



Skills Builder
PARTNERSHIP



Skill Workbook

Name:

Introduction to the Skills Builder Partnership

The Skills Builder Partnership brings together educators, employers, organisations and learners around a common mission:

One day, everyone will build the essential skills to succeed.

We focus on building eight essential skills which have been shown to most effectively prepare learners for education and employment.



Listening

The receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas



Speaking

The oral transmission of information or ideas



Problem Solving

The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge



Creativity

The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas



Staying Positive

The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals



Aiming High

The ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them



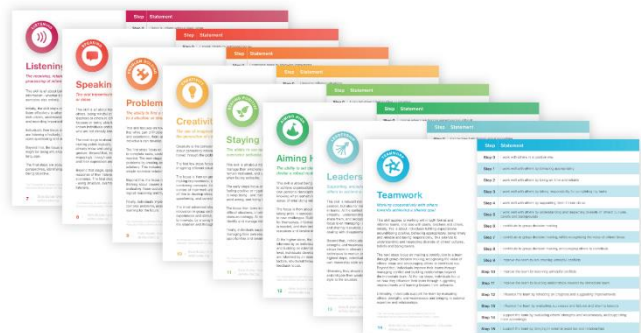
Leadership

Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal



Teamwork

Working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal



The Skills Builder Universal Framework

The Skills Builder Universal Framework shows how to build essential skills at every stage of life. It breaks each skill down into sixteen teachable and measurable Steps. Developed over four years, the Framework is used by 500+ schools and colleges, 120+ employer partners and 90+ impact organisations – all building the skills of 200,000+ individuals.



Staying Positive

The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals

- **This skill is all about individuals being equipped to manage their emotions effectively and being able to remain motivated, and ultimately to motivate others, even when facing setbacks.**
- **The early steps focus on identifying emotions - particularly feeling positive or negative. Building off that is the ability to keep trying - and then staying calm, thinking about what went wrong, and trying to cheer up and encourage others.**
- **The focus then turns to identifying new opportunities in difficult situations, sharing those, and adapting or creating plans accordingly. At more advanced steps, individuals identify and manage risks and gains in opportunities.**
- **Finally, individuals support others to stay positive by managing their own response, helping others to see opportunities and creating plans to achieve them**

Why is Staying Positive an important skill?

Further Education



In Further Education, you may find that you are given more complex and challenging tasks and you may have less adult support and guidance. It is important to develop the skill of Staying Positive to learn strategies to not give up easily and overcome setbacks. This can help to build confidence in yourself and support you to achieve more.

Higher Education



In Higher Education, you may be set complex tasks and assignments which require you to work independently to complete. Many of these activities will contribute to your overall outcomes so it is important to find ways to keep trying, even if something goes wrong. You might also encounter challenges from living alone for the first time or from being a new location. Therefore, being able to stay positive will be important to your wider success.

Apprenticeships



Staying Positive is important in both the workplace and when studying. In both situations you will undoubtedly make mistakes and it is important to know how to bounce back and find opportunities in setbacks. Balancing your studies and working can be a challenge in itself and maintaining a positive outlook can support you to be successful in both areas.

Employment



Whether working for a company or if you are self-employed, the skill of Staying Positive is crucial in the workplace. The jobs market is increasingly competitive and the ability to stay positive can help you to navigate this complex environment. By demonstrating this skill to others, you also show potential to support and manage others effectively.

Workbook overview

Purpose of the Workbook

The aim of this workbook is to support your development in the skill of [Staying Positive](#). As you progress, you will reflect, learn new strategies and tools and gather examples and evidence of when you have demonstrated a step of a skill.

Progression can take time. To fully understand, demonstrate and reflect on two or more steps with a year is considered quick progress. Try not to race through and complete the workbook but take your time to build your understanding and master each step in turn.

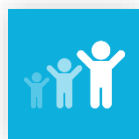
Expectations

In order to get the most from this workbook, it is useful to consider the Skills Builder principles.



Keep it simple

Make sure you use the Framework when talking about the essential skills. This ensures that others have the same understanding of the skills as you do. Use the language and vocabulary of the steps whenever referencing or discussing a skill.



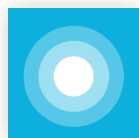
Start early, keep going

Mastering the essential skills isn't simple and takes considerable time and effort. The skills are not just about employability, but about succeeding in all parts of life.



Measure it

It is important to think about and reflect on your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to the essential skills. By fully understanding this you are able to highlight your progress and work out what your next steps are.



Focus tightly

You will most probably have some experience in the essential skills already. It is important to think about what you already know and understand and build up from that point. Ensure you have committed time to specifically building the focus skill.



Keep practising

To speed up progress in the essential skills, you should try to use them as often as possible and in different situations. Alongside this, you should make time to reflect on how you have used them as well.



Bring it to life

When building your essential skills, consider how they could be used in the different parts of your life. For example, you might think about how a particular step might support you in the workplace, in your personal life as well as in education.

Workbook overview

Why should I use this workbook?

This workbook will support you to develop the essential skills which we need to succeed. It focuses on the skills which almost everyone needs to do almost any job.

Focusing on one skill and taking each step of the Framework, this workbook breaks down the steps into it's parts. It encourages you to go out and apply what you have learnt and then record and reflect on the experience. By doing this you will learn how to use the step in different contexts, supporting you to develop positive habits. By collecting these examples, you will build up a bank of evidence for each skill which can be used to support applications or interviews and demonstrate your strengths.

How it's structured

This workbook focuses on one skill. The skill is broken down into steps and each step teaches you an important part of the skill. In this workbook, we begin at Step 0 and build up to Step 10.


1. **Choose the step you want to start with.** This might be Step 0 to recap and build up your learning or you may feel confident to start on a higher step.
2. **Read** the step descriptor, overview and the building blocks that form each part of the step.
3. **Complete the self-reflection** based on your current experience and understanding. Don't worry if you aren't confident yet – it helps to know where you started.
4. The next few pages provide the **details of the step**. These should be read carefully and may need to be revisited multiple times.
5. The end of this section provides ideas on how to **practice the skill step**. Plan when you are going to do this on a few occasions. You can take the ideas directly from the list or use it as inspiration.
6. Once you have practiced the step a few times, there is space to **record your reflections**. The first two questions focus on the knowledge of the skill - try to answer these from memory. Then share your honest thoughts on how you applied the step.
7. Finally, there is space for a tutor, coach, teacher or manager to **sign** to show you have successfully worked on the step.



Step 0
I speak clearly to someone I know.

To achieve Step 0, you will be able to speak clearly to someone that you know - perhaps to ask a question, to talk about something you are familiar with, or give an answer to a question.

This is the first step of speaking in the Skills Builder Universal Framework, and starts with a focus on speaking clearly so that others can understand the words that are being said. This is the starting point for everything else.

**Building blocks**

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- What speaking means
- How to speak clearly

**Step self-reflection**

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

☐ Never


☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always


7

**What you need to know**

What is speaking?

Speaking is how we communicate using speech, and is also called talking. We form words using our mouths and add sound to them using our lungs.

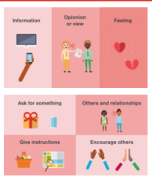
There are other forms of communication, including through writing, performance, sign language, song, and electronic methods of communicating. Some of the principles of speaking can make sense for other forms of communicating too.




Why do we speak?

We speak for several reasons:

- To share information
- To share an opinion or view
- To express our feelings
- To ask for something that we need
- To learn about others
- To build relationships
- To give instructions
- To encourage others



**Quick questions**

Over a typical week, write down different examples of when you might speak to others.

Which reason for speaking do you do most often?

Example completed Step pages



Step 0

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Building blo

The building blocks of this s

- What speaking means
- How to speak clearly



Step self-ref

1. In one sentence, share

This step is all about
through having a con
a problem.

2. When required, how often

- ☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☒ Sometimes
☐ Often
☐ Always



What you need to know

What is speaking?

Speaking is how we communicate using speech, and is also called talking. We form words using our mouths and add sound to them using our lungs.

There are other forms of communication, including through writing, performance, sign language, song, and electronic methods of communicating. Some of the principles of speaking can apply to other forms of communicating too.



Reflection questions

- ## 1. What is speaking?

Speaking is how we share our ideas, using words. It can also be called talking.

2. What can you do to make sure you speak clearly?

We can speak slowly, make sure the person listening is paying attention, think carefully about what we want to say and look at the person we're speaking to.

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

I made a list of all the people I spoke to in one day from start to finish. The total number was 14 which was much higher than I expected. I then reflected on the list I'd made and noted that 10/14 were people I knew well.

I asked my friend to share some feedback on how clearly I spoke and she said she was able to understand everything I said.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

I have to speak to people everyday so this step helps me not only in education but in my wider life. If I can talk to people and they understand me, I'll be happier as I am able to express how I feel. It will also help people support me with what I need.

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☒ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

- Speaking with others in my class
- Discussing my weekend with friends and family
- Speaking to my music tutor about an upcoming show



Quick quest

Over a typical week, write

- Speaking to a friend
- Talking to my sports teacher
- Telling my family

Which reason for speaking

I speak most often to:

Step signed off by:

Universal Framework: **Staying Positive**

This workbook will cover Steps 0-10 of the Skills Builder Universal Framework.

Step 0	I can tell when I feel positive or negative	Page 7
Step 1	I can tell when others feel positive or negative	Page 12
Step 2	I keep trying when something goes wrong	Page 18
Step 3	I keep trying and stay calm when something goes wrong	Page 23
Step 4	I keep trying when something goes wrong, and think about what happened	Page 29
Step 5	I keep trying when something goes wrong and help cheer others up	Page 34
Step 6	I keep trying when something goes wrong and encourage others to keep trying too	Page 40
Step 7	I look for opportunities in difficult situations	Page 45
Step 8	I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and share these with others	Page 50
Step 9	I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and adapt plans to use these opportunities	Page 55
Step 10	I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and create new plans to use these opportunities	Page 60
Step 11	I identify risks and gains in opportunities	
Step 12	I identify risks and gains in opportunities, and make plans to manage them	
Step 13	I support others to stay positive, by managing my own responses	
Step 14	I support others to stay positive, by helping others to see opportunities	
Step 15	I support others to stay positive, by helping others to see opportunities and creating plans to achieve them	



Step 0

I can tell when I feel positive or negative.

To achieve Step 0, you will be able to recognise when you are feeling positive or negative.

This is the first step in the skill of Staying Positive – the ability to identify emotions that are mainly positive and those that are primarily negative in yourself.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- What emotions might feel positive, and what might feel negative
- Why understanding feelings is important



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

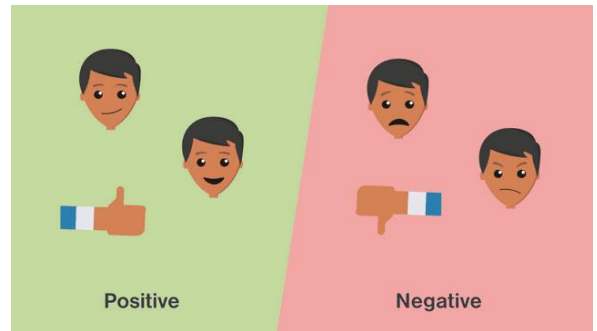


What you need to know

What are emotions?

An emotion is a strong feeling that is caused by something that is happening. There are broadly two different types of emotions:

- *Positive emotions*: These emotions make us feel good, and that we want to continue to feel like this. We might describe ourselves as being happy, excited or calm.
- *Negative emotions*: These emotions make us feel bad, and we want to stop feeling like this. We might describe ourselves as feeling sad, angry or scared.



Positive emotions

Lots of different things cause our emotions, and here are some examples of emotions that we might feel (of course, there are many more):

Happy:

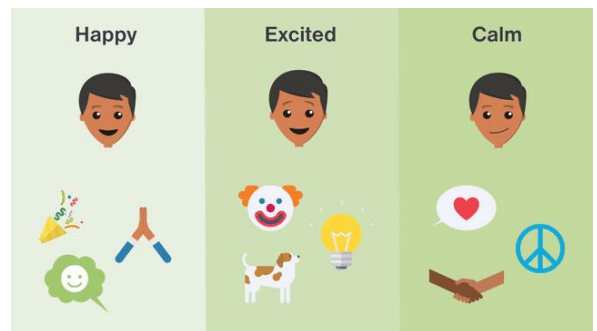
- Joy
- Grateful
- Optimistic

Excited:

- Amused
- Energetic
- Inspired

Calm:

- Kind
- Loving
- Relaxed



Quick questions

What things make you feel positive emotions? Make a list below.



What you need to know

Negative emotions

Sad:

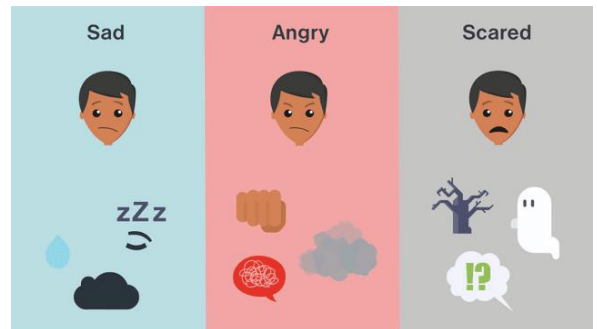
- Disappointed
- Tired
- Fed up

Angry:

- Irritated
- Angry
- Upset

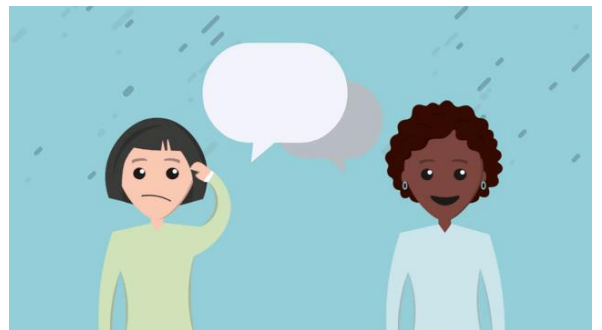
Scared:

- Nervous
- Anxious
- Frightened



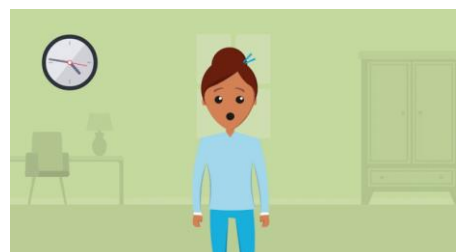
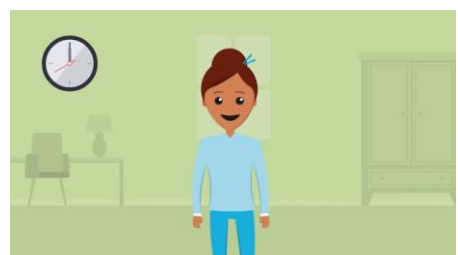
Recognising your own emotions

Do you think you can recognise when you feel these different emotions? Sometimes it can help to talk to someone else you trust when you feel positive or negative but can't work out exactly what it is that you are feeling.



Changing over time

In life, we will feel different emotions at different times. This is a normal part of how we think about what is going on around us. Sometimes our feelings change quickly, and other times we might feel the same way for a longer time.





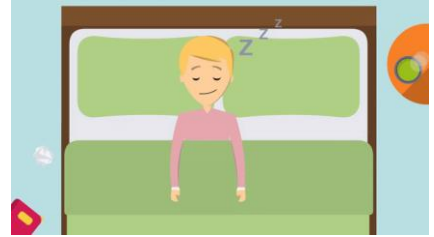
What you need to know

Why emotions are important

It can be confusing and challenging if we feel negative emotions without understanding what we are feeling. However, if we can work out what the cause is, then we can often do something to change that feeling. For example:

- If we feel tired, then we can rest.
- If we feel disappointed, then we can either try to fix the situation or look for something exciting to do instead.
- If we feel angry, we might need to take some time to calm down, and then we can talk to the person who has made us angry or help to fix the situation.
- If we feel scared, then we might be able to speak to someone about what we are afraid of, and we find some ways of making that better.

If we take the time to think about how we are feeling, we can start working out how to change our feelings from negative to positive.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Before you go to bed each night think back to the day you have had and identify the different emotions you felt. Make a list of both the positive and negative emotions you felt and think about the reasons why.
- Write about or draw your emotions – both positive and negative.
- Listen to your favourite music – think about how it makes you feel.
- Create playlists of music to cheer you up when you feel sad, or for when you need to relax and calm down, or for when you need to feel energised and motivated.
- Talk to a trusted person, a friend or family member about how you are feeling.



Reflection questions

1. What is an emotion?

2. How can we use our emotions to help us?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 1

I can tell when others feel positive or negative.

To achieve Step 1, you will be able to recognise positive and negative emotions in others.

In the previous step, the focus was on individuals being able to identify positive and negative feelings in yourself. For this step, the extension is to recognise them in others too.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How to spot positive emotions
- How to spot negative emotions
- What events might lead others to have positive or negative emotions



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

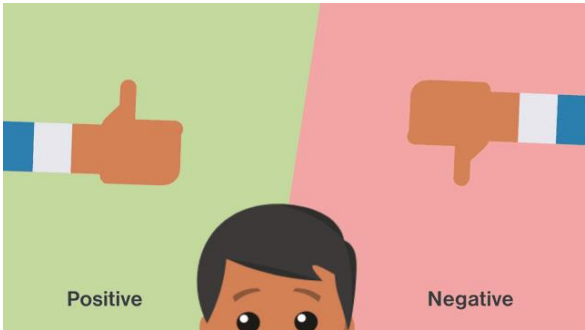


What you need to know

How to spot emotions

In the previous step, we looked at the range of different emotions, which we can think of as being broadly positive or negative.

It is not always easy to tell what emotion someone is feeling, and some people might choose to try to hide how they are feeling for different reasons. However, we can also pick up some clues about how people are feeling:



Positive emotions

Positive emotions	How you might be able to tell
Happy <ul style="list-style-type: none">JoyGratefulOptimistic	Happy people tend to smile, and to look at you directly. They might also laugh and seem comfortable.
Excited <ul style="list-style-type: none">AmusedEnergeticInspired	People who are excited tend to be very active and look like they have lots of energy, like they want to get on and do something.
Calm <ul style="list-style-type: none">KindLovingRelaxed	Calm people are likely to have a more neutral facial expression, although they might smile a bit. They seem to be content to stay where they are, rather than having lots of energy to use.



Quick question

Note down some ways you can tell if someone is feeling a positive emotion. Consider their face, body language and what they might be saying.

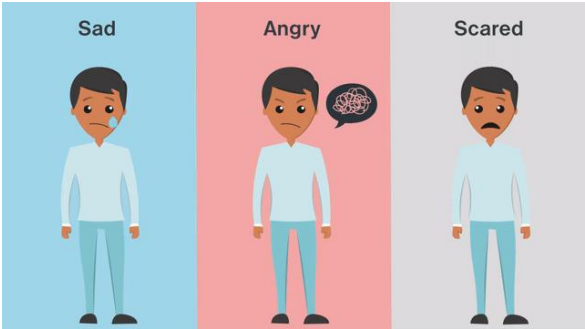


What you need to know

Negative emotions

We might also pick up clues for negative emotions that people might be feeling. For example:

Negative emotions	How you might be able to tell
<div>Sad<ul style="list-style-type: none">DisappointedTiredFed up</div>	People who are feeling sad are unlikely to be smiling, and might have downturned mouths. They are unlikely to laugh, and might cry or look like they could cry.
<div>Angry<ul style="list-style-type: none">IrritatedAngryUpset</div>	People who are angry tend to have a lot of energy. They might shout or talk loudly, and might look red-faced. They might frown or clench their teeth together.
<div>Scared<ul style="list-style-type: none">NervousAnxiousFrightened</div>	People who are scared might not look directly at you, but look around. They might seem twitchy and are unlikely to laugh or smile.



What events cause different feelings

As well as seeing how someone looks, we can also use our understanding of a *situation* to help us to guess how someone might be feeling. This is another vital source of information to help us to work out someone else’s emotions.

This is because in most cases, emotions are linked to what is going on, and so by understanding events, we might be able to understand how someone else would be feeling. This ability to think about the feelings of someone else is called *empathy*.





What you need to know

Examples: positive emotions

Positive emotions	What might cause this
Happy <ul style="list-style-type: none">JoyGratefulOptimistic	Things are going well, someone has got good news or is having an enjoyable day doing something that they like doing, with people they like.
Excited <ul style="list-style-type: none">AmusedEnergeticInspired	Something is going to happen, which is likely to mean something good for that person, or they are doing something which is using a lot of energy but for a positive outcome.
Calm <ul style="list-style-type: none">KindLovingRelaxed	Things are relaxed, and there is no pressure. Someone is having a pleasant time with people they like or love.



Examples: negative emotions

Negative emotions	What might cause this
Sad <ul style="list-style-type: none">DisappointedTiredFed up	Something bad has happened, which might have been expected or unexpected. Alternatively, someone has been working too hard or has not had enough rest.
Angry <ul style="list-style-type: none">IrritatedAngryUpset	Something bad has happened to that person that they do not feel was fair. They might blame someone or something for what has happened and might want it to be made right.
Scared <ul style="list-style-type: none">NervousAnxiousFrightened	Someone feels that something bad might be about to happen - either, they know that something bad is coming, or they think that it could happen. People are often scared when faced with uncertainty.





What you need to know

Different reactions

Of course, it is essential to remember that not everyone will react in the same way to different events and that not all emotions that people feel are linked to what is happening there and then. Feelings can be complicated, and can sometimes be affected by mental health difficulties.

However, thinking about what is going on for someone, as well as how they look, can help to give a better idea of their feelings.



Quick question

What are some examples of events or situations that have caused you positive and/or negative emotions?



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Choose a character from a book you have read or a film you have watched. Ask yourself: when did the character feel positive? How did you know? What did they say or do? How about when they felt negative feelings? What caused them to feel that way? Think about how you'd feel in that situation – how might you react?
- Describe by drawing, or through writing or music what negative and positive emotions can feel like.
- Listen to the words of different songs – what are the lyrics? What is the 'mood' of the song? How do you think the songwriter might have felt when they created the song?
- Watch a video that contains people perhaps on the news or in a soap. Mute the sound and try to work out how the characters are feeling. How can you tell? What are the main signs?



Reflection questions

1. How can you tell what emotions other people are feeling?

2. How can you use your understanding of the situation to help work out how someone is feeling?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 2

I keep trying when something goes wrong.

To achieve Step 2, you will show that you can keep trying when something goes wrong.

In earlier steps, the focus was on identifying emotions in yourself and others. Understanding this is essential to being able to manage the emotional response to give up when something goes wrong, and to keep trying instead.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- Our emotional responses when something goes wrong
- How to overcome the urge to give up, and instead to keep trying



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

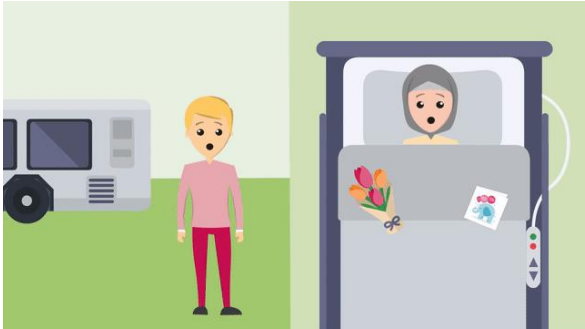


What you need to know

When things go wrong

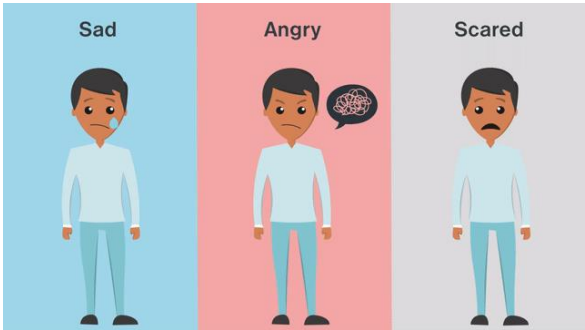
None of us ever want something to go wrong for ourselves. Unfortunately, in life, there is a huge amount that is far beyond our control, and so it is inevitable that somethings things go wrong.

These might be small things – a cancelled train or bus, a letter getting lost in the post, or losing something. Or they might be much more significant things – the death of someone we know, the loss of a job, or becoming ill.



How we feel when something goes wrong

When something goes wrong, we swing into feeling negative emotions that we have been looking at already:



Negative emotions	The effect
<div>Sad<ul style="list-style-type: none">DisappointedTiredFed up</div>	It is normal to feel deflated when something bad happens. We might want to give up or that we have lost energy for continuing to try at something. We might feel that there is now no hope of success.
<div>Angry<ul style="list-style-type: none">IrritatedAngryUpset</div>	We might feel angry if we feel that it was unfair that this setback happened. Perhaps we feel that someone else was to blame, or that we are being unfairly punished for something. We feel an energy to try to put it right or get some sort of justice or fairness back.
<div>Scared<ul style="list-style-type: none">NervousAnxiousFrightened</div>	Alternatively, we might feel scared. Perhaps we now don't know what to do next, or feel that if something bad has happened once, then more bad things might happen soon.



What you need to know

Not letting emotions overwhelm us

It is important to recognise that it is very natural and normal to have a strong emotional response to something going wrong. Sometimes, we will have a combination of all of these emotions, or feel them at different times, particularly in response to something which has gone very wrong – like the death of a loved one.

However, we also need to avoid letting our emotional responses overwhelm us.

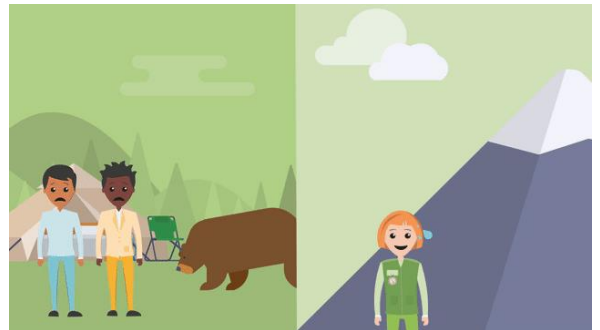


Overcoming the urge to give up

We all feel like giving up sometimes. If you feel sad, angry or scared, the natural response can be to take yourself out of the situation and do something else.

In some cases, for example if you are in danger, then that is the right response.

At other times though, we need to think about how to be resilient. That is, how do we keep going despite feeling negative emotions?



Quick questions

Think of a time when something has gone wrong. How did you react? How did it make you feel?



What you need to know

Strategies to try

There are a few things which might help you:

- *Recognise your emotions and why you feel like that:* It can be valuable to see your feelings and explore them. Naming your feelings can be very helpful in understanding and eventually managing them.
- *Focus on what has been going well:* While there might be a setback, there are probably also lots of things that have been going well. It's important not to lose sight of the positive things when something has been going well.
- *Put the setback in perspective:* For smaller setbacks, there are probably alternative ways to achieve something. A late train probably just means being a bit late to something, a lost letter can be resent. Even more significant setbacks will not be as overwhelming as they might first appear, even if they are rightly things that will cause great sadness.
- *Think about taking positive action:* When you feel ready to, think about what you could do next, which would be a positive way forward.

These ideas are all explored further in the following steps. The focus, for now, is on not immediately giving up on what you are doing. Instead, it is about recognising those emotions and that the emotional feeling of stopping is not necessarily the right call.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- At the end of every day or week make a list of the top 3 things that have gone well for you.
- Reflect on anything that has not gone so well. Talk to a trusted friend or family member and begin to consider positive actions you can take to overcome what has gone wrong.
- When something goes wrong for you, try stepping back from the situation and imagine someone else is telling you about it. What would you say to them to help them? We are often kinder and more helpful to others than to ourselves. Be your own friend when something goes wrong.



Reflection questions

1. How do you feel when something goes wrong?

2. How can you try to keep going instead?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 3

I keep trying and stay calm when something goes wrong.

To achieve Step 3, you should react to setbacks by staying calm and continuing to try hard at the task, if appropriate.

In the previous step, the focus was on continuing to work at something when something goes wrong. This step builds on that by focusing on not just persisting but staying calm to allow for a measured response.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How you might feel when something goes wrong
- How to stay calm in the face of setbacks



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always



What you need to know

How we feel when something goes wrong

In the previous step, we explored how things going wrong can often lead to a negative emotional reaction.

Sometimes when something bad happens, we might feel sad. However, sometimes we have a stronger negative emotional response of feeling angry or scared:

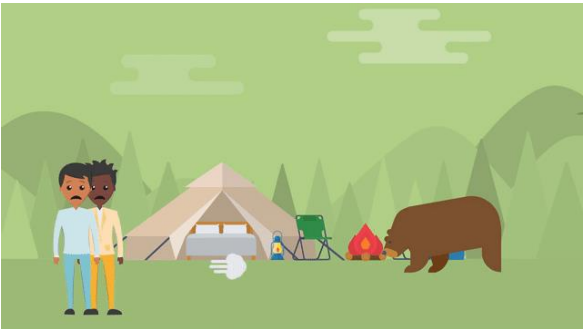


Angry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irritated• Angry• Upset	We might feel angry if we feel that it was unfair that this setback happened. Perhaps we feel that someone else was to blame, or that we are being unfairly punished for something. We feel an energy to try to put it right or get some sort of justice or fairness back.
Scared <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nervous• Anxious• Frightened	Alternatively, we might feel scared. Perhaps we now don't know what to do next, or feel that if something bad has happened once, then more bad things might happen soon.

Managing emotions: fear

When we have one of these emotional responses, we might take actions which end up making things much worse:

When we are *scared*, we try to protect ourselves. This can be a sensible step if we are in danger and need protection. However, sometimes we want to run away from something when we are not really in danger – we are just worried. If we run away in this situation, we might end up being unable to continue with what we are doing – essentially we end up giving up.



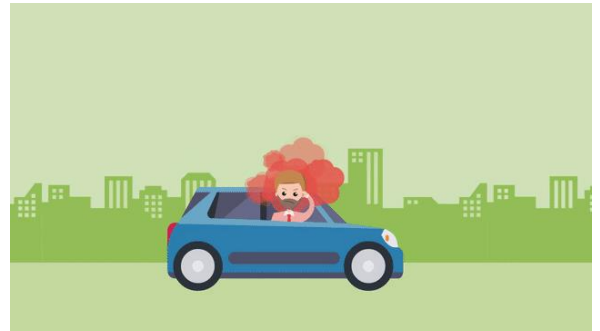


What you need to know

Managing emotions: anger

When we are *angry*, we behave quite differently. Being angry makes us feel like we have energy, but we might end up taking actions which are poorly thought through. There is a term of a 'red mist' descending when we are angry – it means that when we have a strong emotional response, we stop being able to think clearly about what is going on. Instead, we look to blame someone or to try to fix an injustice. We might end up being aggressive to other people or situations and behave in ways that are not appropriate, damaging relationships in the process.

For these reasons, we need to think about how to avoid these emotional responses when something goes wrong.

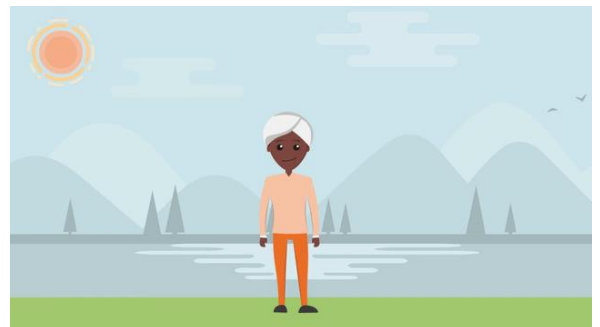


What it means to feel calm

Calmness is a positive emotion which is when we are settled and content with a situation. It is not a strong positive emotion like happiness, or an energetic, positive emotion like excitement.

It is challenging to move from a setback to strong positive emotions, but with practice, it is possible to neutralise strong negative emotions, to get back to a state of calm.

Being calm is helpful because it gives space to think about a setback or a problem to think through what could be done instead. It is tough to make good plans or develop new ideas if you are not feeling calm first.



Quick question

What things help you to feel calm? Make a list below.

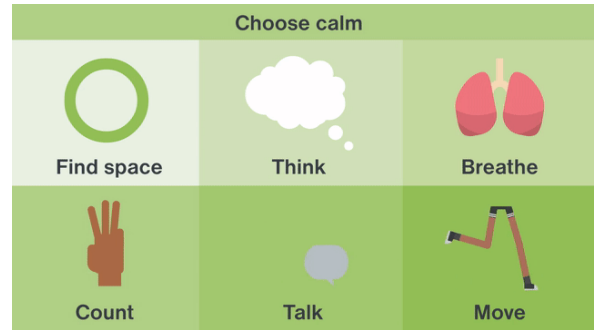


What you need to know

How to stay calm

There are a few steps to calm down if you feel angry:

1. It is essential to make a *choice* to calm down. It will take thoughtful effort to be able to calm down and will take energy.
2. You might need some *space*. Particularly if you have just got the bad news or feel upset about someone's actions, you should try to take yourself out of that situation, so you have time and space to think. Combining this with fresh air works well.
3. You could *think* about something that calms you down, like people you love, happy memories or something you are looking forward to.
4. Sometimes people focus on *breathing slowly* as there is some evidence that this helps you to focus.
5. Some people find *counting* in their heads an effective way of avoiding an immediate adverse reaction.
6. *Talk* to someone who you trust and who is supportive. Sometimes talking about something can help you to feel less angry or upset by it
7. Sometimes *physical activity* can help, as can trying to relax your body – if we are tense it often causes us to tense our shoulders, for example.



Quick questions

Which of the methods above would be best for you?

Why would this suit you best?



What you need to know

Deciding to calm down

Some of these different approaches will be more or less effective for different people – and you might find your own methods that work particularly well for you. However, always remember that the critical step is to recognise when you are feeling angry or upset, and making the decision to become calm.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Talk to a trusted friend or family member when it feels like something is going wrong. Often talking about the thing that is causing you to feel a negative emotion can help you to feel less concerned about it.
- Investigate yoga, meditation and breathing techniques to help you find a sense of calm – there are many classes, apps and resources online to refer to. As you become confident in these practices you can use techniques in your day whenever you feel you may be losing your calm.
- Seek a hobby that helps you to unwind after a challenging day. It might be something energetic like playing a sport, going for a run, a swim, doing some yoga or gardening. Or it could be something less energetic like reading, painting, playing a musical instrument, baking or cooking. Having something to positively distract us, that we can enjoy and engage with, can help us stay calm.



Reflection questions

1. How do you behave if you are angry or upset?

2. Why is it important to stay calm when something goes wrong?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 4

I keep trying when something goes wrong, and think about what happened.

To achieve Step 4, you will show that you can persist at a task but also respond to setbacks by thinking about what you can learn from when things go wrong.

In earlier steps, the focus was on how to keep trying and stay calm when something goes wrong, with a focus on managing your emotional response. The development here is to introduce some analysis of what caused the problem, and how to learn from it.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How to take a positive approach to learning from setbacks
- How to analyse when something goes wrong and learn lessons



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

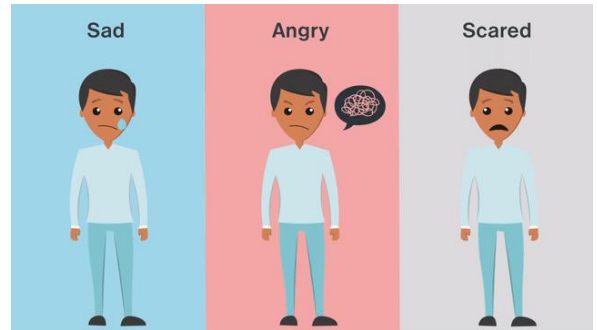


What you need to know

How we feel when something goes wrong

In previous steps, we have explored how we might have a negative emotional response when things go wrong. We looked at how these emotions might include sadness, anger or fear.

However, when something goes wrong, there is often learning that we can take from that experience. This learning might come from several places.



Taking a positive approach to learning from setbacks

- We might have made a mistake ourselves, and this is what led to something going wrong. We can learn not to make the same mistake again in the future – for example, if we missed a train, we can learn to allow more time in the future. If we did not do as well as we hoped in a test, we could learn the need to revise more in the future.
- The thing that went wrong might have been out of control, but looking back, we can see that we could have done something to have been ready in case it had happened. This is called being aware of *risk*, where *risks* are things that could go wrong.
- We might learn something new about ourselves – for example, we might see that when we are late, we get upset or angry. In this case, we can recognise these emotions better in the future and take steps to calm ourselves down (see Step 3).
- Something not working might teach us something. In science, the process of learning is driven as much as by things that do not work, as things that do. Science is all about creating ideas and then testing them through lots of different experiments. Most of the ideas that people come up with are wrong – but they test them to find out.





What you need to know

How this applies in the workplace

Along with science, lots of businesses and other organisations also take the attitude that it is good to try things out even if they end up going a little bit wrong, because we learn useful information through trying them out. This testing of hypotheses is explored a lot more in Problem Solving Step 12.



Being prepared to learn

The most important part of learning lessons when something goes wrong is about having the attitude of *wanting* to learn those lessons.

For us to be ready to learn lessons, we must first get into an emotional state where we can think clearly and *rationally* about what has happened. Being able to think *rationally* means being able to think in a sensible and logical way.

In previous steps, we looked at how to move from natural reactions of being sad, angry or scared to be in a state of calm. This is important to do if we are going to be ready for learning.



Quick question

After something has gone wrong, why is it important to be calm before trying to think about what happened?



What you need to know

How to learn lessons when something goes wrong

Then, learning is about asking ourselves a series of questions:

Firstly, analysing the situation itself:

- What happened?
- Why does it feel that something has gone wrong?
- What is the effect of that happening?
- What role did I play in the events, and what was out of my control?

Secondly, thinking about what could have prevented that happening:

- Could I have predicted that would have happened?
- What could I have done to have prevented that happening?

Thirdly, thinking about what lessons to take into the future:

- What do I know now that I did not know before?
- What would I recommend that others do or don't do based on my experience?
- How will I make sure I put what I have learned into use to help me?

This sort of analysis, once calm, means that even when something goes wrong, we can take something positive out of it – some useful learning that we can use in the future.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Keep a written or audio journal to record your thoughts when things go wrong. You might find writing or talking about when something has gone wrong helps you to understand why it happened.
- Speak to a trusted friend or family member when you feel something has gone wrong. They may be able to help you understand if anything could have prevented it and help you to learn from the experience.
- Seek out stories of people whom you admire who did not always get it right first time. There are many successful people from all walks of life including: sport, the arts, business and entertainment for example, who have shared stories of mistakes they have made, things that have gone wrong for them and the lessons they have learned. Their stories may all be different but they have one thing in common. They kept trying.



Reflection questions

1. How can things going wrong also be chances to learn something new?

2. How can we learn lessons when something goes wrong?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

 - ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 5

I keep trying when something goes wrong and help cheer others up.

To achieve Step 5, you will show persistence in the face of setbacks, and also be able to influence the emotional reactions of others positively too.

In earlier steps, the focus was on how you focus on your emotional response to things going wrong – persisting where appropriate, staying calm, and being able to analyse and take learning out of a situation. This next step focuses on engaging with others and supporting them to manage their emotional responses too.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How to recognise others' emotional responses to something going wrong
- How to cheer up others when something goes wrong



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always



What you need to know

Negative emotions

In the early steps of this skill, we looked at how we sometimes react when things go wrong. We explored three broad categories of negative emotions:

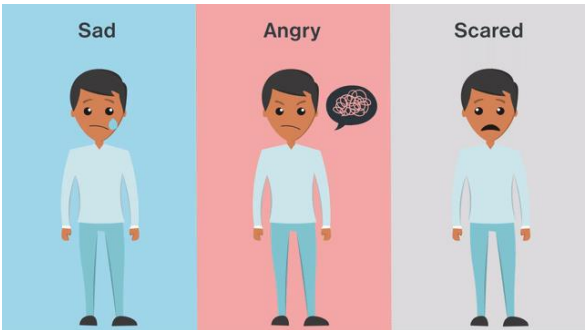
- *Sad*: Including feeling disappointed, tired or fed up
- *Angry*: Including feeling irritated, angry or upset
- *Scared*: Including nervous, anxious or frightened



How others might react when things go wrong

Since our immediate natural reaction to things going wrong is often one of these, or a combination of them, we should expect that other people might have a similar set of reactions to something going wrong.

We might be able to use clues from their facial expressions, behaviour or things that they say to help us to understand what combination of emotions they are feeling. This is explored more in Step 1, but as a reminder:



Negative emotions	How you might be able to tell
Sad <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disappointed• Tired• Fed up	People who are feeling sad are unlikely to be smiling, and might have downturned mouths. They are unlikely to laugh, and might cry or look like they could cry.
Angry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irritated• Angry• Upset	People who are angry tend to have a lot of energy. They might shout or talk loudly, and might look red-faced. They might frown or clench their teeth together.
Scared <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nervous• Anxious• Frightened	People who are scared might not look directly at you, but look around. They might seem twitchy and are unlikely to laugh or smile.



What you need to know

Consequences and blame

There are a couple of other essential things to consider when thinking about the reactions that individuals have when something goes wrong:

- They might react not just based on the thing that has gone wrong but about what the *consequences* of that might be – that is, what will happen next as a result. In some situations, individuals will be worried about whether they will be in trouble themselves or whether it will cause them more problems in the future.
- They might also look to *blame* someone or something else for what went wrong. This can sometimes be a negative result of working in a team – an idea which is explored more in the [Teamwork](#) skill.

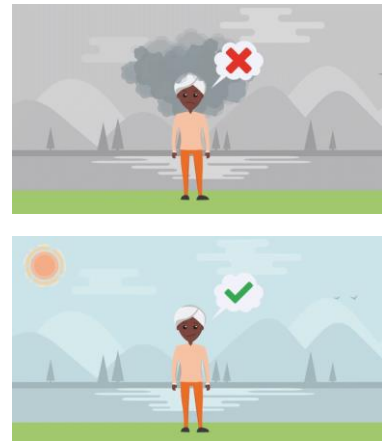
It is helpful to be aware of these additional influences on people's reactions when you try to understand how they are feeling.



Staying calm when things go wrong

In the previous steps, we have thought about what the impact of being in a negative emotional state can be on us as individuals. We saw how being angry or scared stopped us from wanting to continue with a task even if we really should, and how it stops us from being able to think logically about what happened. (See Steps 3 and Step 4)

We also saw that it is possible to calm ourselves down in a variety of ways (See Step 2).



Cheering others up

When thinking about what will cheer other people up, we should start by thinking about how they are feeling. The right thing to do will depend a lot on their emotions, and choosing the wrong approach might end up making things worse.

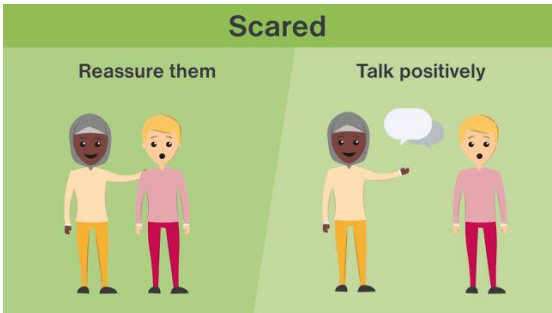
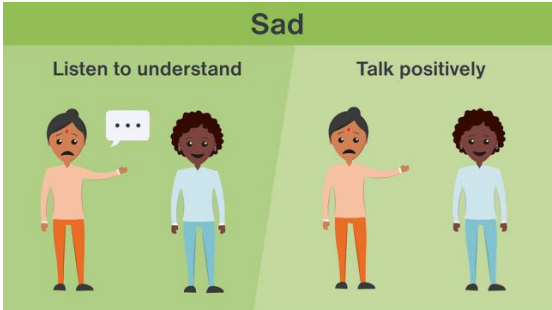




What you need to know

Choosing the right approach

Negative emotions	What you might be able to do
Sad <ul style="list-style-type: none">DisappointedTiredFed up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Listen to them and show that you understand how they are feeling – they might feel better for talking about it.Talk to them about the things that have been going well, or other setbacks you might have faced in the past, and how you overcame these.
Angry <ul style="list-style-type: none">IrritatedAngryUpset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Give them a chance to calm themselves down if they are trying to do this. You might give them some space, or let them go for a walk if they want to.If they want to talk about it, then you can listen to them and show you understand how they are feeling – you do not have to agree with everything they say.When they are calm enough, you can focus the conversation on some of the positives of the situation.Try to avoid talk of blame or reaction.
Scared <ul style="list-style-type: none">NervousAnxiousFrightened	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reassure them that although the thing going wrong might be disappointing, that the other things that they fear might happen as a result are unlikely.Talk about some of the positive things that are going on and how similar problems have been overcome before.





What you need to know

Choosing the right language for the setting

It is crucial to select the right language for the setting so that those people who are listening to you have the best chance of understanding what you are telling them.

- It would feel strange to use formal language with your friends, although they would comprehend you. They might not follow you if you start using unfamiliar technical language.
- Similarly, many people would feel uncomfortable being spoken to informally by someone who they did not know well. They might be confused about what their relationship is with you, or think that you were disrespectful towards them.
- Finally, anyone who does not have the same sort of technical expertise as you would find it very hard to follow technical language, and might feel that they were looking foolish if they couldn't understand what you were saying.



In summary:

- Informal language: For friends and people you know well
 - Formal language: For most people and settings, and people you don't know
 - Technical language: For speaking to others with shared technical expertise
-



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Create a list or mind map of all the things you do that can cheer you up when you are feeling down when something has gone wrong. You may be able to share this with someone else to help them when they feel something has gone wrong for them.
- If a friend or family member is having a tough time and something has gone wrong for them they may want to talk to you. Take time to listen to them. You could suggest that they do something with you that you know they will enjoy, such as going for a walk, or creating a meal together whilst you chat.
- Write a letter, send a message or call a friend to remind them of all the positive things they have achieved and that have not gone wrong. Sometimes we all need reminding that things are not all bad.



Reflection questions

1. Why is it helpful to cheer people up?

2. How can you cheer other people up when something goes wrong?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 6

I keep trying when something goes wrong and encourage others to keep trying too.

To achieve Step 6, you will show that when faced with a setback, you can cheer others up and then encourage them to keep trying.

In the previous step, the focus expanded from managing your own emotions to thinking about others' feelings too. This step builds on this by focusing not just on how to cheer others up, but to keep them focused on persisting with a task.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How motivation can change when something goes wrong
- How to encourage others to remain motivated and keep trying



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always



What you need to know

Motivation: how much we need something

Motivation is your desire to do something – in this case, to continue with a task. Motivation is affected by several things, including:

If something is essential for our survival (for example, finding water in a desert), then we will be highly motivated because the cost of not getting it would be disastrous. However, we can also see things in terms of high reward – we are more likely to be motivated to do something where the positive reward is high.



Motivation: likelihood of success

When we think about what reward we are likely to get from something, we adjust that by the *probability* or *likelihood* that we are successful. If we think something is likely to be successful if we work at it, then we tend to be more motivated. However, if it feels like it will be just luck whether we achieve the reward or not, then there is lower motivation.



The role of motivation

We have already looked at how things going wrong, or setbacks, can affect our emotions. These emotions can have a significant effect on how we feel about continuing on something – and we saw that other people are likely to feel similarly.

There is also another effect, though, which is on our motivation. If something bad happens, we might feel that either the potential reward has been reduced, or that the likelihood that we are successful has been reduced. In simple terms, we might not get what we wanted from what we were doing any more.

If we lose motivation, we are much less likely to stick at something.





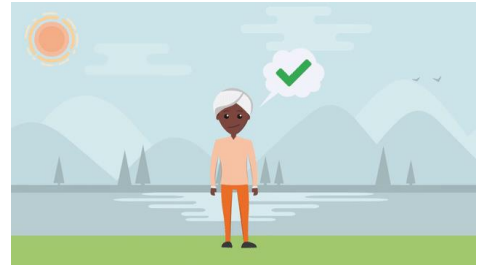
What you need to know

Encouraging others to remain motivated

Before we can get motivated again, we need to be able to manage our emotional response to a setback, which is what we explored in some of the earlier steps. In Step 5, we also looked at how to cheer up others when something goes wrong.

This is an essential first step. Then we can focus on how to rebuild the motivation of other people to keep going with something.

It might be that once the emotional response has weakened, that people can see that there has been little change in the reward for their efforts, or the likelihood of success. In this case, showing people this might help them to be motivated again.



Strategies to try

However, if this doesn't work, there are some other ways of motivating others, by getting them to think about:

- How much work they have already put in.
- How much progress has already been made.
- How much other members of the team, or in the wider world are relying on them to get the task done.
- Other examples of individuals who have been through similar adversity and come out of it positively and been successful in the end.
- How it is possible to adapt to overcome the setback.



Quick question

Imagine you are feeling unmotivated because you are close to your deadline and it looks like you won't be able to finish the slides for a presentation that your team are delivering.

Which of the above strategies would help you to remain motivated? Why?

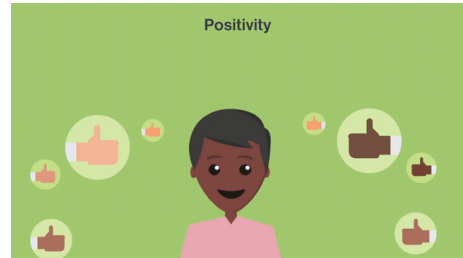
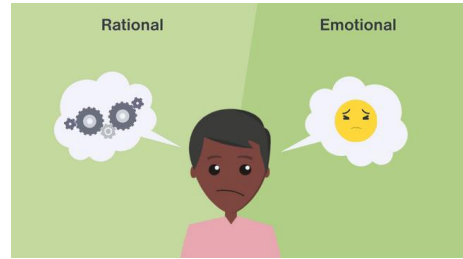


What you need to know

Appealing to rational and emotional sides

It is often important to appeal both to the rational side and to the emotional side of how people think.

Finally, it is important to maintain positivity – focusing on what is going well, encouraging people to see progress and recognising their efforts. This is likely to be much more effective than being negative about them not putting in enough effort, needing to get a grip or similar.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Read, listen or watch the news. Choose a news item about something going wrong for someone. What would you say to them to encourage them to keep going and not give up?
- Choose someone you admire – it could be a friend, a family member, a member of your local community or a well-known public figure. Find out what motivates them. How do they ensure they keep going when things go wrong? What advice would they give to anyone who is having a difficult time and is feeling like they might give up?
- Think about what motivates you to keep going even when things go wrong? Write, draw or create a mood board on the theme of motivation. Share your ideas with others and listen to their ideas too.



Reflection questions

1. What is motivation?

2. How can you encourage others to keep trying too?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 7

I look for opportunities in difficult situations.

To achieve Step 7, you will have to be able to identify where opportunities exist, even in difficult situations.

In earlier steps, the focus was on how you respond to something going wrong. The focus now moves on to how to find opportunities in difficult situations.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- Why opportunities exist even in difficult situations
- How to start identifying some of those opportunities



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

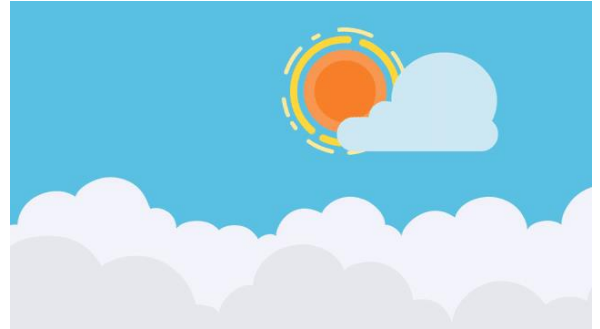
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always



What you need to know

Looking on the bright side

We may be familiar, depending where in the world we are, with phrases like ‘every cloud has a silver lining’ or to ‘look on the bright side’ of something. What these clichés are getting at, is the idea that very few situations are so absolutely terrible that it is not possible to either make something a bit better, or to use an opportunity that has emerged.

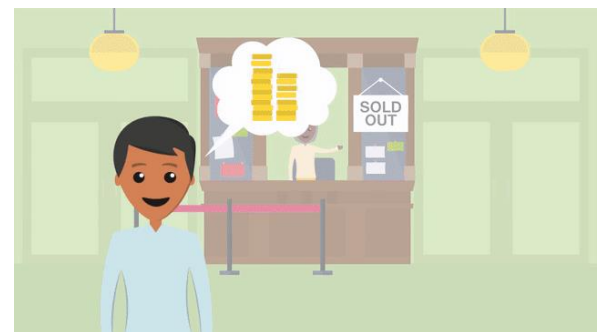


There are always opportunities

Of course, there are certainly incidents in world history or even closer to home where it feels that a situation has been bleak. Most difficult situations we deal with in our day-to-day lives, however, are much more balanced – they might be miserable, but they are rarely catastrophic.

On a small scale, something like missing a train might mean more time to read a book, to prepare for a meeting or to spend with friends. Being unable to get tickets to something you want to attend means you have saved some money and can use it for something else you would enjoy. An unsatisfactory test result has taught you that there is an area of your learning that you need to focus on more.

More widely, there are often upsides to a situation, but we need to understand that situation a bit better first.



Quick question

Consider a setback that you or someone you know has faced. Note down some potential upsides to the situation.



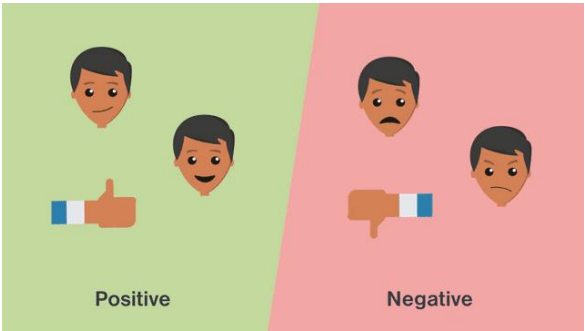
What you need to know

Understanding positive and negative sides of a situation

In order to find the opportunity in a situation, we have to first try to really understand the situation and what has happened.

We then want to understand what the positive and negative sides of that situation are.

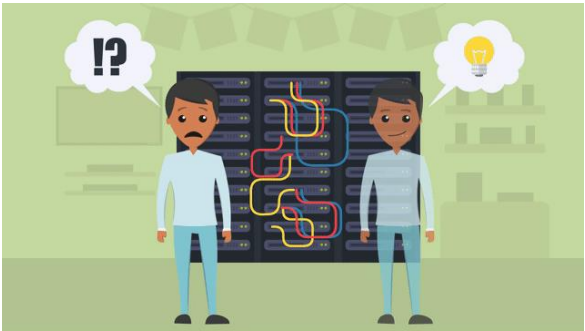
If we are dealing with an existing situation, then we can force ourselves to think about both what the positive and negative sides are. If you are feeling upset, then it is easy to feel that there is only a negative side to the situation. However, over time you might begin to see some positives. It is worth writing these as two lists, side by side:



<i>Positives</i>	<i>Negatives</i>
What is good about this situation – this is likely to be harder to write	What is bad about this situation – this is likely to be easier to write

Taking yourself out of the situation

To do this, it is sometimes helpful to try to take yourself out of a situation, and imagine that you are there as an observer. This helps to put some separation between you and the emotional response you have to the events. You could ask yourself the question, if I was someone else, what would I tell me were the positives in this situation?



Quick question

Imagine that a close friend or colleague has failed an important exam. What are some of the positives and negatives of that situation?



What you need to know

Identifying opportunities and threats

Alternatively, we might be dealing with a situation that is not yet fixed, but is still unfolding. In this case, we have to think slightly differently. We cannot just think in terms of positive or negatives, but we can think in terms of threats and opportunities. Threats are things that might happen with negative effects, whereas opportunities are things that might happen with positive effects.

Again, writing these down side-by-side is a good way of forcing a balanced approach to thinking about these:

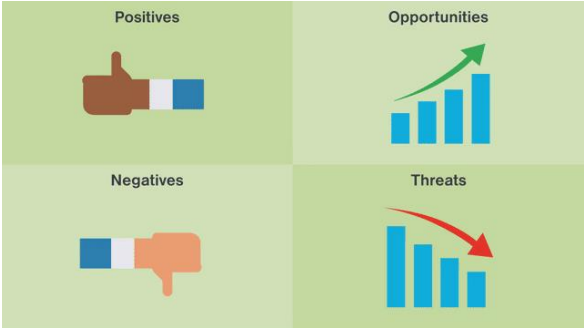
Opportunities	Threats
Things that might happen with positive effects	Things that might happen with negative effects



Achieving a positive outcome

Having identified the positives or negatives in a situation, or the opportunities and threats, we can choose to focus on the positives or the opportunities. This means thinking about not just how to avoid the negatives or threats, but how we can take action to achieve a positive outcome for ourselves.

As with much of staying positive, the crucial part is deciding to do so.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Actively listen to the lyrics of songs. Create a playlist of songs and music that encourage the listener to see the positives in even difficult situations.
- Gather writings, poetry, sayings and art that encourage you to find the positives in difficult situations. You can return to these when you need to stay positive.
- Whenever a difficult situation occurs look for both the positives and the negatives. You may find writing them down or recording them on a device helpful. Create three lists: the negatives, the positives and the opportunities. Focus on making the opportunities column the longest!



Reflection questions

1. What do people mean when they say to 'look on the bright side' of something?

2. How can you identify opportunities in difficult situations?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

- ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 8

I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and share these with others.

To achieve Step 8, you will show that you can identify real opportunities in challenging situations and then articulate them to others.

In the previous step, the focus was on how to look for opportunities in difficult situations. This step expands on that by also thinking about how to communicate those opportunities to others.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How to effectively share the positive side of a difficult situation
- How to involve others in identifying a positive side for themselves



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

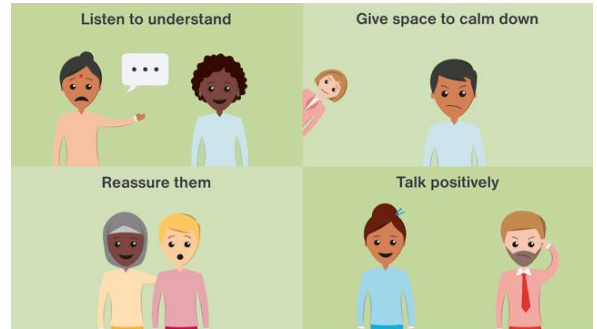


What you need to know

Cheering others up

In Step 5 and Step 6 of this skill, we explored working with others when facing setbacks. We particularly highlighted a couple of things:

Firstly, the need to ensure that others are in the right emotional state to be able to respond appropriately to events. This means moving them out of a state of being angry, scared or upset and trying to support them to be in a more neutral place by cheering them up (See Step 5 for more).



Motivating others to keep going

Secondly, the need to focus on others' motivation and some of the ways to boost their motivation. For instance, by focusing on what has already been achieved and other positive reinforcement.



Sharing the positive side

It is essential not to forget these previous steps, because if you do not put these building blocks in place, then you will struggle to communicate opportunities in difficult situations, as people will not be in well-placed to hear them.

If you do put these foundations in place though, then you can bring people with you to think about the opportunities. A key part of that is not to forget the negative side of the situation and acknowledging what the difficulties are.

If you don't do this, then people will think that you have misunderstood the reality of the situation, or that you are overly optimistic. For them to take you seriously when you present your ideas about the opportunities, they need to believe that you take the situation itself seriously first.



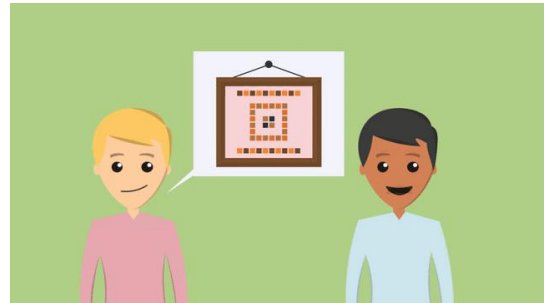
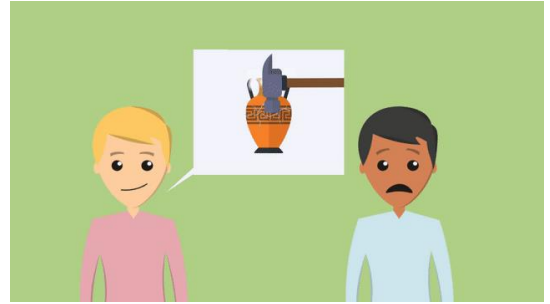


What you need to know

Helping others to accept the support

Once you do this, you can then take them through the journey that you had of thinking about what some of the positives or opportunities might be. Give them time to digest what these are because they will need the time to change their thinking from just about the negative side of the situation to taking in the positive – in the same way that it might have taken you time to make this change too.

Ultimately though, people are motivated by the idea of positive outcomes from a situation. So, if they believe that it is possible to find a positive result, even in a difficult situation, or at least make the situation slightly better, then they are likely to take you seriously.

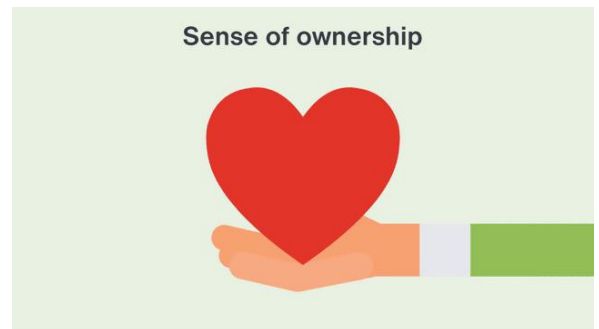


Building a sense of ownership

Even more effective than telling people what the positive side of a difficult situation is getting them to work this out for themselves.

This is a common trait of humans that you might have touched on already in some of the other skills. People are more invested in an idea when they feel that they came up with it themselves – this is having a *sense of ownership*.

When we own anything, we feel a greater sense of wanting to protect and look after it, and this is the same with ideas.



Quick question

Note down a range of ways you can cheer others up and motivate them.



What you need to know

Involving others in identifying the positive side

In this case, you can work through the same approach as you did in Step 7, thinking about the negatives and positives in a situation, or the threats and opportunities in a situation. If you can do this together, though, you will find that you will probably have more ideas than you did when you just did this alone. Just as importantly, by taking part in the exercise collectively, individuals will have more of a sense of ownership over the opportunities that come out at the other end – and more likely to act on them as a result.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Create a list of tips to advise others how they can best support someone who has found themselves in a difficult situation.
- Look out for news articles, stories and films where characters have overcome difficult situations. Share recommendations with family and friends.
- Spread positivity with friends, family and your community – when you encounter a difficult situation let others know what opportunities have arisen as a result. Everyone experiences difficulties. Do not be ashamed of these. Celebrate what you have learned from these and how you overcame them.



Reflection questions

1. What can be the risk of sharing the positive side of a difficult situation?

2. How can involving others with identifying the positive side be helpful?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

 - ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 9

I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and adapt plans to use these opportunities.

To achieve Step 9, you will show that you can adapt your plans in response to challenging situations to keep going.

In the two previous steps, the focus was on how to identify opportunities in difficult situations – first as an individual, and then in the context of working with others. This step builds on these by introducing the need for action as a result of this analysis.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How to review a situation to find the positives and negatives
- How to adapt plans to make the most of those opportunities and avoid threats



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always



What you need to know

Looking on the bright side

In Step 7 and Step 8, we looked at how to try to identify opportunities in the middle of difficult situations. We saw how there are almost always positive sides to events, or at least things to do to make a difficult situation slightly better. We also saw that it is possible to help other people spot those opportunities too, if we are careful about how we take them through that journey with us.



SWOT analysis

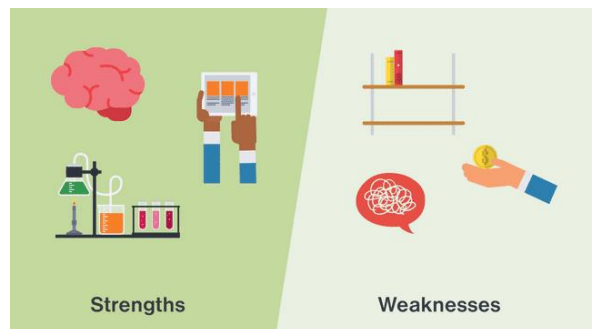
If we are going to be adapting our plans, we must get as full a view of a situation as possible. One tool that we will also see in [Aiming High Step 13](#) is called a SWOT analysis, which stands for:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats



Strengths and weaknesses

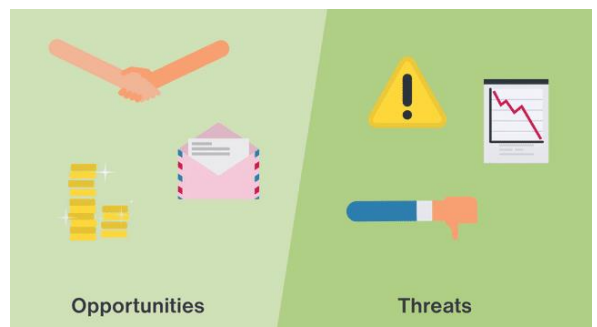
The first two elements are about us, or our team, or our project so far. It is about taking an *internal perspective* on what we are already good at. We can identify strengths as those things that are going well, or that we are good at doing. Weaknesses are those areas which are not going so well, or which we do not feel we are as good at doing, or perhaps that we have less experience in doing.



Opportunities and threats

The final two elements are about the situation that we are in. These are about taking the *external perspective* on the situation – both identifying the opportunities and also the threats.

When we think about adapting our plans, it is valuable to take the time to have both the *internal* and *external perspectives*. Always remember, that you can ask other people for their ideas and suggestions too – someone who is outside of the situation might have a clearer view on it than someone who is in the middle of it.





What you need to know

Focusing on the end goal

If we are adapting our plans, we are assuming that there were already plans in place for what you wanted to do. These might be extensive plans for a big project, or rougher plans for a smaller undertaking.

In either case, we want to start by reminding ourselves of what we are trying to do and *what we are trying to achieve*. If we are in a situation of adapting plans, it is particularly important that we don't lose sight of what the goal of the activity is.

For example, a postal strike might disrupt you sending a gift to a friend or relative for their birthday. However, you have to remember that the goal is to make that person know that you are thinking of them and appreciate them on their birthday – and there might be lots of other ways to do that, from a thoughtful phone call or a visit to arranging something nice for you to do together in the future.



Adapting plans

Once we are clear on our goal, or goals, from what we are doing, then we can think about how we can change our plans to adapt to a difficult situation. This is where we can bring out the threats and opportunities this gives us. For example, the postal strike means that we can't send a physical present or gift, but the opportunity is that we can use that time and effort to arrange something nice to do, and that we save some money that we can use on something else.

We can then go back to the strengths and weaknesses we identified for ourselves. If a strength is that you and the relative have a shared love of art, or dance, or music, then you could think of something you could do together to share that thing you enjoy. If you have a talent for creativity, you could make them something. However, if these were weaknesses, then best to be avoided.





What you need to know



Quick question

What are the key differences when considering strengths and weaknesses compared with opportunities and threats?



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- Carry out a SWOT analysis when faced with a difficult personal decision. You may be deciding on which college or university to study at, where to live in a new area or on a venue to hold an important family occasion.
- When making plans, for example for a get together with family or friends – have a 'Plan B' in case 'Plan A' cannot happen. Be focused on your end goal and adapt plans as necessary whilst remaining positive.
- Have a 'if I can't do X', I'll do Y' strategy when planning your time. That way, if you cannot complete a task, you will not feel your time has been wasted. You can still feel positive you have achieved something at the end of each day.



Reflection questions

1. How can we make sure we fully understand a difficult situation?
2. What do we need to think about if we're going to change our plans as a result?
3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.
4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?
5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?
 - ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 – Very confident
6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:



Step 10

I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and create new plans to use these opportunities.

To achieve Step 10, you will show that you can explore a situation and use your analysis to create new plans to use the opportunities you identify.

In the previous step, the focus was on how to look for opportunities in difficult situations, and then adapt your plans accordingly. This step expands on this, but by looking at the creation of new plans as a result.



Building blocks

The building blocks of this step are learning:

- How to review a challenging situation and identify viable opportunities
- How to develop plans for acting on those opportunities



Step self-reflection

1. In one sentence, share what you currently think this skill step looks like in action.

2. When required, how often do you demonstrate this step?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always



What you need to know

Reviewing a difficult situation

It is important to remember that almost no situation in life is ever entirely good or entirely hopeless. Instead, opportunities exist in all situations – and that often solving a problem is how the best ideas come about. These might be scientific discoveries, new inventions, or new businesses that turn a difficulty into an opportunity.

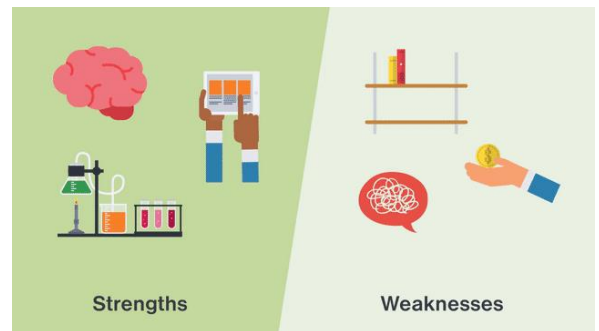


Strengths and weaknesses

In the previous step, we introduced the idea of the SWOT analysis. As a reminder, this is about taking two different perspectives on a particular situation.

Firstly, we want to think about ourselves, our teams or our organisations:

- What *strengths* do we bring to a situation that might be valuable? These might include our experiences, our skills, our attitudes or knowledge and *assets* that we have. For example, a computer, experimental equipment, or access to a factory.
- What *weaknesses* do we want to avoid? These might be gaps in any of the areas that we have already talked about. It is important to remember though that strengths and weaknesses are not fixed– we can learn new skills, build our experiences or purchase equipment if we need it.



Quick question

Consider the strengths you could bring to a team and note some of them down below.



What you need to know

Opportunities and threats

Secondly, we want to think about the situation itself:

- What are the *threats* – that is, those things that might go wrong, risks that we face, events that might unfold, or others who might end up being rivals to solve the problem that we are working on. Sometimes we avoid thinking about threats because we want to stay positive but being aware of the risks is very important for us to make the right decisions.
- Finally, what are the *opportunities* – those chances that might be positive for us. These might come from new technology, more resources becoming available or the chance to do something new. These are not always obvious, so we need to think widely about these, and perhaps talk to others with different perspectives too.

If we do this exercise well, then we should end up with a clear view on a situation and see what we can bring to it as well.

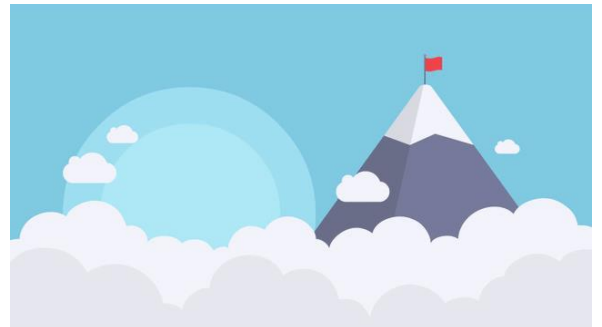


Turning analysis into new plans

Creating a new plan is an exciting thing – being able to start with a blank sheet of paper and creating something new.

The biggest trap that people fall into when creating plans is to immediately start thinking about the activity that they want to do and not thinking about what they are trying to achieve. It is essential to begin by identifying what the goals are of what you are trying to achieve. This is similar to thinking about the *success criteria* in *Creativity*.

In the same way that we cannot come up with really great ideas if we do not know what we are trying to solve, we cannot come up with plans if we don't know where we are trying to get to.





What you need to know

Different types of goals

Normally, people think in terms of two types of goals:

- *Primary goal* – this is the main thing that to achieve. For example, it might be to find a new material that is fire resistant. Or to create a much more fuel-efficient engine. Wherever possible, it is good to put a number on this, so you can see how success looks. Perhaps the material should resist a temperature of 400°C, or the engine achieve more than 100 miles per gallon of fuel.
- *Secondary goals* – these are additional goals that we also want to achieve and are similar to success criteria. For example, it might be that the new material must not be a risk to health, or must not cost too much. Perhaps the engine needs to be easily recyclable.

These goals give us our end – what we are working towards achieving.



Building a plan

We can then work backwards from here. The normal stages of a plan include:

- *Scoping and research* – understanding the problem more fully.
- *Idea creation* – developing different ideas for how the problem could be addressed or the opportunities used.
- *Testing ideas* – putting ideas into practice and seeing how they work.
- *Reviewing and improvements* – seeing whether the ideas worked in practice and how they might be improved. The cycle of testing ideas, reviewing and making improvements is likely to continue until you feel confident that you are getting towards your goals.
- *Putting into practice or production* – putting the idea into production, completing the experiments and solving the problems.





What you need to know

Being flexible

There are lots of different approaches to creating plans depending on the situation. If the environment is predictable, then we might be able to make detailed plans with dates and times of when different things will be completed, and by whom.

If the situation is changing quickly and is unpredictable, we might set goals but need to be more flexible on what we do to achieve those goals.



Situational learning examples

How to practise this skill step

To best practise this step of Staying Positive, apply what you have learnt to a real-life situation. Choose one or more of the activities below, remind yourself of the key points in the step, and have a go!

- In order to reach a personal goal – what will you need to do? Carry out the research and create an action plan to remind yourself of what you want to achieve. For example you may wish to take part in a 5km race in under a certain time limit – investigate training plans online, speak to others who run and draw up your own personal training plan to action.
- Consider where you want to be in 5 years' time. What do you want to have achieved? Create a mood board of images and words you associate with this.
- Explore planning tools and apps online that you may be able to use in education, work or at home to help you work towards your personal goals.



Reflection questions

1. How can we find opportunities in difficult situations?

2. How can we turn analysis into new plans?

3. Describe how you practised this skill in real life.

4. How might this step support you in your setting and/or beyond?

5. How confident do you feel to continue using this step in the future?

 - ☐ 1 – Not at all confident
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 – Very confident

6. Please include any other examples of when you have used this step in your life.

Step signed off by:

