Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Embracing change in the workplace



To thrive in today's highly competitive world, one needs to continually adapt and innovate. That means change is now the norm for most employees. But any change, whether it's positive or negative, personal or professional, can be stressful because it involves the unknown, and we tend to fear the unknown. Finding ways to embrace change is the key to success.

Understanding change

Change is something we can't control, but we can control how we adapt to that change – how we transition from an ending to a new beginning. But how we perceive a change often affects our transition. For example, if we see a change as positive and full of opportunities, we'll embrace it and adapt quickly. However, if we think the change might have a detrimental effect on us then we're likely to be resistant. Also, the greater the perceived threat, the greater our resistance and more difficult our transition will be.

Easing the transition

We might not be able to escape workplace change, but we can make it less difficult. Here are some tips to embrace change and ease the transition.

- **Understand the situation**. Get as much information about an impending change and how it will affect you. Speak to your manager and coworkers. However, when discussing organizational changes with coworkers, remember that their understanding or perspective might be different than yours and often this misunderstanding could spark office rumors.
- **Recognize your reactions to change are normal and part of the transitional process.** This process has three main stages:
    1. Endings. This is a time of loss and regret. We may experience a lot of emotions, including disappointment, sadness, or even anger.
    2. The Neutral Phase. Changes have begun and we may feel uncertain, anxious, confused, and resistant.
    3. Beginnings. We've accepted the new reality and understand our new role. We are more optimistic about the future.
- **Have a positive attitude and an open mind**. Yes, change can be frustrating and stressful, but it can also be professionally advantageous. Focus on how things might work to your advantage and what new skills you may need to acquire.
- **Think long-term.** Organizational changes can be a challenge for any company and the transitional period may cause some upheaval before the long-term rewards become clear. Remind yourself that current uncertainties will pass.
- **Do what you do best**. Workplace changes can consume everyone's time and attention and that can cause productivity and efficiency to slip. Keep performing your job to the best of your ability and remain focused on your own performance.

- **Be flexible**. This can be an opportunity to help influence change and become the go-to person on your team. Demonstrating a willingness to accept new challenges and help coworkers will also make people more likely to support you and your professional goals.
- **Manage your stress.** Find healthy ways to cope with stress – a walk, a long run, yoga, meditation, massage, or take a few minutes to read a book or listen to music.
- **Build a support team.** Talking about your concerns and feelings with trusted friends and family members helps keep things in perspective. If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out to your Employee and Family Assistance Program for resources and support.
- **Maintain a sense of humour.** Humour also helps keeps stressful situations in perspective.

Finally, remember that nothing stays the same. Circumstances could change again soon, making you wish you hadn't wasted energy getting upset about the original change. If you're able to maintain a good attitude, you'll keep your options open. You might even find unanticipated benefits!

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