

## Learn to stop and think

When a problem happens, the best thing to do is stop and don't rush into doing or saying something you might regret. Try imagining a red traffic light telling you to stop. **Take a few deep breaths.** The red turns to amber, which is the next step – **planning** the most sensible things to say and do next. Keep taking some deep breaths. Imagine the light turning green...GO....with your plan.

## Remind yourself what to do

When you first start using these ideas, it is easy to keep slipping back into old ways, letting your feelings take over etc. You need some ways to remind yourself what to do. Have a look at the following examples.

**Mike gets into trouble for being very fidgety in his class.** He decided to sit on his hands to stop himself. But he often forgot, so he agreed with his teacher that she would lightly touch his shoulder to remind him.

**Jules was always in trouble with her parents for having such an untidy room.** Even when she remembered, she still couldn't seem to get it properly tidy. So she made a list of all the things that she had to do. She used this to get her room really neat every time, and yay! her parents started her pocket money again!

**Simeon had a problem with his temper.** It was so bad that he had been suspended from school for fighting. He knew he should just walk away, but couldn't seem to help staying to argue. He asked his best mate to help. They agreed the mate would say 'bail out' to him, whenever he was losing it. This would be a signal to Simeon to stop, walk away and calm down. It took a while, but eventually, he learnt to deal with things much better.

## Dealing with Chronic Fatigue (CFS/ME) in Young People

# Solving problems



When we deal with something badly, it is a good idea to think it over afterwards.

This leaflet will help you in your understanding of problems and how best to deal with them.

Every day, we face challenges and problems, such as:

- Being unfairly told off by a teacher
- Trying to sit still and concentrate
- Dealing with an annoying brother or sister
- Negotiating with parents for a late night

There are lots of ways we could deal with a problem, and we have to find the best way.

With thanks to Professor Paul Stallard, The University of Bath, for his original work, from which this has been adapted.

This is one of a series of information leaflets on managing CFS/ME in children and young people. These are also available on our website at [www.rnhrd.nhs.uk](http://www.rnhrd.nhs.uk).

For more information on our service, please contact Heather Hill on **01225 473425** at the Specialist Paediatric Chronic Fatigue/ME Service, Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (NHS Foundation Trust), Upper Borough Walls, Bath BA1 1RL.

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## Why do problems happen?

Here are three of the most common reasons:

- **acting without thinking**
- **feelings take over (remember the importance of feelings and taking control of them, not letting them control you)**
- **you can't think of any other solutions**

We can get very fixed in our ways and stop thinking about other ways of doing things.

Here are some examples:

**Ged's friend pops in to see how he is feeling and if he wants to go out.** Ged is having a good day, so he says yes, forgetting he has already used his energy for that day and is supposed to be relaxing.

**Tash heard her teacher say to copy some maths into her book.** But she stopped listening and missed the bit about starting a new page and using a pencil.

**Matt didn't understand his homework.** But he felt too worried to ask for help, got the work wrong, then had to stay behind to do it again.

**Rosie's mum said it was teatime.** Rosie was in a bad mood, because she felt awful, so she shouted at her mum. Her pocket money was docked.

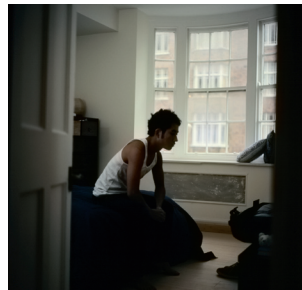
## Identify different solutions

When we have made a wrong choice about what to do or say, it is a good idea to think it through afterwards. Think about all the different things you could have said or done.

Here is a way to do it (the **OR** method):

Write down your problem and all the **OR** answers you can think of: e.g. I feel that my friends often ignore me. **How can I get them to listen to me?**

1. I could talk louder OR
2. I could shout OR
3. I could stand in front of their faces and talk OR
4. I could keep repeating myself OR
5. I could try talking to just one person at a time OR
6. I could talk to them about things that I know they are interested in OR
7. I could find a new group of friends!



## Think through the consequences

When you have made your **OR** list, you need to then think through what would happen if you were to try them out.

- firstly, what are the good or positive things that would happen for each of the items on your list (if you were to try them out)
- now what are all the negative or bad things that might happen?
- now you are in a good position to decide on the best one, on balance

Here is an example:

**Drew was getting teased by three people at his school.** They were calling him names. Drew got really angry. Firstly, he chased the teasers. The next time, he hit one of them and was in big trouble with the head-teacher. Then he tried calling them names back. The problem just got worse.

**He decided to get clever and solve this problem. He wrote it down. He thought of all the different things he could do. Then he wrote down the positive and negative consequences for each of his solutions.**

On balance, he decided the best solution was to keep away from the trouble-makers, and if they came to find him, to move closer to a teacher who could then see what was happening.



## Practise getting it right

It is not at all easy learning to deal with problems in the best way. Like any new skill, the more you practise, the better you get.

### Use your imagination

Try imagining a scene with your problem. Think of yourself working through it in a really good way. Imagine a really great outcome, and everyone is happy. Now praise yourself for doing so well!

### Practise acting it out

You may feel silly, but actually, it can be a really cool way to get good at solving problems. See if your friends will join in acting out the problem situation with you.

It can be good fun too!