Overcoming Challenges

challenge n. a thing, object, action or situation that blocks one’s way or prevents or hinders progress
gumption n. shrewd or spirited initiative and resourcefulness

Everyone faces challenges. It’s a part of life. Some people have a lot of challenges to overcome. Others only a few. We may have temporary challenges (not enough money to go out for ice cream, Internet outage when a big assignment is due, etc.) or long-term challenges (life situations out of our control, physical disabilities, etc.). There are two possible outcomes when we face a challenge: 1. we allow the challenge to defeat us, or 2. we show gumption and overcome our challenges and achieve success.

Let’s look at some strategies for overcoming challenges, then apply them to some real-life situations.

❖ Build a Support System
  o You need a group of people you can turn to for help, support, encouragement, and accountability.
  o This team can consist of supportive family members, teachers, community leaders, and responsible friends.
  o Be sure that the members of your support system are successful in overcoming challenges themselves. *A foolish person can only give foolish advice.*
  o Exercise!
    ▪ A change of scenery may change your perspective.
    ▪ Exercise releases endorphins…which increases your positivity and happiness.
    ▪ Regular exercise also improves your overall health and mental well-being.

❖ Focus on the Positives
  o What are your strengths in this area?
  o What do you have working in your favor?
  o What help is available for you?
  o Have you been successful when facing a similar challenge? What worked for you in that situation?
  o Who is cheering for you?

❖ Celebrate Your Successes
  o Overcoming challenges requires baby steps of success. Celebrate every step of the journey!
  o Most success in overcoming challenges isn’t instant or a single action…it’s a process. Celebrating the baby steps keeps you motivated to keep working until the ultimate success is achieved.

❖ Brainstorm Possibilities
  o Compile a list of possible actions or strategies you could take in order to successfully overcome your challenge.
Write down the possible outcomes or consequences of each action or strategy.

Choose the strategies or actions that have the best chance of success. Put them into action and then reassess as needed.

It may be a good idea to run your list past your support team for their input.

❖ **Take Risks**

- Get out of your comfort zone and ask for help.
- Try even if you think you will fail - you may have a surprising outcome!

❖ **Set Small, Achievable Goals**

- Look for things that are attributing to the challenge that you can easily change. Are you procrastinating, missing live ClassConnect sessions, spending too much time playing video games, or lacking good study habits?
- Set goals to address those issues first - time management, creating a schedule that works, setting alarms for ClassConnect sessions, creating a workspace free from distractions, or reaching out to your teachers for help with study habits.
- Continue setting new goals once the old ones are achieved until you have successfully overcome the challenge.

**Real-life Scenarios**

❖ Rachel was doing well in all of her courses, until the local cable company decided to upgrade all the lines in the area. Utility work meant that her home Internet was very unreliable—out for hours at a time. She was unable to attend ClassConnect sessions and was unable to submit assignments. After two weeks her grades had fallen dramatically. What can she do to overcome her current challenges?

- Rachel called on her support system consisting of her mom, homeroom teacher, and best friend. They brainstormed a list of possible actions. She decided she would take her laptop to the library every day and use their free Wi-Fi to attend ClassConnect sessions and complete assignments. She Kmailed each of her teachers for help with catch-up plans and to let them know about her situation. She worked an extra hour each day and over the weekends until she was doing well in all of her courses again.

❖ Eric struggles with math and literature. These subjects have been difficult for him since elementary school. He knows he’s going to be lost before he even logs in to class, so most days he doesn’t bother. He just guesses on assignments and accepts defeat without putting up a fight. However, Eric has decided that he wants to pursue a career in technology after high school and will need a high school diploma in order to get into the two-year program of his choice. His plan of action?

- Eric called in a support team consisting of his literature and math teachers, counselor, and advisor. His advisor helped him create an action plan and a daily schedule. His teachers scheduled weekly check-ins with him on the phone and invited him to extra help sessions. He started attending live ClassConnect sessions and studying every day.
The first week, he scored 30% on his math assessment. The second week he scored 40%. He celebrated the fact that his grade improved by 10% in a week and worked on strategies with his teachers to improve even more the next week. By focusing on the positives and taking risks, Eric was able to bring his grades in literature and math to passing.

❖ Alexis is having a hard time focusing on her coursework because she just found out that her parents are getting a divorce. There has been a lot of fighting in her house and now she doesn’t know who she will be living with or even where they will live. The break-up of her family and the possibility of moving away from her friends is a major distraction. She has several major projects due in the next two weeks and she has gotten further behind than she had planned. The fighting makes it hard to concentrate on her work even when she is trying to focus. How will she overcome this challenge that is out of her control?

○ Alexis created a support system consisting of her counselor, teachers, advisor, and best friends. Her counselor helped her deal with the emotional struggles she was experiencing. By letting her teachers and advisor know what was going on, they were able to help her set small, achievable goals so that her projects were completed in time. Her best friends offered support and helped her celebrate her small successes along the way. Alexis also began going for daily jogs. This allowed her time away from the fighting and away from the stresses of school. She was able to focus on herself and the positives she had going for her which gave her a new perspective on the upcoming challenges.