

September 2018

Coping With Change

Change can take many forms and affect every aspect of our lives. It occurs in our family, work, social life, and well-being. Some changes involve additions, such as births, new friends or relationships, and new possessions. Others involve losses, such as death, divorce, or illness. Some changes are sudden, such as losing your job, while others are more gradual, such as entering middle age.

Change can be good or bad, depending on the individual and the circumstances. For example, a promotion is generally viewed as a change for the good, but if you're anxious or unsure of your skills, you may view it as negative or threatening. A divorce may be seen as a tragedy or a relief. Change may be sought out, appreciated or accepted, or it may be forced upon you, and then resented or resisted. It can challenge or stimulate you, or make you feel anxious and threatened. Too little change can make life boring or depressing, while too much change can be uncomfortable or overwhelming.

Whatever its form, change requires an adjustment of some kind. Change creates stress, which needs to be managed effectively to prevent the development of stress-related symptoms and illnesses. Unmanaged stress can cause physical and emotional disorders, including everything from headaches and digestive problems to high blood pressure and insomnia.

The key to coping with change is to recognize it, understand its effects, and bring it—or your responses to it—under control as much as possible. When you can't control the change itself, adjusting your attitude toward it can help lessen any stress or tension.

What to Know About Change

Strive for moderate change.

Change is stressful, even when it's positive and welcome. Strive for balance. Too much stress at once, or even a moderate amount of stress over a long period of time, can be unhealthy.

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Try to see the opportunities in change.

Try to think of change as a mixture of crisis and opportunity. Ask yourself what lesson you might learn, what skill you might develop, or what aspect of yourself you might strengthen as a result of coping with this change.

Physical health will support mental health.

During times of change and high stress, remember that regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep is needed to maintain your ability to cope.

When you find yourself faced with an unexpected change, take a moment to evaluate your emotional response. Ask yourself how you're feeling. Are you happy, sad, scared, angry, threatened, resentful, excited or indifferent? If you are having a negative reaction, ask yourself if there is another way that you can look at the situation. Does it bring opportunity, needed change or some other positive benefit?

Learn a relaxation exercise. Relaxation is one of the most effective tools for managing stress and the anxiety or tension that can go along with it. Relaxation helps your body undo the negative effects of stress and can keep you functioning better physically and mentally.

Remember that you don't have to weather change alone. Look for support from family or friends or find additional support online at www.wseap.com.

Adapted from U.S. Army, Joint Base Lewis-McChord. (2013, July). Introduction (pp. 3–6). In Goal setting for personal and professional excellence. Retrieved April 12, 2018, from <http://www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil/>

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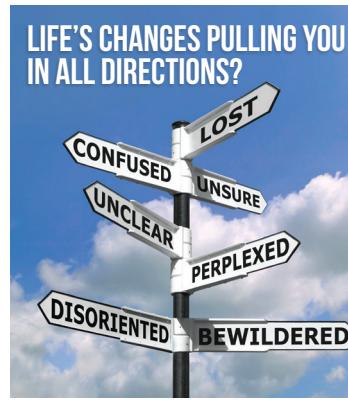
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