



# Change

How we perceive change will determine how it affects us. If we fear change, then when it happens it is likely to worry or upset us. But if we see change as offering us a different set of options, then it can become exciting and new. Perceiving change in this way allows us to accept it, assess what is within our control and begin to positively manage the new situation.

**HELP** 

Change is inevitable – a natural part of life. Whether we make changes ourselves or it arrives unexpectedly, we can learn from it on every occasion.

### What is change?

Change can be viewed as an opportunity or a challenge – either way it provides us with the chance to see new ways of being or doing things. But sometimes change can feel threatening because it forces us to face unknown situations or accept unfamiliar outcomes.

### Changes at work

Change is part of working life as organisations evolve to remain competitive. Changes to our job roles and responsibilities, work demands, work relationships and career developments can be sometimes unsettling. Often we like things to stay the way they are because it gives us a sense of structure, control and continuity. But when change happens at work we need to adapt, be flexible and to accept it as normal.

### Planning for change

Some change, by its very nature, is unpredictable. However, many aspects of change can be anticipated, such as increased financial demands at Christmas, children leaving home or deciding to change your job. By learning to properly prepare in advance, we reduce the impact of change and affirm to ourselves that we have control over our own decisions.

### Managing change

#### Positive thinking

A lot of what we dislike about change is based on fear of the unknown – and fear breeds worry. But we can learn to choose between fear, worry and acceptance, helping us to face the reality of each new situation. It's easy to be negative sometimes, to retreat into a cycle of blaming others or avoiding responsibility. By remaining positive we can consider what is in our control, assess all the options and make rational choices or take appropriate decisions.

### Physical health

Maintaining physical health is an important part of dealing with new challenges. Looking after ourselves with a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep and an appropriate work/life balance makes a significant contribution towards a positive outlook.

### Coping with change

- > **Shock and numbness** is the aftermath of the loss or change, where we feel numb to what's happened
- > **Denial** happens as we fail to accept the situation or the consequences of the situation.
- > **Anger and hostility** occurs when we emotionally express the affect the change or loss has on us.
- > **Uncertainty or depression** affects us as we question the change or loss and we may experience depression.
- > **Bargaining** emerges as we start to take on board what has happened.
- > **Acceptance** enables us to come to terms with the change, accept the changes and live our lives again.

### Talking things through

When life and work changes bewilder us it is easy for our feelings to get out of proportion. Sometimes the right course of action is to express your feelings to a friend or family member, to get their perspective. But sometimes it is more useful to speak to an independent professional about your worries.

### HELP support

HELP covers a wide range of issues such as stress, bereavement, debt, relationships and work problems. Legal and financial services are only available to employees who need information to help them reduce the distress that they are experiencing.

For further information, please call 0800 6888 777 or visit [www.rmghelp.co.uk](http://www.rmghelp.co.uk)

You may also find the following websites useful:

#### Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

The HSE is responsible for enforcing health and safety legislation in the UK.

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

#### International Stress Management Association (ISMA)

Promotes sound knowledge and best practice in the prevention and reduction of human stress.

[www.isma.org.uk](http://www.isma.org.uk)

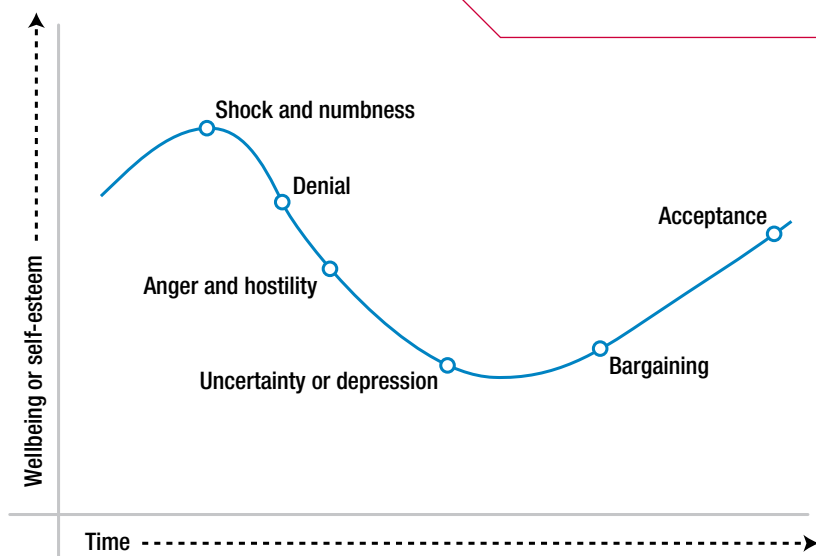


Figure 1. The Change Curve

(Based on Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, 'On Death and Dying' 1969, New York, Macmillan)  
[www.elisabethkublerross.com](http://www.elisabethkublerross.com)  
[www.ekrfoundation.org](http://www.ekrfoundation.org)