

Do You Want Things to Be Different?

What to Know

Sometimes you might want things to be different. This might involve a situation at home or a problem you're having at school. You can make things go better and make a change by breaking patterns. The following seven steps can help things go differently. Follow these steps.

1. Think about the things you do in a problem situation. Is there something you can change about the situation, like the timing, what you say, the location, or the order you do things in? Here is an example.

Charlie frequently gets angry at his classmates. He uses words to threaten them and invades their space while yelling and swearing. Charlie will be suspended from school if he doesn't make some changes. He decides to make things better by following Step 1. When he's mad, he talks quietly instead of yelling. He doesn't feel as mad - and he didn't get in trouble. Charlie then decided when he's mad, he won't invade his classmates' space. That helped, and they didn't hit him or yell at him. Finally, Charlie knew it would be helpful to stand next to his teacher's desk when he was really angry. That way, he wouldn't be tempted to lash out.

What will you do? Think of a time things didn't go well for you. When did that happen? What part of that problem situation can you do differently in the future?

2. Think of something that somebody else does that makes the problem better. Try doing what they do the next time the problem comes up or think of something you've done in the past that made things go better. Here is another example.

Charlie noticed when Tom gets angry, Tom doesn't get mad and instead, he says something nice in response. When someone called Tom a mean name, Tom said, "You're just saying that to make me feel good!" Charlie decided to plan some silly things to say the next time someone makes him mad. When he uses a silly saying, he feels less angry! Charlie started ignoring other kids' comments to him. Charlie remembered one time when he got angry, he sat at his desk and scribbled on a piece of paper instead of yelling. This also helped him stay out of trouble.

What will you do? Think of something that somebody else does that makes things go better. What is the person's name and what do they do that you will try?

Think of something you've done in the past that helped make things better. What did you do that you will do next time?

3. Feelings give you information. Understand what your feelings are - but don't let them determine your actions. Let your brain decide your actions. Feelings can be great advisors but poor masters. Advisors give you information and help you know what to do. Masters don't give you choices. Here is an example.

Charlie feels frustrated when he can't solve a problem. When his feelings control his behavior, he throws his books, yells, or gives up. He decided to let his feelings be his advisor instead of his master. He let his feelings give him information - without controlling him. Now when he feels frustrated, he uses that feeling as information that lets him know he can:

- ask for help.
- skip the question and come back to it later.
- take a break and come back to it later.
- re-read the directions.
- do as much as he can and go on to the next problem.

- read a book to search for the answer.

What will you do? Think of a feeling that used to get you into trouble, like anger or frustration. What feeling do you want to stop getting you into trouble?

What information is that feeling telling you? What does the feeling suggest you should do that would help things go better?

4. Change your focus. What you pay attention to will become bigger in your life and you will notice it more and more. When you have a problem, try changing your focus. Here is an example.

Charlie gets distracted in class when other students are talking. He looks around the class at everyone talking, and he never seems to get his schoolwork done. One day he decided to change his focus. When he stopped looking around the class and kept looking straight at his paper on his desk, he got a lot more work done!

What will you do? Think of something you're focusing on too much. What gets you into trouble when you focus on it?

What will you focus on instead that will *not* get you into trouble?

5. Imagine a future time when you're not having the problem you're having now. Work backwards to figure out what you can do now to make that future come true. Here is an example.

Charlie has trouble getting along with classmates at school. To solve this problem, he thought about what he wanted things to be like in the future. He imagined that he has friends and he gets along with almost everyone at school. Charlie worked backwards to figure out what he would have done to get to that point. He imagined he would probably talk respectfully to others, follow directions, smile more, and use friendly words. He decided to try it, and it made a big difference. He can't change how others talk to him by flipping a switch, but when he changed how he was talking to them they changed the way they talked to him!

What will you do? Think of what will be different for you in the future when things are going better. How will things be different?

Think of one thing you would be doing differently before things could go better in the future. What will you do?

6. Change your story. Talk about times when the problem wasn't happening and what you were doing then. You can't control other people, but you can change what you're doing and that might change what others do. Here is another example.

Charlie used to talk about how all the kids in his class picked on him and made him angry. Whenever someone asked him why he got into fights, he would talk about what the other students did to him to "make him mad." Charlie decided to change his story. He stopped focusing on what others did that made him angry. Instead, he talked about times when students picked on him and he walked away. He talked about times when classmates tried to upset him, and he just smiled like they said something nice to him.

What will you do? Think of a time when you were not having the problem that is bothering you. Write about that time.

7. Use action talk to make things better. Action talk sticks to the facts and focuses on the things you can see. Action talk doesn't include what you believe the other person is thinking or feeling because you don't know that. When you complain, only talk about the action you don't like. When you make a request, talk about what action you want the person to do. When you praise someone, talk about what action you liked. Here are some examples.

- "I feel angry when you talk while I'm talking."
- "I'm upset right now. Can we talk about this later?"
- "Thank you for waiting to talk until I was finished."

What will you do? Complain about someone cheating using action talk.

Make a request using action talk.

Tell someone you appreciate them using action talk.
