

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Take Control of Change

No matter what we do in life, we are all facing changing times in some form or another. The workplace is constantly in transition as we wrestle with the impact of both lay-offs, and of continuing technological advances.

When we go home, many of us then also have to cope with the effects of personal changes that may include new elder care or child care responsibilities or perhaps relationship or financial challenges.

If you are feeling a little insecure amidst this sea of change, you are certainly not alone. Recognize that sitting back and worrying is not going to get you anywhere. In fact, one of the true secrets to thriving through periods of change is figuring out exactly what you can control and what you can't. And then actually doing something about it!

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Research shows that most of us spend 40 per cent of the time worrying about events that will never happen, 30 per cent about things that have already happened, 22 per cent about trivial issues, 4 per cent about events we can't influence and 4 per cent about real events that can be controlled or changed. It's this last 4 per cent that we must focus our energies on! Here are the four key steps:

The First Step: Knowing what you would like to change.

- Think about events or circumstances over which you would like more genuine control. Control means managing them better, reducing their unhealthy impact or eliminating them entirely.
- List these circumstances and write a brief description beside each of why it is important to you and exactly what it is you can or cannot control about it.
- Look for patterns on the list. Do certain people keep reappearing in the scenarios? What is the overall healthy or unhealthy impact on your well-being?
- Reflect on exactly what is causing these patterns and write down your thoughts.
- Writing important things down has a powerful, relaxing and focusing effect. It's as if seeing your significant life events in "black and white" helps take the mystery and power out of them.

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The Second Step: Deciding what can or cannot be changed.

- Reflect on the list you developed and decide which circumstances you can control and which ones you can't.
- Beside each event or circumstance, write down whether or not you truly believe that you can control them. Be truthful with yourself!
- Now make up a new page with the two headings: "Life Events I Can Control" and "Life Events I Can't Control."
- Enter the decisions you made previously.

The Third Step: Deciding where to take action.

- Recognize that you have two key alternatives: either you will take firm action on controlling, reducing or eliminating stressful life circumstances, or you won't. It’s as simple as that!
- Beside each of your stress items in your "I can control" and "I can't control" lists, write down in big, bold letters either "I Will Take Action" or "I Will Not Take Action."
- By consciously choosing and committing to take affirmative action on the life events that you can control, you are setting out on a helpful and healthy course that will lead to better outcomes.
- Recognize that if you have some items on your "I Can Control" list that you choose to do nothing about, you are effectively giving up and choosing to have more unhealthy stress and frustration when it makes absolutely no sense! Re-think these items.
- By choosing to take no action on events over which you have no control, however, you are making a great choice for personal health in times of transition.
- Admitting that there are some circumstances that you can't do anything about, means you are choosing not to fight the impossible. Instead, you are choosing to let these stresses go and to focus your energy on things you can do something about.

The Fourth Step: Making an action plan.

- This is a tough and vital step! You are about to make a realistic plan to change your unhealthy beliefs, attitudes and behaviors about circumstances beyond your control and to practice pro-change, healthy new behaviors for events you can better control.
- Start a new page with two headings: "Thriving" and "Letting Go."
- Record your decisions from Step Three, listing the events you intend to take action on under "Thriving" and the others under "Letting Go."
- For each event, decide on one or two simple steps you can take that will successfully meet goals.
- Assign a realistic timeline and describe how you will celebrate each success.
- Review your plans periodically. The importance of different events can change, requiring plan adjustment.

Change is inevitable so being better prepared for it’s arrival can go a long way in helping you not only balance your priorities, but also, your overall ability to manage the impact of the circumstances on not

only your own well-being but also for those around you too. Today is the perfect day to begin.