



Coping well with change is vital to your health

Have you ever heard the old adage “*the only constant in life is change*”? It is one of the truest statements there is: change is inevitable, it happens to everyone, and it will happen again and again and again. Though change may be constant, for many people, managing change remains one of the most difficult challenges of day-to-day life; we prefer the known over the uncertain. Accepting change and building resilience are fundamental to good mental health.

Change comes in all forms and in all areas of life: personal and professional relationships begin and end, you start a new job, your family moves, loved ones die, you have children, you report to a new boss, new workplace protocols are introduced, and so on. Even positive change, can be difficult to adapt to. Some changes in our personal or work life can ask us so much from us that the impact can lead to depression or anxiety. However, proactive resilience building can make change less frightening and a more fulfilling prospect.

What is resilience?

Resilience is a way of life that gives us the ability to bounce back and manage ourselves in response to adverse events as well as positive events that shake up day to day stability. This includes conflict, and failure, as well as progress and promotions, new responsibilities and role at home and at work. Highly resilient people continue to flourish in conditions of constant change. Research shows the attributes that are common to resilient people include: flexibility, sociability, sense of purpose, and curiosity. These allow them to be creative and learn from the experience.

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The good news is that resilience skills can be learned. Here are some ways to develop your resilience:

Make meaningful connections. When change happens, we rely on the people around us to help us move through difficult times. Make and maintain strong connections with friends and family members. Not only does this allow for mutual support, but it also helps to remind you of your true self regardless of changes happening around you.

Nurture a positive self-image. Developing confidence in your abilities, instincts, and nurturing a strong sense of self is important in building resilience. When faced with changes, look back to your life experience and the achievements and experiences you have already coped with. Draw courage from this. Life is not black and white; it is not all success or all failure.

Look at the big picture. The Beatle, George Harrison, famously sang “all things must pass”. How right he was. Things changed and they will change again: keeping perspective will help you move through times of upheaval. Remember what you are going through right now is a moment in time with history behind you and the future ahead of you.

Prioritize self-care. Taking good care of yourself increases your ability to adapt to change. Eating well and exercising regularly are great ways to do this, and things like meditation and yoga are also very beneficial in strengthening your resilience.

Set goals and remember what’s important to you. When you are confronted with change or other impactful life experiences, it is important to put these events into a meaningful context for yourself. Having goals and a sense of purpose also provides guidance on how to incorporate change and what actions to take.

Anticipate change and plan accordingly. While enjoying periods of calm and stability, continue to anticipate change and look for signs of what is to come, plan ahead, and put resources aside. Create change by acting curious and exposing yourself to new experiences and new ideas. Why not try a new activity or sport, travel to a new destination, or sample a new cuisine?

Increasing your resilience does not mean you will be insensitive or unaffected by change, only that you won’t be loose your balance or feel incapacitated to take action. People with strong resilience still experience grief and the emotional impact of change and loss, but are able to move through these states and maintain positive mental health. Including the tips above in your day-to-day life will help you be prepared for change and be ready to make the best of it when it happens.

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