

Getting Ready for Change

Change. It's a word that many of us don't like to hear and, when spoken, it sparks worry and concern. For some people, the idea of change can be unsettling and can create an even stronger attachment to maintaining the status quo.

Many people prefer stability over change; predictability and consistency in our daily routine help us to feel safer and more secure in a world that always seems to be shifting.

With rapid changes in technology and society impacting on us, we look for certainty and security in places like work and in our relationships. But, we can't simply wish for change to go away.

"...change is necessary in life to keep us moving, to keep us growing, to keep us interested,"

Dr Dennis O'Grady, psychologist, professor and author.

When we know that change is coming, we tend to expect that any shift will leave us worse off. This reaction is so typical that it has a name; it's called "catastrophising".

When we catastrophise change, we over exaggerate our perceptions of the possible negative impacts that could occur.

It's important to recognise that change, in all parts of life and work, is inevitable, so while you may not be able to stop it from happening, you can control the way you respond to change.

WHEN YOUR WORKPLACE ANNOUNCES THAT "CHANGE IS ON THE WAY"

When an announcement is made that "change is on the way" at work, our instinctual response is often negative. The first thoughts that enter people's minds are usually focused on what we might lose as a result of the change. When we hear the word "change" used in the context of our workplace, we may fear:

- Losing our jobs or our feeling of job security
- Being demoted or facing other "negative" changes to our work role
- A drop in our salary or the loss of other workplace benefits
- The effect of the new arrangements on our future job prospects
- Having to say "goodbye" to colleagues who are moved to different work areas or to teammates who lose their jobs
- New responsibilities or tasks being added to our workload

We experience these feelings of loss and these concerns because the change has impacted on the predictability and consistency of our daily work routine.

HOW TO BUILD POSITIVE THOUGHTS AROUND CHANGE

What can we do to shift the way we think about change at work?

"Some changes look negative on the surface but you will soon realise that space is being created in your life for something new to emerge,"

Eckhart Tolle, teacher and author.

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GETTING READY FOR CHANGE

Acknowledge the change. Recognising that change is on the way, and accepting that this will happen whether you want it to or not, is the first step towards taking a proactive approach to getting ready for change.



Accept your feelings and be proactive. Know that it's OK to feel anxiety and uncertainty in the face of change and take action in response to these feelings; reach out to colleagues who are also facing new circumstances at work and offer to support each other during this time.

Reflect on past periods of change. You have successfully faced changes before, either in your work or personal life. Think back to other times or situations of uncertainty and recall the successful ways you approached managing the change. Specifically recall the ways you focused on maintaining your mental health during periods of uncertainty. It may be useful to write down your thoughts and feelings, this will help you to identify any areas where you may need support during the time of change.

Reframe your thoughts and feelings about change. When you find yourself experiencing negative thoughts and



emotions around the upcoming change, stop and reframe the way you are thinking about the shift. Think of different ways you can explain the change to yourself. Can you look at the change as an opportunity to learn new skills? Could you consider the benefits that come with working with different people in your organisation? Will the changes lead to opportunities for personal growth, specifically if they mean that you take on new responsibilities as part of your job?

Be part of the change that is happening in your workplace.

Go one step beyond acknowledging the change and ask your boss, supervisor or employer if you can play an active role during this time. Many organisations will need staff advocates during times of change, employees who can help to keep others informed of new directions and how this will change people's roles at work. Deciding to put your hand up and play a positive role can help you to better understand, and prepare for, the impact of changes and can also help you to acknowledge and accept the change (see above).

WHY YOU NEED A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK DURING TIMES OF CHANGE

Change is a whole of organisation process; it affects everyone and, chances are, if you are feeling challenged during times of change, others are too.

People can feel isolated during change, particularly if they believe that the new ways of doing things unfairly "target" them by, for example, leading to a demotion in their job role or a significant change in their work responsibilities. Even if there are no immediate, obvious negative impacts on your day-to-day work, changes can leave you feeling uncertain about the future.

That's why it's important to have a strong support network. Your support network can include:

- Your boss, supervisor or manager
- Members of your work team
- Colleagues from other teams or different parts of the organisation
- Colleagues or friends who work for other, similar organisations
- Your mentor or other professional contacts
- Counsellors from your Employee Assistance Program

FIND OUT MORE

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GETTING READY FOR CHANGE

Change can bring about stress, and having a strong network in place at work can help you to manage the impacts by:

- Giving you a sounding board, an opportunity to have someone listen to the way you are feeling about the upcoming changes
- Helping you to see the changes through someone else's eyes, giving you a broader sense of the positive impacts of change
- Showing you different perspectives on the outcomes of the change, helping you to discover positives that you hadn't considered
- Enabling you to speak with more experienced staff who have seen other periods of change in the organisation
- Helping you to understand that you are all going through the changes together
- Having a network that you can rely on means that you don't need to face the impacts of change on your own.



GET SUPPORT TO BE PART OF CONVERSATIONS AROUND CHANGE

The Converge International Employee Assistance Program is there to support you and your mental fitness during times of uncertainty and change at work. Our experienced counsellors work closely with organisations and their employees during change projects and understand the stresses and other impacts that can arise through this process.

You might find it useful to have a sounding board, someone you can speak with, who can listen to your concerns around the changes you face, as well as offer you support to take proactive steps to better manage change.

You can access EAP support by:

- Calling **1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327)**
- Accessing our new Live Chat feature by going to www.convergeinternational.com.au and clicking on Live Chat
- Launching the EAP Connect smartphone app and tapping on Contact Us or Appointment

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