _____



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