



The one thing you can always expect in life is that things will change. Being flexible allows us to adapt to changes without getting bent out of shape.




Palm trees have strong roots but a flexible trunk that allows them to bend instead of breaking in the wind. People need flexibility in order to adjust and thrive during the changes that life brings. At work, a task may take longer than expected, plans may not materialize, the direction or goal you are working toward may change, or a coworker may not deliver as promised. These changes can improve your flexibility and give you the opportunity to pitch in and help, or they can discourage or break you. Developing your knowledge and skills can help you overcome challenges and grow in the process.

**Opposite:** hardness, brittleness, breakable, stiff, inflexibility, intractable, stubborn, obstinate

**Related Concepts:** resilience, give, liveness, plasticity, pliability, suppleness, adjustable, able to change, able to grow and develop

**Summary:** Able to change



*“The ability to recognize opportunities  
and move in new – and sometimes  
unexpected – directions will benefit you  
no matter your interests or aspirations.”*

—Drew Gilpin Faust

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**Drew Gilpin Faust** (Born September 18, 1947) Catharine Drew Gilpin Faust is an American historian, college administrator and the President of Harvard University. Faust is the first woman to serve as Harvard's president and the university's 28th president overall (Wikipedia).

**Other Flexibility Quotes:**

“You must always be able to predict what's next and then have the flexibility to evolve.” – Marc Benioff

“Let no one think that flexibility and a predisposition to compromise is a sign of weakness or a sell-out.” – Paul Kagame

“The boldness of asking deep questions may require unforeseen flexibility if we are to accept the answers.” – Brian Greene

“Very few conflicts in the history of the world have been satisfactorily concluded according to a published timetable, because you lose all flexibility in dealing with your opponents.” – William Hague

“Two things I'm trying to work on are openness and flexibility”. – Lili Taylor

“Competitiveness demands flexibility, choice and openness...” – David Cameron

“The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.” – Albert Einstein

“That which yields is not always weak.” – Jacqueline Carey

“The human capacity for burden is like bamboo- far more flexible than you'd ever believe at first glance.” – Jodi Picoult

“If you're not stubborn, you'll give up on experiments too soon. And if you're not flexible, you'll pound your head against the wall and you won't see a different solution to a problem you're trying to solve.” – Jeff Bezos

“Music may be the activity that prepared our pre-human ancestors for speech communication and for the very cognitive, representational flexibility necessary to become humans.” – Daniel J. Levitin

“I want to caution you against the idea that balance has to be a routine that looks the same week in and week out.” – Kevin Thoman

“We are stubborn on vision. We are flexible on details...” – Jeff Bezos

“Flexibility is a requirement for survival.” – Roger Von Oech

“A guarantee in this life: Change! Flexibility is better than predictability!” – Evinda Lepins

“There can be no life without change, and to be afraid of what is different or unfamiliar is to be afraid of life.” – Theodore Roosevelt

“The unexpected is our normal routine.” – Commander William Riker, “The Outrageous Okona,” *Star Trek: The Next Generation (1988)*

“Many or few alternatives can be at hand. A wise and skillful choice acts from a sincere effort. Solutions and results come from cooperation, hard work and efficiency. With high intention matched with a flexible, patient heart and proficient action gets best quality and value.” – Angelica Hopes

“Human nature is water, not stone.” – Marty Rubin

“Have the capacity to adapt to change, it's your healthy growth, intelligently and emotionally. Our life can be full of extrinsic surprises, your flexibility is a key when you accept changes.” – Angelica Hopes

“Methodology must be flexible. Companies often don't adopt the materials & methods they were trained on because they aren't flexible enough.” – Brian Lawley

“Yielding flexibility is a virtue of an ever-expanding heart.” – Molly Friedenfeld

“Intelligence is the handmaiden of flexibility and change.” – Vernor Vinge

“Planning is helpful. If you don't know what you want, you'll seldom get it. But, no matter how well you plan, you will fare better if you expect the unexpected. The unexpected, by nature, comes unseen, unthought, unenvisioned. All you can do is plan to go unplanned, prepare to be unprepared, make going with the flow part of your agenda, for the most successful among us envision, plan, and prepare, but cast all aside as needed, while those who are unable to go with the flow often suffer, if they survive.” – David W. Jones



# 1. Anticipate Change

Prepare yourself for the possibility of change.

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Human nature tends to fear what it cannot control. If you mentally prepare yourself for the possibility of change, you will have a better chance to respond positively. Anticipate that change will occur, make plans, invest in relationships, and develop the character to respond constructively when change comes.



## 2. Roll With The Punches

Get back up when you're knocked down and keep on going.

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Life is full of twists and turns. Your ability to remain effective depends on your ability to roll with the punches, get back up when you've been knocked down, and keep on truckin' when things get challenging. Positive people help ease the process of change and make it more pleasant for everyone.



### 3. Recover and Rebuild

Recognize the opportunities  
that change brings.

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Don't be a victim of circumstances. Recognize the opportunities that change brings. Change can help you find new methods and refine your goals. Maintain a good attitude through the process and willingly tackle your new challenges, and you will grow.

# Discussion Starters

1. Why do you think people tend to fear change?
2. What does it mean to “roll with the punches”?
3. How can rebuilding after change help you find new and better ways of doing things?

## **Additional Flexibility Discussion Starters:**

Why does expecting change help you prepare for it?

What is one of the biggest and most challenging changes you had to deal with? What did you do?

How can strong relationships help you deal with change?

When was a time when life knocked you down and you had to get back up and dust yourself off and keep on going? How did it make you feel after you were able to make it through?

How can you ease the process of change for people with whom you work?

Who is someone you know who has helped you deal with change? What did they do that helped you?

When have you had to rebuild after change? What were some of the new challenges you faced?

How can flexibility help you be happier when you leave work and return home?

How can you help and encourage others when change happens?

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