

# FACING Change

Daily we are reminded that change is inevitable, pervasive, and relentless. We not only have to tolerate unpredictable environments and situations, but also continually adapt in order to excel. Oftentimes, change brings with it such frustration, we just want to shout *Enough with change!*



There are biochemical, psychological, and historical factors that suggest virtually everyone is resistant to change. While mild resistance can create preoccupation, tension, and distraction; staunch resistance to change can result in inflexibility, rigid thinking, poor decision-making, impaired physical and emotional health, and strained relationships. Our resistance to change is often rooted in not wanting to move beyond our personal comfort zone rather than fear or failure. As such, the discomfort of change can lead us to reach backwards in order to retain some sort of familiarity in our lives.





## *Negative* Symptoms of Change:

- Loss of sleep, appetite, and morale
- Generalized feelings of anxiety, tiredness, and isolation
- Lack of motivation to work

As change is impossible to avoid, it is important to modify our attitudes toward it. This requires that we discard the ABC Attitude – Always Be Critical. While we do not have to accept everything that comes along, we do need to be prepared to examine the changes from a non-defensive perspective. This also requires that we examine our levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. We are not going to be open to change if we think too critically of ourselves.

## How Do We Handle *Change?*

Handling change is often accompanied by both exhilaration and discomfort. The process begins with the recognition that we cannot move on to something new until we grieve for what we are losing. Letting go of old ways and settling into a new routine can be a time of confusion, chaos, or creativity. Although we may feel indecisive and at times stretched, we nevertheless begin to explore possibilities and learn new skills as we find our new way. Gradually, we accept our new reality and where we are going. This may involve a commitment to a new vision, renewed cooperation with others, and an emerging sense of balance in our lives.

## Living with *Change.* is Easier to Manage when:

- It is anticipated and voluntary
- Other changes are kept to a minimum
- Opportunities for gradual change are offered
- We have supportive relationships
- Our self-esteem and confidence are high
- We have many interests outside the job
- There are opportunities to join in planning and exploring future options





# What Do We Know About *Change:*

- Adjusting to change takes time. Especially as it requires us to navigate the new expectations that are placed upon us, and develop/strengthen skills as we adopt new roles.
- Change is a highly personal experience. Every individual has their own distinct way of coping with it. Therefore, in the face of change, it is detrimental to our own personal progress to compare ourselves with others.
- To a certain point managing change requires self-care. This includes seeking support from others and maintaining a healthy lifestyle in terms of food and exercise. It is also beneficial to celebrate each of our accomplishments, no matter how small, as we work through the change process.

## Self-Care Responses To *Change:*

- Exercise need not be vigorous to relieve stress, but it is important to use muscles other than those used during work.
- A short nap (15 minutes) after work can be refreshing, especially if the job requires intense concentration for long periods of time.
- Take short breaks and let your imagination go to work – listen to music, daydream about positive events and allow yourself some deliberate wishful thinking.
- Step away from work and breathe slowly but deeply. Restoring the body's oxygen supply helps it to regain its ability to relax.
- Distress can be countered by creative responses - painting, woodworking, etc., no one method works for everyone.