

Coping with change...

Change is a normal part of life and inevitable. It's how we move on and develop. On one level, change means progress and improvement. However, change can also be unpredictable and stressful. As organisational guru, Charles Handy comments, "**Change is like the British weather: always with us, always different and not always what we would like**". There is little doubt that we are living against a background of rapid and continuous change in society at large. We are faced with:-

- New technology
- Mergers and restructuring of organisations
- Increased performance expectation and workload
- Changes in job roles
- New working patterns
- Changes in family structure

What is difficult about change?

As a rule we don't like change much. Human beings tend to feel more comfortable with what is familiar. Change requires us to respond and puts demands upon us. We need energy to respond to these demands and constantly adapt to change.

How will a person recognise that he/she is finding change difficult?

We all respond to change differently - some people thrive on change, whilst others find it more difficult to deal with. Equally, we may sail through one change in our lives yet find ourselves quite thrown by another. If this is the case, it is important to understand that it is perfectly normal to experience some of the following responses.

- Anxiety
- Lack of concentration
- Poor decision-making
- Tiredness
- Irritability
- Low motivation
- Lack of self-esteem
- Relationship problems

How can one manage change for oneself?

Try to stand back and look at what is going on as a process of transition between two places - a journey. Whenever we go on a journey to a new place we would not consider doing so without a map, or at least some instructions to help us find our way. Admittedly, we are all different and deal with things in our own way - you don't have to stick to the map if you have your own clever short cuts - but there are certain things which most people find helpful to guide them on their way.



- a new pair of shoes can take a while to feel right
- Accept that your feelings are normal in the circumstances
- Give yourself time and try to accept that things may be uncertain for a while

Build some scaffolding

- Allow family and friends to support you, and avoid isolating yourself

- Do things you enjoy - change can sap your energy and enthusiasm, so take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating well and making time for leisure
- Take a day at a time and set yourself some short-term goals - avoid anxiety by focusing on the short-term rather than projecting too far into the future

Learn some new strategies

- Think about what's helped you cope with change in the past. After all, we are coping with change all the time, so some existing strategies are there already
- Try to be honest about recognizing unhelpful 'escapist' ways of responding to change - i.e. alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, overwork
- Relieve some of the tension by taking exercise and doing some relaxation exercises

When should a person seek further help?

Many people manage change successfully by using their own strategies, and taking support from friends, family and colleagues. But if support is not available or, if the changes seem too great, a person should then seek help. This may well be in the form of counselling,

So how does counselling help a person to adjust to change?

Counselling offers a totally confidential and professional service to help manage the changes in a person's life. Counselling can help by:

- Providing a safe, neutral setting for a person to talk through your situation and make sense of what is happening
- Offering information and guidance on coping

Change continued

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Change can be difficult to manage - However.....

talking through life's changes with friends, family or a counsellor, sooner rather than later, can mean that much may be learned on how to be positive about changes in life.

The whole experience can often then be a great asset to dealing with future experiences/challenges.



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