

CHOOSE
SMART
SOLUTIONS



CHOOSE SMART SOLUTIONS



As you know, sometimes in life we have to face tough choices and major changes.

Maybe you've struggled with a subject at school, fought with your parents or friends, or had to change schools and make new friends after a move.

Situations like these can be stressful and trigger all sorts of reactions and feelings. But know what?



Everyone faces challenges, and everyone has trouble sometimes.

Luckily, there's a range of handy tricks and solutions for getting through changes more smoothly.



The first step is to understand how you react in various situations. That'll help you choose the best solutions for you.

Stress has different effects on different people.

Here are some examples:

Effects on the body

Sometimes when I meet new people or do an oral presentation, my heart beats faster and I breathe more quickly. I also feel slightly sick to my stomach and have to go to the bathroom more often.

Effects on the brain

When I have a test, even if I've studied, sometimes I get scared I'll fail. I may also have a hard time concentrating, forget certain parts of the subject or have trouble picking the best answer.

Effects on feelings

When I heard my parents fighting, I felt a bunch of emotions welling up inside: sadness, surprise, anger, disappointment, uncertainty and so on.

Effects on my behaviour

When I have a tournament, sometimes I don't have my usual appetite. But as soon as the tournament ends, my appetite comes back.



There are lots of tools you can use—simple techniques to deal with change and handle stress. Here are some examples:

Have fun

Sometimes a fun distraction is just the ticket to forgetting all about your stress. Read a book, go for a walk, write, draw, sing, cook, watch a movie or play a game.

Breathe

As you breathe in, feel your stomach inflate like a balloon. Then slowly breathe all the air out. Repeat three times.

Tell people how you're feeling

No matter what you're going through, it helps to talk to someone you feel comfortable with (a parent, friend, teacher, coach, etc.). Explain the situation and how it makes you feel. You'll probably feel better afterward, and it could help you find solutions if needed.

Pet your companion animal

There's a reason people say dogs are humans' best friends. Spending time with animals can really make you feel better. If you don't have pets, try visiting a friend or relative who does.

Laugh

A good laugh can make you feel better all over. If you're dealing with a stressful situation, try reading a comic strip, asking a friend to tell you a joke or watching funny videos or TV shows.

Help someone

Helping out a friend or doing a good deed will lower stress levels. Thinking about others takes your mind off your own problems for a while. Why not give your neighbour a hand shovelling snow or help your grandmother with the gardening? While you're at it, you may even think of a solution: one more great reason to lend a helping hand.

Get moving

Staying fit and active helps fight stress. For example, try biking or walking to school on days when you have a test in the morning.

Listen to music

Music is a great way to unwind, blow off steam and get out of your head—just think how you can't help but dance to your favourite song! Any kind of music will do: What counts is the positive effect it has on you.



"Last year I realized that playing piano helped me feel better when I was stressed out. I sit down and play just for fun. In just a few minutes I forget all my worries."

– Dahlia

Name three stress relievers that work well for you.



Here are just a few examples of solutions for getting through difficult situations and solving problems more easily.

Recognize your feelings

Not all feelings are pleasant—no one enjoys being angry or sad. But every one of them is perfectly normal. It's better to recognize your feelings than try to ignore them.

"Before, when I got scared, I'd pretend I wasn't. Then when I got home, I'd often cry. Now I know it's okay to be scared. I ask myself questions: Am I scared because this is an unfamiliar situation? Am I scared someone might not like me? Asking these questions helps me understand my emotions and keeps fear from taking over in my mind."
– Kelly

Talk to someone

Talking to someone you trust helps ease strong emotions. And sharing what's happening helps you better understand the situation and find solutions or ways to get through hard times more smoothly.

Look around: There are a lot of people in your life. Some you're close with, others less so. All of these people are part of your social network. There are people you trust—people who are there when you need them, who listen to you and help you make decisions when you're going through a hard time.

Decide what you want

When you're calm, it's easier to decide what you really want. That's when you should think about what you're trying to achieve.

"When my best friend told me he was moving and changing schools, I was really sad. But when I got home I had a talk with my mom, and that calmed me down. Then I figured out that what I really wanted was to keep seeing my friend. My mom called his mom to find out exactly where they were moving. It's really not that far! So our parents agreed that we can continue to see each other on weekends."
– Matthew

Who's in your social network?

- Your parents, brothers and sisters, and cousins.
- Your friends: people you spend a lot of time with, but also people you're happy to see socially, such as school friends, friends in your neighbourhood, and the people you do sports or other extracurricular activities with.
- Other adults you get along well with: such as grandparents, uncles and aunts or a teacher, coach or neighbour.



Write down the names of people who could help you or listen to you when you're going through a time of stress or major change.

Family: _____

Friends: _____

Other adults: _____

Channel your positive inner voice

We all have an inner voice. Sometimes it makes positive suggestions, and other times, it expresses negative thoughts. Listen to your thoughts. When they're negative ("I'll never do well in math, I'm too shy, I'm scared to talk in front of the class"), remember that you have the power to transform negative thoughts into positive statements by using phrases like "I'd like to," "I want to" and "I plan to." For example: "I'd like to get better grades in math. I want to be less shy. I plan to speak confidently in front of the class."

Over time, with a little practice, you'll see your behaviours change as you become better able to accomplish your goals, which in turn will make you more confident and relaxed.

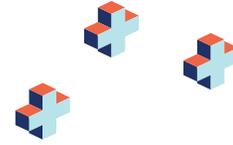
Decide to take action

Once you've set a goal and formulated your thoughts in positive terms, it's time to spring into action and make a change. This is the perfect time to ask yourself, "What can I do now to make my positive thoughts come true?" Once you have an answer, don't wait—take action!

If your positive thought is "I want to be a better basketball player," Step 2 is to ask yourself, "What can I do to become a better basketball player?" There are lots of answers, including the following: "I could practice more. I could ask my gym teacher or coach for tips. I could watch videos of my favourite players to learn some new moves."

"I wanted to win a comic strip contest at school. I had already figured out my subject and asked for help from my cousin, who loves comics. I also watched videos on drawing and practiced a lot. I didn't win the contest, but I did finish third. That's pretty good! I'm proud of myself, and I've gotten better at drawing."
– Alec

Like Alec, you might not perfectly achieve exactly what you wanted. But every step you take toward achieving your goal will help you develop your skills and improve your self-confidence. You always win when you take action, because you're taking positive steps to address your situation!



Choose a positive thought and ask yourself the following question: What can I do now to make it come true?

Positive thought:

What I can do to make my positive thought come true:

As you can see, there are plenty of ways 🛠️ to overcome challenges more easily. One is to learn to recognize what causes you stress, and then put in place practical solutions 📖 that work well for you.

Always remember that you're not the only one facing these situations, and there are lots of people around who can provide support 🪜 and offer advice on dealing with challenges.

If you ever feel alone or don't feel comfortable talking to someone in your social network, you can always call Tel-jeunes, a confidential helpline created specially for young people.

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