

Bad Day Do-Over

What to Know

Bad days happen and everyone has them! They can be caused by many different reasons, but sometimes the negative experiences you face in a day can snowball too fast. It's important not to get stuck in a cycle of negativity when you have a bad day. To get through a bad day, do a few simple things. One thing you can do is tell yourself you need a "do-over." A do-over is an opportunity to do something again or repeat it—especially when it did not turn out well the first time. Here are some other tips to get through a bad day.

- 1. Change your environment.** If you can, remove yourself from the environment that's stressing you out. For example, if upsetting things are happening in the school cafeteria, take your lunch to an empty classroom. If you're in class, ask for permission to go to the bathroom. Do whatever you need to do to remove yourself from the situation. This strategy works because science tells us our surroundings affect how we feel. So, when you change your surroundings, you may change how you feel.
- 2. Take a time-out.** A short walk can calm you down. Ask your teacher for a hall pass to take a 5-minute break to quietly walk the hallways. If your bad day strikes when you're somewhere other than in class (like in the cafeteria during lunch time), take a quick walk without a pass (follow your school rules, of course). Silently count your steps when you take stress-walks, "1...2...3...4...," to refocus.
- 3. Listen to music or a calming podcast.** Schools have different policies about using headphones, but if you're allowed, put in earbuds to decompress and escape the bad-day-feelings. Even listening to one song on your way to class can be enough to reduce stress. If you can't do this between class, spend a few minutes in the restroom listening to something that will soothe you and positively impact your mental state.
- 4. Find support.** Sometimes a bad day is too much to handle by yourself. Seek out a trusted person to help you cope, like a teacher, coach, guidance counselor, social worker, or teacher's aide. Choose someone that can offer a non-judgmental ear, objective advice, and a clear perspective. If your bad day results in physical symptoms of distress—a rapid heart rate, sweating, breathing problems, or racing thoughts—go to the nurse's office.

5. Remember to breathe. Sometimes when you feel stressed, sad, mad, or anxious, your breath may be shallow as you breathe into the upper part of your chest. If you notice this, close your eyes, and picture a place that makes you happy and calm (like your bedroom, the beach, the woods, etc.). Take at least three big belly breaths—inhaling through your nose, pulling your breath down into your stomach, and exhaling all the air out. Imagine your stomach is like a balloon. When you breathe deeply it tells your brain everything is going to be okay.

No matter how bad your day is, you can have a do-over. A better day is right around the corner. You can handle whatever comes your way—even if you need some help.

What to Do

Think about what a bad day looks like for you. Imagine what supports you need from friends or grownups, and brainstorm some coping skills you can use. Fill in the following statements.

When you have a bad day, it looks like:

Actions:

Emotions:

Body Sensations:

Thoughts:

Other: _____

To re-do your bad day, you need:

Coping Skills:

Places You Can Go:

Trusted Friends and Adults That Can Help You:

Other: _____

Now, imagine you get a do-over. What would your day look like? Be specific.
