

# Responding to Change

Change. It's a word that many of us don't like to hear and can spark 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
- Unwelcome changes to our work role and responsibilities
- 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 whose roles may be impacted
- New responsibilities or tasks being added to our workload

## 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.

### 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



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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).

## **GET SUPPORT TO BE PART OF CONVERSATIONS AROUND CHANGE**

Converge 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 Converge support by:

- Calling **1300 687 327**
- Accessing our Live Chat feature by going to **convergeinternational.com.au** and clicking on Live Chat
- Launching the **Converge smartphone app** and tapping on Contact Us or Appointment



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