

Defining Agility

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn three different ways to apply your agility skill centered around anticipation, adaptation, and recovery.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Anticipating New Opportunities
2. Adapting to Unexpected Events
3. Recovering from Setbacks
 - a. Managing Stress



BEFORE YOU START

Think about an aspect of your life that seems to be constantly in motion. Maybe it's something that changes on a daily, weekly, or annual basis. How do you usually cope with the change?

Agility is the ability to embrace change and effectively pivot when things around you are constantly in motion. There are three basic ways that you can apply your agility skill at work, school, and home:

- Anticipate a change that's about to happen.
- Adapt to change that's in the here and now.
- Recover from a failed opportunity.

1. Anticipating New Opportunities

One component of your agility skill is the ability to recognize opportunities that are on the horizon and to make a change because of them. Maybe you learned about a new job that your company will soon be posting and you're interested in applying. Perhaps your family is growing and your house no longer meets your needs—you notice interest rates are low, so you shop for a new home and eventually make an offer on one. Whenever you take advantage of a growth opportunity to drive a change in your life, you're practicing agility.

Read the following example and answer the question beneath it.



➦ **EXAMPLE** Gigi is a high school senior who is planning to attend a traditional four-year college in the fall. She's already been accepted to the school she wants, but, admittedly, money is tight. Gigi isn't entirely sure how she will pay for the first few years. Months before college starts, she receives a flyer in the mail that says her new campus will be converting to 100% online learning in the fall. Gigi wonders if she'll still get the full college experience attending online classes from her dorm room. The flyer has Gigi questioning whether she's made the right decision about attending a traditional campus in person during her first year.



THINK ABOUT IT

Gigi is anticipating that school might be different than expected in the fall. Given her financial situation, what is one opportunity that she might pursue after receiving the flyer?

Upon receiving the flyer, Gigi might pivot and take college classes from the comfort of her family's home instead of campus. That way, she could save on dormitory expenses. She might even decide to attend a different online university that is more affordable and just as reputable as the one she originally selected.

When you alter the current path you're on by anticipating future events, you're exercising your agility skill. Having foresight is important so you can switch to the path that suits you best.

2. Adapting to Unexpected Events

There are times when we don't see change coming and it takes us by surprise. Maybe your manager moves up a deadline on a critical project. Or perhaps your car breaks down unexpectedly on the side of the highway. Unexpected events take place in the here and now and force us to use our agility skill to adapt quickly to new circumstances.

Read the following example and answer the question beneath it.

➤ **EXAMPLE** In March 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, several beer and spirits makers shifted their production from alcohol for consumption to hand sanitizers (i.e., alcohol for disinfecting). Through an act of social responsibility, the companies made the pivot in order to serve hospitals, first responders, and police departments around the country that depend on hand sanitizers to ward off the spreading virus (Furnari, 2020).



THINK ABOUT IT

Think about the last time that you had to pivot on a moment's notice. What caused you to change course? What was the outcome? If it were to happen again, would you handle the situation the same or differently?

If change catches you off guard, try to recall the traits of agile people. Do your best to remain optimistic, open-minded, and proactive. As the previous example shows, the kind of change that you're capable of just might surprise you.

3. Recovering from Setbacks

The last component of your agility skill is the ability to recover from setbacks or failure. If you experience a setback, try to focus on what you could have done better rather than ruminating about the setback itself. Being agile is sometimes an iterative learning experience.

Read the following example and answer the question beneath it.



➤ **EXAMPLE** Iris works as a claims adjuster for a major insurance company. Customers call her to file their automobile claims like traffic accidents and weather-related damage. She usually pays close attention

to details, but today is a little different. She discovered that she overpaid on her last claim by over \$800 due to a company code that she entered incorrectly in the computer. Upon discovering the error, Iris put her palm to her forehead, closed her eyes, and let out a long sigh. After collecting her thoughts, she reached out to her manager, and together they phoned the overpaid client to let them know about the oversight.



TRY IT

Which of these would be an agile way for Iris to recover from what just occurred?

1. Refrain from telling fellow claims adjusters to avoid embarrassment.
2. Call the technology department to inquire why the codes are so confusing.
3. Leave work early so she can address the problem later on with a clear head.
4. Determine which code she entered incorrectly and why the error occurred.

The correct answer is 4.

Iris should focus on what she could have done better and try getting to the bottom of the error. It would be beneficial for her to share her experience with other adjusters because they might have useful tips or know more about the error. In time, Iris may call the technology department for help, but she should certainly not look to lay blame. Finally, it's usually best to deal with problems directly rather than avoiding them—leaving work early is a poor decision because it only delays the inevitable.

Recovering from a setback can be difficult, but realize that everyone makes mistakes. Treat each setback as a learning experience so that you're being **forward-thinking** rather than criticizing yourself unnecessarily.



TERM TO KNOW

Forward-Thinking

Planning for the future.

3a. Managing Stress

Humans tend to be creatures of habit, so it's natural for any kind of change to cause people **stress**. (We saw how Iris became subtly stressed in the previous example.) Stress can trigger a number of health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and weight fluctuations. Fortunately, there are several techniques you can use to manage your stress levels during times of change or after setbacks:

- Eat healthy.
- Avoid consuming alcohol or caffeinated drinks.
- Avoid smoking.
- Exercise.
- Every 25 minutes, break for 5 minutes as you work.
- Meditate.
- Go easy on yourself.
- Get more sleep.



DID YOU KNOW

The amount of sleep you need changes as you age. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC), an adult between the ages of 18-60 needs 7 or more hours of sleep per night.

You'll be in a better position to develop your agility skill if you're taking good care of your physical, mental, and emotional health. The reverse can also hold true. That is, learning adaptation strategies can help reduce your level of worry in certain situations. You'll see some of these strategies in the next lesson.



TERM TO KNOW

Stress

Physical, mental, or emotional strain, often caused by demanding circumstances.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned several ways to apply your agility skill. You saw how agility can help you **anticipate new opportunities** by looking ahead and planning for what's to come. You also discovered that **adapting to unexpected events** is an important component of your agility skill because we don't always see when change is coming. Finally, you know that **recovering from a setback** is rarely easy, but being agile gives you the tools you need to look ahead and avoid self-criticizing. Try to use techniques for **managing stress** during times of change to keep yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally balanced.

REFERENCES

Furnari, Chris. (2020, March 25). *With Sanitizer In Short Supply, Alcohol Producers Pivot To Battle Coronavirus Pandemic*. Forbes.

www.forbes.com/sites/chrisfurnari/2020/03/25/with-sanitizer-in-short-supply-alcohol-producers-pivot-to-battle-coronavirus-pandemic/?sh=646d336571f2



ATTRIBUTIONS

- [How Much Sleep Do I Need?](#) | Author: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | License: Public Domain



TERMS TO KNOW

Forward-thinking

Planning for the future.

Stress

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