

Coping With Change

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Theodore Roosevelt famously said “There can be no life without change, and to be afraid of what is different or unfamiliar is to be afraid of life.” However, the process of adapting to change is often challenging and stressful – particularly if the change is unexpected or uninvited.

The emotional challenge of change often stems from the fear of the unknown, which in turn is fed by a range of inter-connected fears:

- *Fear of leaving our comfort zone* - we like our routines and don't like to be faced with the unknown.
- *Fear of failure* – linked closely with the need for perfection, worrying about not getting things right.
- *Self-doubt* – expressed in phrases like “I'm...not good enough”, “...not qualified enough”, stemming from a lack of confidence.
- *Fear of loss* – change may bring gains but also losses – for example, loss of contact with friends or family, loss of status or loss of known routines.
- *Fear of upsetting others* – change can have a ripple effect on others. Though the aim of change may be positive, the fear of ill feeling from others can limit how we embrace it.

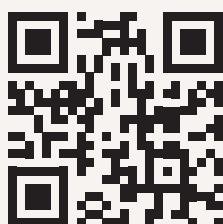
Fear is one of the biggest barriers to us embracing change, preventing us from moving forward in our personal lives and at work. Our best emotional ally against the fear of change is curiosity. If we engage our curiosity at times of change we can try to understand why we might be feeling

stressed or fearful and, instead of being blinded by our fear, we can begin to visualise a future beyond the change - looking ahead to the new opportunities change may bring. Being curious also opens our minds to growth and learning. We can learn important lessons about ourselves and others from change, even from change that leads us towards an undesired direction.

So, next time you are faced by an unexpected or unplanned change, engage your curiosity and bear in mind the advice of Leon C. Megginson, champion of entrepreneurship, “It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.”

Five tips for coping with change:

1. **Be as informed as possible** – beat the fear of the unknown with knowledge. If you understand why the change is happening and where it is headed you will find it easier to cope with the process.
2. **Take small steps** – you are not going to be able to effect a wholesale change overnight. Find one small thing that you can do at a time, then do it, and then do another. These small steps make change palatable and easier to accomplish.
3. **Give yourself time** – it takes time (weeks or months) to accept and adjust to change, to learn to live with it and acknowledge what you may have gained. You may also need to give yourself time to grieve for what you feel you have lost.
4. **Fail well** – remember that successful people often have a list of failed attempts behind them. ‘Failing well’ means learning from our failures and mistakes and moving on to success.
5. **Look after yourself** – recognise when you are becoming stressed and have a strategy that helps you feel calmer. Try to eat and sleep well, take a break, go for a walk or run, focus on slowing your breathing, do yoga or meditate, listen to music or talk with your friends and family.



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