

Bouncing Back: Understanding and Overcoming Setbacks

What to Know

Setbacks are a normal part of life, especially as you grow and face new challenges. Sometimes, things might not go as planned—maybe you don't do well on a test, lose a game, or have an argument with a friend. Setbacks are not failures—they are just obstacles that give you a chance to learn, grow, and become stronger.

What is a setback? A setback is an event or situation that interrupts your progress or pushes you backward. Setbacks can be big or small and affect different parts of your life. Remember that everyone experiences them, and they don't define your worth or capabilities.

What to Do

Write down three setbacks you have experienced recently. In the second column, note how each one made you feel.

| Setback | How did you feel? |
|---------|-------------------|
| #1 | |
| #2 | |
| #3 | |

Setbacks can stir up many emotions, such as disappointment, frustration, or even anger. It's completely normal to feel this way. Understanding and acknowledging your emotions can help you manage them more effectively.

Review the setbacks you wrote down. Describe in detail the emotions associated with each one.

#1

#2

#3

Here are some examples of common setbacks teens may experience.

Setback: Receiving a Poor Grade

Immediate Emotions: Disappointment, frustration, sadness.

Secondary Emotions: Doubt about abilities, anxiety about future performance.

Long-Term Emotions: Motivation to improve, acceptance of the outcome, or continued feelings of inadequacy.

Setback: Experiencing a Breakup

Immediate Emotions: Heartbreak, shock, denial.

Secondary Emotions: Loneliness, longing, anger, or betrayal.

Long-Term Emotions: Resilience, growth in personal strength, possibly lingering sadness, or improved emotional insight.

Setback: Losing a Competition (sports, academics, etc.)

Immediate Emotions: Disappointment, envy (toward winners), embarrassment.

Secondary Emotions: Reflection on personal effort, criticism of own performance.

Long-Term Emotions: Increased determination, acceptance, or reduced self-esteem.

For each setback you noted above, write a brief description below. List any emotions you can think of related to each setback. Draw a line connecting each setback to the emotions you felt. Notice if different setbacks cause similar emotions.

| Setback | Emotions |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| #1 _____ | _____ _____ _____ |
| #2 _____ | _____ _____ _____ |
| #3 _____ | _____ _____ _____ |

Every setback has a lesson. Finding out what you can learn from each setback turns a negative experience into a valuable lesson that prepares you for future challenges. For each setback, write down one thing you learned from it. Then, write down how this lesson can help you in similar situations in the future.

| Setback | One thing you learned | How will this help you in the future? |
|----------------|------------------------------|--|
| #1 | | |
| #2 | | |
| #3 | | |

Developing strategies to handle setbacks can make you more resilient and confident. Some strategies include setting realistic goals, creating a support system, and practicing positive thinking.

Create a plan for the next time you encounter a setback. Include:

- Who you will talk to for support
- What positive affirmations will help you stay motivated
- Steps you will take to tackle the problem

Who will you talk to? _____

Positive Affirmations

Steps to Manage the Setback

Anticipating that setbacks might happen helps you prepare mentally and emotionally, reducing their impact. It doesn't mean expecting the worst but rather being prepared to face challenges head-on.

Imagine two scenarios where things might not go as planned. Write down how you can prepare for these situations, both mentally and practically.

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Scenario #1 | Describe how you will prepare: |
| Scenario #2 | Describe how you will prepare: |

Remember, experiencing setbacks is a part of growing up. Understanding and learning from them can turn each setback into a step forward on your journey. Keep this worksheet as a reminder of your strategies, and refer to it whenever you face new challenges. You are capable of bouncing back stronger every time!

Reflections on This Exercise

Did anything surprise you about this activity? If so, describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
