



# Managing Change

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview .....	1
Objectives .....	1
<b>Change .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Causes of Change .....	3
Activity: Personal Change .....	4
How Change Affects Us .....	5
The Change Process .....	11
Techniques for Managing Change .....	13
Activity: Understand What Happened .....	15
Activity: Begin Again .....	17
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>19</b>





# Introduction

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## Overview

Our world is ever changing. Many factors influence changes in our world.  
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In the workplace, employees are asked to learn new ways of doing things, use new tools and change their work habits. Change in the workplace is seldom something that you have control over. However, how you handle that change is in your control.

Your reaction to change will affect how you will survive and succeed in your personal and professional life. Some changes are small, some large, and still some are monumental. This unit will discuss the causes of change, the concept of change as a process, the dynamics of change, the phases of change and techniques for the healthy management of change.

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## Objectives

The information, activities and practices provided in this unit will enable you to:

1. Identify causes of change in the workplace.
2. Accept change as on-going.
3. Identify how change affects us.
4. Identify techniques for managing change to achieve a positive outcome.

**Notes:**

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# Change

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## Causes of Change

Why is there so much change in the workplace?

The three major forces of change are:

- People
- Technology
- Information

### People

People cause change. People generate new ideas and they make things.

Between 1925–1975, the population of the world doubled from two billion to four billion. The population today is over six billion and the prediction is ten billion by the year 2040. The more people there are, the more new ideas are generated and the more new things are produced.

### Technology

New technology also causes change. Since technology is produced by people, the population growth directly affects technology.

### Information

The amount of information or knowledge doubles every five years. In addition, this information is available to many more people. Information is reaching more people faster. The more informed a population becomes, the more chances for change.

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## Activity: Personal Change

Write two personal examples of change.

1. A change that was easy to make.
2. A change that was hard to make.

Self-chosen change is the easiest type to process. Imposed change is usually the hardest for us to process. Imposed change is change that is outside of our control, change that we did not choose and most of the time do not want.

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## How Change Affects Us

There are several things that happen when people make changes. These things happen whether the changes are voluntary or forced.



*People May Feel Awkward and Self-conscious*

When going through change, it's natural to feel ill at ease or a little self-conscious.

One reason you may feel awkward is because you are not given enough information.”

A remedy for feeling awkward and self-conscious when going through a change is sometimes more information. Asking questions will give you more information, and more information might help you to understand the purpose for the change.

When you feel awkward and self-conscious:

- Recognize that others may also feel awkward and self-conscious.
- Accept discomfort as normal and temporary.
- Obtain as much information as possible.

It's natural to first focus on what you might lose, but the more quickly you focus on what you might gain, the easier the change will be.



*People May First Think about What They Must Give Up*

When you focus on what you must give up:

- Recognize that change can have positive benefits.
- Focus on what you will gain as quickly as possible.



Sometimes people may feel alone during change even though everyone else is going through the same change.



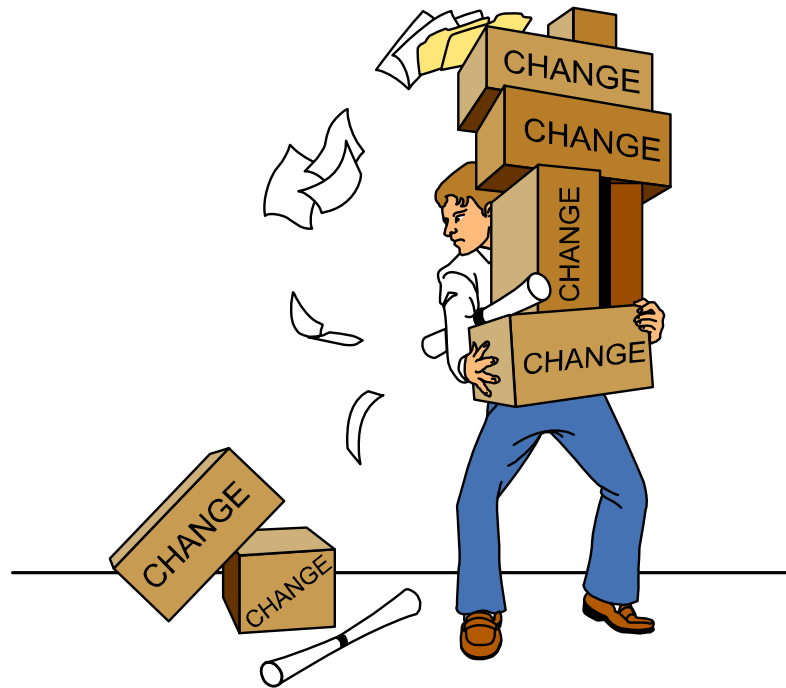
*People May Feel Alone*

Feeling alone is a natural human response to change.

When you feel alone:

- Seek support from other people.
- Ask for help.

Other people can often be a resource to help you through change. Additionally, supporting others through the same change can also help you feel a little less “alone.”



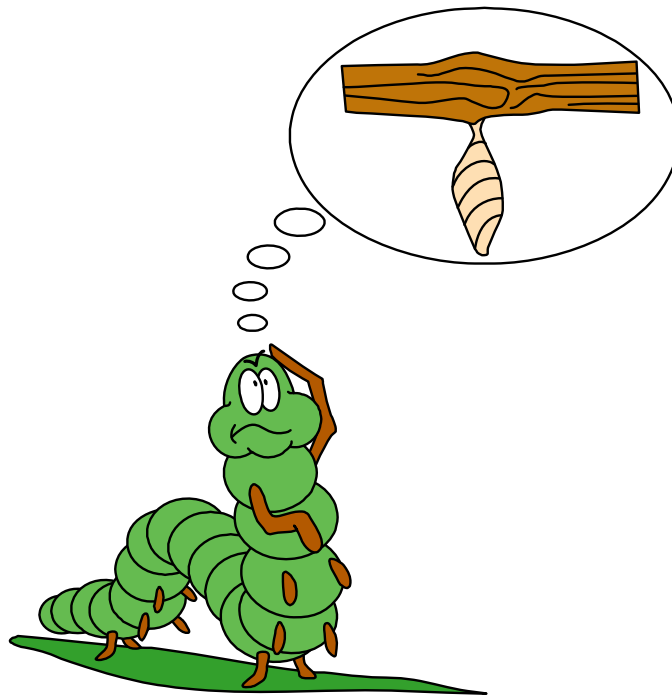
*People Can Handle Only So Much Change*

It's easy to feel overwhelmed when we are forced to manage a very large change or even many small ones at the same time.

When you feel overwhelmed:

- Take time out to refocus.
- Determine priorities.
- Set realistic goals.
- Learn from failures.

People are individuals, each with different experiences and personalities. Change is easy for some people and more difficult for others. The degree of comfort with change and the length of time needed to complete the change will vary from person to person.

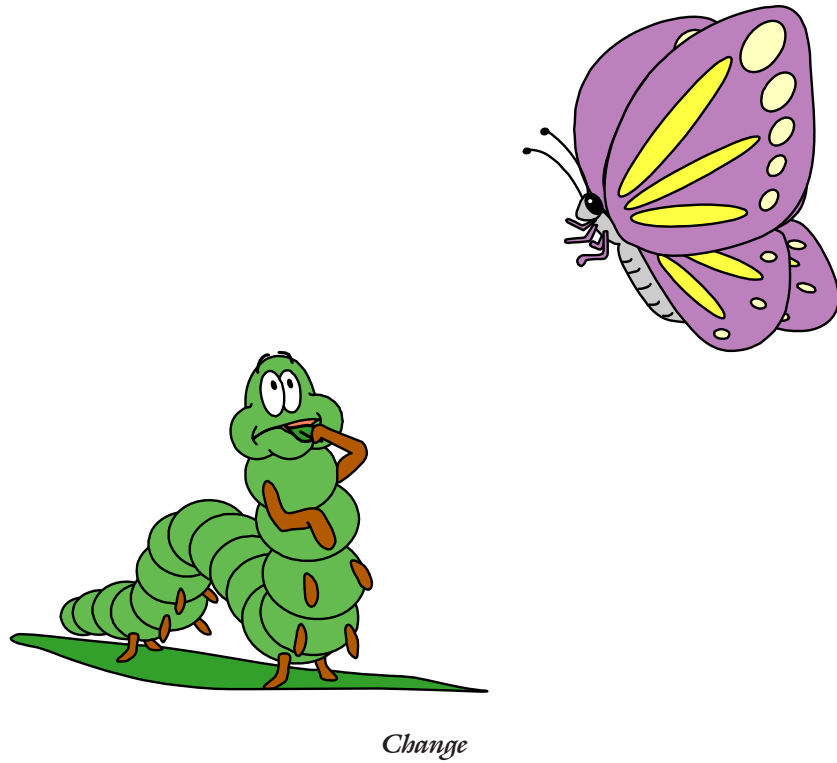


*People Have Different Levels of Readiness for Change*

When you doubt your ability to handle change:

- Avoid comparing yourself to other people.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Be patient with others.

To summarize how change can affect us, keep in mind, change does not have to be difficult... just different.”

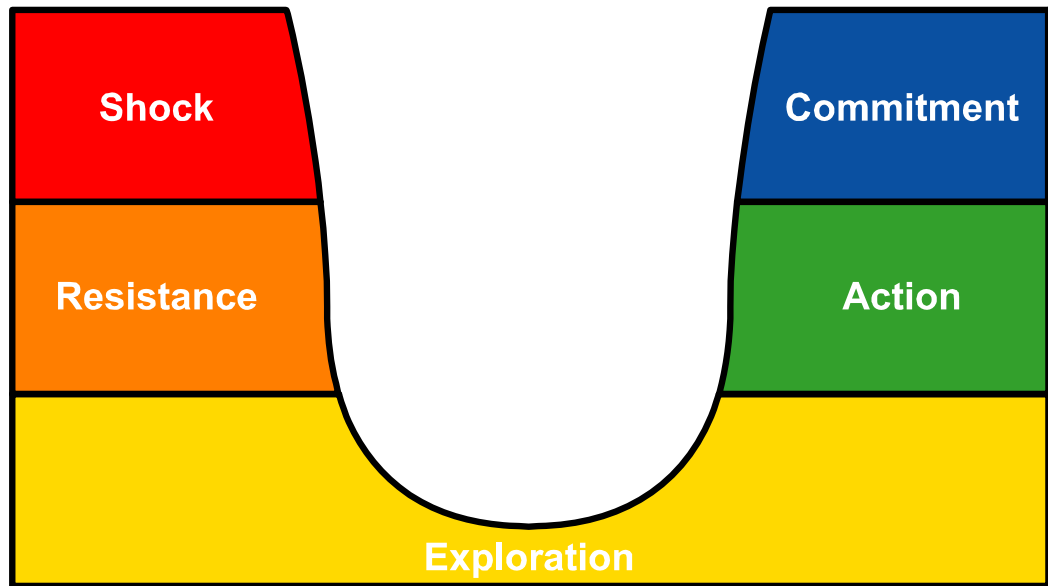




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## The Change Process

There are five phases of change.



*The Change Process*

### Shock

The first reaction in the Change Process is sometimes a temporary state of shock. It is an initial feeling of numbness.

### Resistance

Resistance is a barrier to a healthy adaptation to change. Resistance consists of a five stage process for accepting loss. While these phases are normally considered in relation to loss, they can also apply to any turning point in our life.

The stages of resistance are:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

**Denial** is a normal response to an exceptional situation. “No, this can’t be happening to me!” However, getting stuck in the denial phase, changes this normal response to an unhealthy response.

**Anger** is often the response to the question “Why me?” You must look inward and understand the real source of the anger. Anger, when properly directed, can be healthy. Sometimes you have a right to be angry.

**Bargaining** is an attempt to postpone. At this point there is a shift in the way the event is viewed. The event is real, but maybe it can be adjusted.

During the **Depression Phase**, the sadness may pave the way for acceptance. Depression is part of the mourning process for the loss of meaningful people and places. At this point, a search begins for new ways of viewing the world. If depression is like a deep sadness, it provides a doorway to transition. But if depression is more like hopelessness, there is a danger of being trapped.

**Acceptance** is the viewing of a nearing event with quiet expectation. This phase is a time of preparation and peace.

Although most of us have experienced all five phases in relation to certain changes in our lives, the sequence may be different for different people. Also, you may not pass through all phases.

## **Exploration**

During the Exploration segment of the change process, be creative. Discover new alternatives by replacing “I can’t \_\_\_\_\_ because” thinking with “I can \_\_\_\_\_ because.”

This is the time to challenge yourself and take risks. Assess your interests, your skills and your experiences.



## **Action**

During this phase of the Change Process, you reach a point where you are ready to act. When that happens, it is important to act. Action satisfies the desire to make something happen.

## **Commitment**

During the Commitment phase of the Change Process your behavior is affected. You are busy setting goals, choosing a strategy, developing support and moving forward.

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## **Techniques for Managing Change**

The techniques for managing change in a positive way include:

1. Understand what happened.
2. Accept what you cannot change.
3. Change what you can.
4. Begin again.

## **Understand What Happened**

To totally understand what happened, you must be able to:

- Describe the event.
- Identify how you feel.

Describing the event means the ability to understand the type of event that has occurred, the significance of the event and the demands created by it.

Identifying how you feel requires the ability to label your inner experience in relation to what's happening.

	Happy	Sad	Angry	Afraid	Confused
Strong	Ecstatic Thrilled Joyful	Suicidal Despondent Depressed	Alienated Furious Enraged	Terrified Petrified Panicky	Disoriented Shocked Bewildered
Medium	Happy Pleased Delighted	Lonely Sad Unhappy	Resentful Frustrated Aggravated	Scared Afraid Anxious	Conflicted Torn Lost
Mild	Content Satisfied Okay	Blue Upset Concerned	Mad Irritated Annoyed	Timid Cautious Uneasy	Unsure Hesitant Mixed-up

*Feeling Words*



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## Activity: Understand What Happened

### Ann's Example

Ann had been a dedicated employee when she found out that her office was closing due to organizational and financial restructuring. Ann had been very satisfied with her job and was unsure of her qualifications for other work.

Ann's whole life seems to be changing. She is losing what feels comfortable to her. She is losing friends at work and feelings of security. She will have to adjust to a whole new environment, new people, new ways of doing things. She will need new skills and will have to adjust to financial uncertainty.

She is anxious, unsure, afraid, resentful, and angry.

### Your Example

Describe an important event. This event can be unexpected or anticipated, positive or negative. Describe the demands this change is creating. Then write down the feelings experienced in relation to this event.

Event:

Significance:

Feelings:

## **Accept What You Cannot Change**

Accepting what you cannot change is the second step to managing change.

Serenity Prayer:

Accepting what you cannot change means you know that the clock cannot be turned back, no matter how much you hope and wish. Accepting means putting the past behind you by letting go of the “old.”

## **Change What You Can**

Changing means making the transition and beginning again. The transition period may be a time for exploration and experimentation, a time to reflect on past experiences and let new desires emerge. Once you reach a point where you are ready to act, it is important to act.

## **Begin Again**

Beginning again gets you moving forward. This is the time to set a goal. Setting a goal gives you a way to measure progress. Choosing a strategy gives you a chance at success. Beginning again may also mean involving other people in your change program to support you, reward you for progress or help you get back on track when you experience setbacks.



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## Activity: Begin Again

### Ann's Example

Ann's goal: I will learn new job skills to give myself greater opportunities for a new job.

Ann's strategy: I will enroll in a job skills training course because I need a structured learning environment.

Ann's support: I will ask my family to help with chores and to respect my need for study time.

Based on the results of their earlier activity, complete the following statements as a first step toward beginning again:

My goal is:

My strategy is:

My support will be:

[illegible]





# Summary

Today we have discussed the process of change, how to manage change in the workplace. As you take this information back to the workplace, remember that you will need to let go of the old ideas you have about change and accept that change is a constant process. How you handle change is in your control. Your reaction to change will affect how you will survive and succeed in your personal and professional life.

There are three major forces of change:

- People
- Technology
- Information

When going through change, it is natural to feel awkward and self-conscious. You should:

- Recognize that others may feel awkward and self-conscious, too.
- Accept discomfort as normal and temporary.
- Obtain as much information as possible.

When you're focused on what you must give up:

- Recognize that change can have positive benefits.
- Focus on what you will gain as quickly as possible.

When you feel alone:

- Seek support from other people.
- Ask for help.

When you feel overwhelmed:

- Take time out to refocus.
- Determine priorities.
- Set realistic goals.
- Learn from failures.

When you doubt your ability to handle change:

- Avoid comparing yourself to other people.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Be patient with others.

Phases of the Change Process:

1. Shock
2. Resistance
3. Exploration
4. Action
5. Commitment

Techniques for managing change:

- Understand what happened.
- Accept what you cannot change.
- Change what you can.
- Begin again.