

# TEACHER HANDOUT

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## SUPPORTING AND IMPROVING SAMPLE CLIENT'S FLEXIBILITY

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Teacher ratings of Sample's skills suggest difficulties with flexibility in their behaviors or problem-solving. An important part of flexibility is being able to move easily from one topic or activity to another. Lack of flexibility may lead to emotional upset when change in routine occurs.



### BUILD UNDERSTANDING

It's important to understand that Sample's difficulties with flexibility are brain-based and not due to personal choice or willful behavior. People with inflexible thinking may often be misunderstood as “stubborn” or “defiant,” but in fact it is hard for them to adapt to change. They may find it difficult to accept feedback, stop correcting people, accept disappointment, adjust to a change in routine, think of a new way to do something, start or stop doing something, or let others take the lead.

There are also strengths that come with inflexible thinking. For example, people who are less flexible may often be good at sticking with ideas and tasks, even when others lose interest. They can study subjects or skills intensely and for a long time. Since they may be good at focusing on details, they can develop expertise and knowledge. Inflexible people may also be less likely to be affected by peer pressure and more likely to stand up for what is right, even if that takes courage. Look for these strengths in Sample and reinforce them when you see them.



### PROVIDE SUPPORTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

There are many simple things that you and Sample can do in school to reduce demands for flexibility. Research suggests that these supports may be helpful. Working with Sample's parents to implement them across settings may be most effective.

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## **Be predictable.**

- Stick to a consistent schedule. It may be helpful to have a visual or written schedule available as a reminder.
- Give advance notice when something will change, such as a planned absence of a parent or teacher, a field trip, or a change in schedule.
- Don't interrupt Sample with an immediate demand that they stop what they are doing or switch to a new activity. Instead, provide 5-, 3-, and 1-minute warnings. Use a countdown clock if needed.
- Have clear, consistent, and written rules about what behaviors are expected.

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## TEACH SKILLS AND PROVIDE INTERVENTIONS

Once Sample has these supports in place, they can learn and practice new self-directed approaches to improve flexibility. Many adolescents who are inflexible find it difficult to control their emotions and their thoughts. As a result, many methods of improving flexibility also include ways to recognize and cope with strong feelings.

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**Model and reinforce flexible thinking.** It is helpful for Sample to see adults share a common language about flexible thinking. Use words like “flexible,” “stuck,” “what is our plan B?”, and “compromise” to help them handle challenges. For example, when you run into an unexpected event (fire drill, power outage), say that you need to be flexible and ask Sample for their help coming up with a plan B.

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## FUNCTIONAL GOALS

Below are examples of functional goals that can be used in individualized education program (IEP), 504, or other intervention plans. Many of the goals are written to highlight the type of support and/or the personnel needed to provide the support to Sample, in addition to the specific behavior.

- Given visual cues, extensive practice, and faded cuing, Sample will manage violations of their expectations or schedule without disrupting classroom activities.

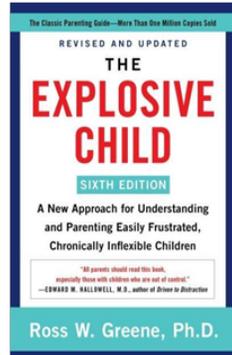
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## RESOURCES



<https://www.harpercollins.com/products/the-explosive-child-sixth-edition-ross-w-greene?variant=39314539905058>

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