

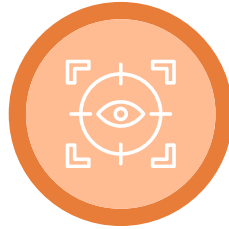


Build your Mental Flexibility

Our brain is like a control centre, helping us to stay organised, respond to challenges, and get things done by helping us:



Think
and
plan



Focus
our
attention

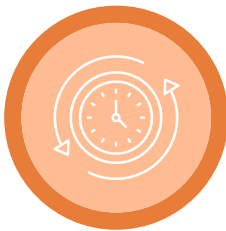


Remember
important
things



Make
decisions

Cognitive (or mental) flexibility is our ability to shift our thinking or adapt our behaviour when things change. It allows us to:



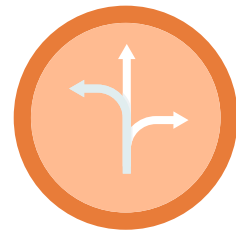
Adjust to
new rules or
routines



Take
different
perspectives



Switch
between
ideas or
tasks easily



Change
approach
when things
don't work

It is a key part of being able to overcome challenges, and deal with unexpected situations.

Meanwhile, **mental inflexibility** is the opposite. It might look like insisting on one way of doing things, getting stuck in routines, or feeling overwhelmed when plans change. It makes it harder to learn, solve problems, and manage emotions well.



Benefits of building Mental Flexibility

Research shows that being cognitively or mentally flexible is linked to:



Better
problem-
solving



Stronger
learning



Better
memory



Higher
creativity



Better stress
management



Better
emotion
regulation



Better
relations



More
academic/
workplace
success

It plays a role in uncertainty, adapting in unpredictable environments, and bouncing back from setbacks.

Just like physical flexibility, mental flexibility grows with regular practice. A few intentional steps can help you become more adaptable, creative, and calm — no matter what life throws your way.

Mental flexibility helps to support building a growth mindset – this means believing you can improve through effort and learning. It helps you to bounce back





<https://hdp.gov.mt/>

How can I build my mental flexibility?

Try out our tips and see what you like best! Then, integrate these habits into your daily routine.



Exercise your body to help your brain

Physical activity boosts blood flow to the brain and improves cognitive flexibility.

Even short bursts of exercise (like a 20-minute brisk-walk or workout) can improve focus, switching between tasks, and changing your point of view.

If you are not very active, even a few minutes of movement helps!

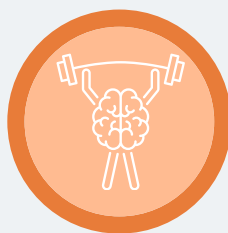
[Click here](#) for more tips on getting more movement into your routine!



Be open to change

Flexibility grows when we practice adapting to new situations and experiences. The more we practice, the easier it is to stay calm and find solutions when life takes an unexpected turn.

Try new routines or mixing up your schedule, look at challenges from different angles, and treat mistakes as valuable lessons, not setbacks.



Give your brain a workout

Try activities that stretch your thinking, like:

- ***Learning something new (e.g. a skill, language or instrument)***
- ***Playing games that involve puzzles, logic and problem-solving***
- ***Reading or watching content that challenges your perspective***
- ***Changing up the way you normally do things***



Balance focus with creative thinking

Being flexible means knowing when to stay focused and when to let your mind wander. Both are important: Focusing helps you get things done, and letting your mind wander can help you come up with creative ideas. The trick is to notice what your brain needs.

If you're stuck, give your brain a short break — go for a walk, doodle, or just daydream for a few minutes. This back-and-forth — between focus and imagination - helps you solve problems, stay calm, and think in new ways.



Empty your mind every now and then

When your mind feels cluttered, it's harder to think clearly, switch perspectives, or adapt to change. Emptying our mind doesn't mean thinking less — it means making space for fresh, more flexible thinking by offloading what's stuck in our head.

- ***Write down everything on your mind — no structure, no filter***
- ***Externalize decisions by listing your to-dos, worries, or thoughts to clear mental space***
- ***Jot down lingering thoughts before switching tasks***
- ***Reflect and reframe: Revisit your notes later to prioritise or see things differently***



Make it social

Practice with others!

- ***Invite others to challenge your thinking in a respectful way***
- ***Rotate responsibilities at work or home to break routines***
- ***Try group problem-solving (where multiple answers are encouraged)***



Mental Flexibility Bingo

There are many ways you can build your cognitive flexibility!
Challenge yourself to try a few of these:

1 Make a list of solutions to a current problem	2 Cook a new recipe from a foreign cuisine	3 Make a small, intentional change to your routine	4 Brainstorm uses for everyday objects
5 Switch between tasks without rushing	6 Read content with different perspectives	7 Take a class on something completely new	8 Listen to music from a different genre
9 Practice mindfulness to clear the mind	10 Learn a few words in a new language	11 Play a word game like Scrabble	12 Embrace humor and make a few jokes
13 Share different perspectives in conversation	14 Explore somewhere new	15 Read a book or story about unique characters	16 Play a strategy game like sudoku or chess
17 Do a word association exercise	18 Try to think of a situation as if you were someone else	19 Take a different route to work	20 Watch a documentary about something new
21 Look at optical illusions	22 De-clutter a space in your home or work	23 Try a new form of art (e.g. sculpture, photography)	24 Attend a cultural event
25 Write a short story or poem	26 Explore a new technology or application	27 Visualise different scenarios and outcomes	28 Repeat your favourite ideas!