

# Living with CHANGE

Daily we are reminded that change is inevitable, pervasive, and relentless. We are admonished that we not only have to tolerate this unpredictable environment, but also that we have to continually adapt in order to excel. And yet, we want to shout back *Enough with change!*

In fact, there are biochemical, psychological, and historical factors determining that virtually everyone is resistant to change. Whereas 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.

The discomfort of change can lead us to reach backward in order to retain the familiar. Sometimes we are afraid of change because it moves us beyond our comfort zone rather than any fear of failure. An example is someone who self-sabotages after assignment to a new job.

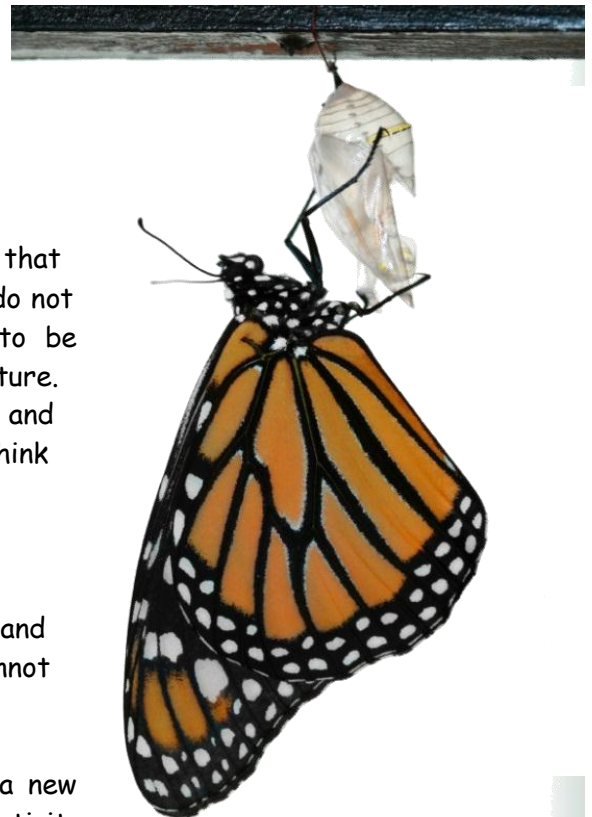
Symptoms of not coping with change include - loss of sleep, appetite, and morale; generalized feelings of anxiety, tiredness, isolation, and not wanting to go to work.

We need to modify our attitudes toward change. 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 posture. 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 / Transition?

Handling change is often accompanied by both exhilaration and discomfort. The process begins with recognition that we cannot move on to something new until we grieve for what we are losing.

While letting go of old ways, we do not yet feel settled in a new routine. This 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 commitment to a new vision, renewed cooperation with others, and an emerging sense of balance in our lives.



## Change Is Easier To Manage When

- it is anticipated and voluntary
- opportunities for gradual change are offered
- our self-esteem and confidence are high
- one job can be changed for another
- other changes are kept to a minimum
- we have supportive relationships
- 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.** Change can come so fast that we do not have time to process all that is required of us. It takes time to catch up. It is a process and a progression.

**Change can be difficult.** Usually with anything difficult come feelings of awkwardness, doubt, loss, anxiety, and struggle. Excessive tension can result in depression.

**Change is a highly personal experience.** No matter how many people are impacted, we feel alone. We compare ourselves with others to see how we are coping.

**People require support and clear expectations.** The clearer the expectations, the more likely the change will be supported. Seek out those who support the change and offer support to others.

**Managing change requires self-care.** Things we can do to make the transition easier include: how we do our job and how we take care of ourselves - healthy eating, exercise, and seeing friends. We also need to celebrate each of our accomplishments, no matter how small, as we work through the change process.

## Some Self-Care Responses To Change

Even though some of these responses use mental activity, we will notice that our heart rate, muscular tension, and breathing will become more relaxed.

**Getting physical.** Exercise need not be vigorous to relieve stress but it is important to use muscles other than those used during work.

**Power napping.** A short nap (15 minutes) after work can be refreshing especially if the job requires intense concentration for long periods of time.

**Focusing & visualizing.** Taking short breaks and letting our imaginations go to work - daydreaming about positive events and allowing ourselves some deliberate wishful thinking.

**Listening to Music.** Listening with our eyes closed and again letting our imaginations work.

**Breathing.** Stepping away from our work activity and breathing slowly but deeply. Restoring the body's oxygen supply helps it to regain its ability to relax.

**Creating.** Distress can be countered by creative responses. Painting, woodworking, etc - no one method works for everyone.

---

**For confidential assistance**  
**Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055**  
**[www.browncrawshaw.com](http://www.browncrawshaw.com)**