Coping with Change: Helpful tips on coping with change

Change is a natural part of life. Most of us are continually making adjustments that reflect our changing needs or interests—switching majors in school, moving to another city, or adjusting to a new job. Some changes are sudden and unexpected which can be a challenge to accept. This article series will help you find the best strategy for coping with change—whether planned, unexpected, difficult, or positive—and learn to focus on what you can control, while letting go of what you can’t.

This is the third in a three-part series of articles on coping with change which starts with “Understanding the benefits of change.” Read the previous article, “Change and stress.”

Helpful tips on coping with change

Facing change can be difficult but, with the right attitude and support, you can find the positive in it. Here are some tips on coping with change.

Expect and accept change. Take steps to avoid becoming rigid and afraid of new experiences. Throughout life, keep making friends, exploring a variety of interests and activities, and accepting new challenges at work.

Take care of your physical and emotional health. If you’re facing a big change, take extra care to eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, get enough sleep, and limit your alcohol consumption. Learn and practice some relaxation techniques by taking a yoga class or following a guided meditation online. Take some breaks and make time to do something you find enjoyable with friends or family.

Keep an open mind. Just because you haven’t done something before doesn’t mean you won’t like it. And just because you’ve tried something once and it didn’t turn out as well as expected, doesn’t mean you’ll have the same result next time.

Stay positive. Hold on to your sense of humour. Laughter is a stress-breaker and it helps us not take life too seriously. Remember, you have a choice as to how you respond to the changes you face. Keeping a positive attitude will help you through the tough times.

Take it slow. Making a change is really a series of small transitions. You will find it easier to cope with a big change by breaking it down into small steps so that you can make gradual adjustments over time.

Gather information. The most stressful thing about change may be the uncertainty it brings. To ease your anxieties, learn as much as you can about what you’re facing. Do research online or at the library. Talk with friends and co-workers who’ve faced the same kind of changes you’re facing and ask what helped them the most. A book you may find helpful is Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes, Revised 25th Anniversary Edition, by William Bridges, which describes the stages of change and how to deal with them.

Identify obstacles. Just about everyone encounters obstacles that get in the way of change. Taking the time to write yours down will help you know and understand your own obstacles. From there, you can work to figure out how to get past the obstacles you may be facing.
“Accept the past, but fight for the future. Even though we are never free from change, we are always free to decide how we respond to it.”
Nick Tasler, Harvard Business Review

**Pace yourself.** Avoid taking on a big change before you’ve adjusted to another one, or trying to make too many smaller changes all at once. If you know that you’re already experiencing stress, try to postpone making big decisions that will bring about change and, possibly, more stress.

**Talk about your feelings with loved ones who can help.** Be as specific as you can about your concerns. You might say to your partner, “I’ve had more responsibilities at work since I’ve been promoted, and it’s become harder for me to make dinner every night. What can we do about this?”

**Consider joining a support group.** If a change feels too big to handle alone, consider joining a support group for people who are going through a similar experience. You can find groups listed in the calendar of events in your local newspaper or by searching online for a national organization devoted to the issue that concerns you.

**Seek professional help if you are having difficulty coping with change.** Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Most people benefit from support and guidance when faced with tough circumstances. Your employee assistance program (EAP) or other confidential counseling services available to you can provide you with resources and help.

This is the third in a three-part series of articles on coping with change. Read the first article, “Understanding the benefits of change.”

© LifeWorks 2021

Jessica Stogsdill
Immediate Support Counselor
Last Reviewed Sep 2018
Jessica Stogsdill, LMSW, is an Immediate Support Counselor at LifeWorks and has worked with adults in a variety of situations, aiding them in increasing their resiliency and general wellbeing.