

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

Bending, Not Breaking: Teaching Kids Cognitive Flexibility

Cognitive flexibility helps kids adapt when plans change instead of melting down. Use these questions to connect, reflect, and grow together.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Cognitive flexibility is the ability to shift gears, try a new way, and keep going even when things don't go as planned.



1. KNOWING OUR FEELINGS

- What was one time today when your plans changed?
- How did that change make you feel?
- What did you do with that feeling?

2. MANAGING BIG FEELINGS

- What helps you calm down when you feel upset or frustrated?
- What can you do when things don't go your way?
- How can we help each other when it feels hard to "bend"?

3. UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

- How do you think your friend or sibling feels when plans change?
- What are some clues that help you know how someone else is feeling?
- How can we show kindness when someone is having a hard time adjusting?

4. MAKING GOOD CHOICES

- What choices can you make when Plan A doesn't work out?
- What's another way you could try solving a problem?
- How do you decide when to try something new?

5. GROWING TOGETHER

- What's one way you practiced being flexible this week?
- What helped you bend instead of break?
- How can we keep helping each other grow our "bendy brains"?

TRY THIS TOGETHER



Share a time when a plan changed—what happened next?



Role-play Plan B for a situation that might change.



Take turns saying one thing you appreciate about each other.



Make a "Bend, Don't Break" poster or reminder to keep somewhere you'll see it!



REMEMBER
Strong trees don't resist the wind—they bend and keep growing. Every time we practice flexibility together, we build stronger brains, stronger connections, and more resilience for life.



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology



Understanding minds.



Strengthening connections.