Plans for Coping

Why Children Need a Backup Plan

When children feel bad or sad, it is easy for them to feel helpless and to believe that the situation is hopeless. Sometimes, when something happens that makes kids feel bad, they may have to try two or three coping strategies - and keep trying - before they feel better. Complicated situations can't be changed right away, and bad moods don't go away in an instant, so it is important for kids to keep trying different solutions until they find the right combination of coping skills to make them feel better.

Your child has been working to identify his or her three favourite coping skills to use when he or she feels bad. Using only one of these skills may not be enough to solve a challenging problem or to turn bad feelings into good feelings. So, it's important for your child to try all three of his or her favourite skills – Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C – whenever he or she is trying to solve a problem and feel better. Your child should keep trying these plans one at a time until the problem is solved and he or she feels better. In other words, if Plan A fails, your child will move to Plan B, and then to Plan C, and keep trying until he or she feels better!

How Can I Help?

For some children who face problems and begin to feel bad, it can be hard to try even one coping plan, and it can be tempting just to give up if the first plan doesn't work. You can help your child by learning what his or her three favourite coping skills are and then making sure that he or she uses those skills, rather than giving up too soon. When your child is feeling bad, encourage him or her to try his or her favourite coping skill – that is, Plan A. Make sure that he or she has really given Plan A a good try. If Plan A doesn't solve the problem and your child still feels bad, then encourage your child to try Plan B, and then Plan C, if necessary. The basic idea is not to give up, but instead to keep trying until some progress has been made and your child feels at least somewhat better.