



Surviving the Change: Tips for Coping with Change in the Workplace.

By Shanna Trujillo

At this point and time in the world, we have all found that change is inevitable, a way of life of sorts. Some degree of change and transition is natural and expected. We may have even learned to manage the ever-changing world of today. Then comes the overwhelming, unexpected change that emits emotions such as uncertainty, fear, frustration, confusion, sadness, anger, resentment, helplessness, just to name a few. As normal as these feelings are, frankly, they can become incapacitating in certain situations. How then, in a place where service, productivity, and efficiency is a must, can we adapt to and manage these difficult times?

As New Directions Employee Assistance Programs states, humans do not like to experience the unexpected. Uncertainty can be the setting for an intense, stressful, anxiety provoking work environment, often because we equate the unknown with danger. Consider these wellness tips as ways to manage change effectively.

Managing Change

- **Tell yourself the truth.** Allow yourself to be upset, angry worried, or sad.
- **Reach out to others.** Discuss your feelings with supervisors, coworkers, family, friends, and/or EAP counselors.
- **Stay focused.** Use “to-do” lists to keep your goals clear.
- **Be patient.** It takes time for change to settle in throughout the organization, just as it will take time for you, and others, to sort through your emotions.
- **Let go of the past.** Prepare yourself for the transition by moving forward with a positive attitude, fresh ideas, and new skills.
- **Reflect on what you’ve learned.** Ask yourself what you have learned from these experiences. Take note of what coping methods have worked for you so that they may be in handling change in the future.

Adapted from Magellan Mental Health Services (1999)

After the change has set in but the waters are still a bit rough, keep these tips in mind while riding the waves.

After the Change

- **Manage your time wisely.** Learn to estimate what you can realistically accomplish in a day. Set goals to achieve this end and prioritize ways to accomplish daily, weekly, monthly, goals.
- **Make connections.** Connecting with family, friends, coworkers, can provide you with a sense of community.
- **Take a flexible attitude to change.** Whenever possible, view these changes as opportunities. This may not be apparent right from the start, but frame it as such when the dust begins to clear.
- **Take care of yourself.** Forgetting about your own mental health can be detrimental as a service provider. Take care of yourself by:
 - ❑ Pampering yourself with special treatment.
 - ❑ Getting at least 8 hours of sleep a night.
 - ❑ Eating healthy.
 - ❑ Getting some source of physical activity at least 3-4 times per week.

Adapted from New Directions Employee Assistance Program (2002)

If these are not typical lifestyle practices for you, make this time of change and transition a time for a lifestyle change as well.