

## Coping with Change

The world seems to be changing at an extraordinary pace. We get used to the way things are, and then they shift. That change can be unsettling; even positive change can throw us for a loop.

As soon as something nudges us out of our regular routine, or challenges our understanding of how the world works and where we fit into it, we're likely to experience a deluge of feelings, including fear, anxiety, overwhelm, excitement, distraction or denial.

In turn, those feelings can manifest in behavior. You may act out with aggressive or passive-aggressive communication. You may push yourself to overwork or take the opposite approach and procrastinate, avoiding what's on your plate.

Your self-care may suffer. You may reach for unhealthy substances or behaviors, get less sleep, skip meals or overindulge. You might cut yourself off from others or spend time with people who have unhealthy habits.

### The Impact

Stress from both positive and negative change can have immediate and long-term effects. Stress inhibits digestion and absorption of nutrients, impairs your body's ability to ward off germs, can cause insomnia and worsen pre-existing health conditions. If you're also engaging in unhealthy behaviors and poor self-care, you're at an even higher risk for illness or injury.

Mental abilities can be affected, as well. When you're preoccupied about the future, it's much harder to concentrate and/or apply your brainpower to what's in front of you.

Great leaders are admired for their serenity and confidence in the face of uncertainty. For many of us, though, at such times, serenity is far from our reach. Instead, emotions are close to the surface and can flare up at inopportune times. Whether you lash out, cry or pound on your desk, it's uncomfortable to feel out of control.

### Strategies for Coping with Change

**Take care of your body.** Eat well, sleep well, exercise to discharge stress and refrain from harmful habits, such as smoking, excessive drinking, or recreational drugs.

**Take care of your mind.** Stay in the present by practicing deep breathing and/or meditation. Challenge your negative thinking and keep things in perspective.

**Express your emotions in healthy ways.** Share them with people you trust.

Vent negative feelings by pounding on a pillow.

**Treat others well.** Strengthen your good relationships so you can draw on their support, and work at your challenging relationships so they don't add to your stress.

**Be proactive.** Prepare the best you can for the changes that might come, but then accept the reality of the moment. Think back to other challenges you've come through and remind yourself that everything will work out okay this time, too.

Into every life change will come, but its lasting impact doesn't have to be harmful. Change also has a way of opening new and rewarding doors. Bottom line, let change be the catalyst for better self-care, which will feed you in all times, stable and uncertain.

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