



Adaptability and Flexibility Activities

The resources are meant to be downloaded and edited as necessary to meet the specific needs and/or experience level of your Participant group and/or be incorporated into other existing materials in use by your organization.

Activity 1. PAUSE Method

Adaptability can be practiced using the PAUSE method. It is a way to work through the steps necessary to plan a new approach. This method can be applied to many different situations in real-life, particularly in the workplace. Similar to a design cycle, this is an iterative process. This method helps participants to identify problems and develop next steps.

- P**ause – Pause and reflect. Stopping gives you time to think about the situation.
- A**lternatives – Make a list of alternatives and options to formulate a new approach. Think about which option is best for the situation and develop a plan.
- U**tilize – Utilize the resources, people, systems, or tools, available to help accomplish the goal.
- S**tart – Implement the new plan.
- E**valuate – Evaluate often to determine if the new approach is working. Repeat the PAUSE steps as necessary.

Set up role-playing scenarios that require participants to be adaptable. Have them work through the scenarios using the PAUSE method. The attached OOPS Cards can be used as starting points to develop scenarios.

Reflection Questions

1. How could this process be applied to your life outside of the workplace?
2. How might this process prevent conflicts?
3. How does this process move a situation forward?
4. How does this relate to the Design Cycle? [See Design Cycle](#)

Activity 2. Oops Cards

Create a set of cards that list scenarios that could derail a schedule or force a change in plans. Customize these to be relevant to something the participants are involved with. Ask participants how they would adapt to the new set of circumstances. Here are some examples.

Wednesday, the copier runs out of toner. None will arrive until Monday.	The person in charge of a specific key task has been in a car accident and will be off of work for a month.	You are supposed to drive the carpool with two other coworkers, but now your car has a dead battery.	You reach a difficult hurdle with your project. Half the group wants to scrap it and start over again with a new idea.
An ice storm hits. Your building suffers a power outage that may last several days.	There should be eight people working with you. Three have come down with the flu.	The director of your non-profit has requested that you give an informational speech about the organization to a local community group.	A co-worker has pointed out that you may be infringing on several copyrights with the materials you are using in a presentation.
Coffee spills on important documents/electronics you are using.	A person you were counting on never shows up.	The boss adds three additional assignments to your already long To Do List.	Key materials that you planned to utilize have been discontinued.
Ice damage on the roof causes the ceiling to collapse. Your workspace is no longer usable.	Your computer crashed.	You thought you had until Friday to complete your work. Now the boss wants it by Wednesday.	A tool you need for your work is missing.

Reflection Questions

1. What feelings did you have when you first read your Oops Card?
2. What additional ways did you come up with to solve the problem before you settled on one?
3. What are some Oops problems you have personally solved?
4. When is adaptability and flexibility important?

Activity 3. How to Scenarios

In this activity, groups are to come up with three or four very DIFFERENT ways to approach one of the following. Have groups write a summary of each plan and who would be responsible for various aspects of the plan. Then ask the groups to select the plan they think would be most successful.

- a. Remove a rabbit from a vegetable garden.
- b. Create a break area for employees that is outdoors.
- c. Capture a runaway dog.
- d. Organize a messy closet.
- e. Inventory supplies.
- f. Create a film about recycling.
- g. Find a storage solution for sports equipment.
- h. Plan an adoption day for a local animal shelter.

Reflection Questions

1. What frustrations did you encounter?
2. What positive experiences occurred?
3. How does this apply to real-life situations?

Activity 4. Flexi-Word Game

The goal of this activity is to spell as many words as possible. This works best in pairs or groups of three. Give each player a blank 5 x 5 grid. Words can be formed both horizontally and vertically. The first player calls out a letter and all players enter that anywhere in their grid. Players do not let the others see their grids. The next player calls out a letter and all players enter that letter. Continue play until all the boxes on the grid are filled. While players may begin with a plan for spelling out words, they must be constantly flexible to change plans as new letters are called out.

Scoring - Look for words in both the horizontal rows and vertical columns. You may only score the longest word for each column or row. In the example below, SPOT is scored, but POT would not gain additional points.

Three letter words = 3 pts.

Four letter words = 4 pts.

Five letter words = 10 pts.

S	T	A	R	T
P	I	C	K	Y
O	U	T	B	P
T	J	B	N	E
N	E	T	F	S

Horizontal words: start, picky, out, and net score a total of 26 points.

Vertical words: spot, act, and types score a total of 17 points.

Grand total: 43 points.

Reflection Questions

1. What was your original plan for filling in the squares?
2. How did letters called out by others change your plan?
3. What did you do to insure flexibility within your word choice or letter selection?
4. What would you do differently?
5. How does this concept apply to your work situation?

Activity 5. Focus on Feedback

Divide into pairs. Give each pair a Focus on Feedback card. Ask them to come up with one or multiple ways to respond to the question listed.

A customer demands a discount. You refuse to give it because that is the company policy. Your supervisor says you should have contacted her to make the decision. Another customer requests a discount, but your supervisor is unavailable. What do you do?	You like to work under pressure and always accomplish your goal at the last minute. Co-workers share with you that this stresses them out. What can you do to adapt?	You complete a report. Your supervisor returns it and asks for changes. You are not certain what to change. What should you do?
You have gathered supplies for an event. After your supervisor has looked at the completed inventory, she tells you this is not what she had in mind. How do you handle this?	Your supervisor says there have been customer complaints that you seem uninterested in their needs. What can you do to adapt?	Your supervisor tells you there have been some complaints about how you interact with co-workers. He says others feel that you are quick-tempered. What can you do?
During your annual review, your supervisor feels you are able to handle more responsibility. How do you respond?	You created a checklist for a procedure that improves the accuracy of the data you collect. Your supervisor wants you to teach others in the department. What is your next step?	You sense that some of your co-workers have a lot more background knowledge about the project than you have. What can you do?
You created a new bagel topping at the shop where you work. You always eat it for your lunch, but also started offering it to some of your regular customers. They loved it. What should you do now?	A customer approaches you and raves about how customer service has improved over the last few months. You feel really good about yourself, but know many others have worked hard also. What can you do to communicate this?	Your boss sees how you finished the woodwork trim in a house your company is building. He says that it shows you care about craftsmanship. You know you cut corners on your work Friday to get done early. What do you do now?
Your supervisor witnessed your participation in a safety violation. He warned you this can be grounds for dismissal. You know other workers have done the same thing. What do you do when this situation comes up again?	You work in a hospital lab. One doctor comes to you with a concern that another doctor's patients have been given priority over all others. What should you do with this information?	You are an aide for a special needs student. You put together some materials that have really helped your student achieve some goals. Now the art, music, and PE teachers are asking you to prepare some materials to help the same student in their classrooms. What do you do?

Reflection Questions

1. What first came into your mind when you read the card?
2. How did you justify your response to the situation?
3. When have you experienced a comparable situation? How did you handle it?

Crosswalk of Performance Indicators and Activities for Adaptability and Flexibility

Performance Indicator	Activity 1 PAUSE Method	Activity 2 OOPS Cards	Activity 3 How to Scenarios	Activity 4 Flexi-Words	Activity 5 Focus on Feedback
Embraces new ideas and approaches when opportunity arises			X	X	
Seeks opportunities to improve processes and accomplish goals	X		X		
Effectively changes plans, goals, actions, and priorities to deal with changing situations	X	X		X	X
Reflects on and modifies own work behaviors based on feedback	X	X			X
Asks questions in the face of ambiguity to gain clarity and identify next steps	X	X			

Other Competencies Addressed in Adaptability and Flexibility Activities

Refer to Index for a full list of Performance Indicators in each activity

Competency	Activity 1 PAUSE Method	Activity 2 OOPS Cards	Activity 3 How to Scenario s	Activity 4 Flexi-Wor ds	Activity 5 Focus on Feedback
Working with Others					
Teamwork and Conflict Resolution	X	X	X		X
Cultural Competence					
Communication					
The Thought Process					
Problem Solving	X	X	X		X
Decision Making					
Critical Thinking					

Self- Regulation					
Initiative and Self-Drive		X			
Reliability and Accountability					
Planning and Organizing					