

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

Making It Work: Strategies to Handle On-The-Job Change

Whether the reality of the current recession has you feeling anxious about job security, left you with fewer co-workers and more work, or put you in a situation where your job has been altered so drastically, you're not sure what career path you're headed along, workplace change can feel unsettling and downright scary. The tactics below can help you turn a workplace transition into an opportunity rather than a misfortune.

Awareness is strength. Many people go through a kind of "grieving process" when faced with change, especially when these changes involve layoffs and the ending of close workplace relationships. *Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance* are recognized as the classic stages of grief and you may need to process all of these emotions before you can feel settled again.

Whatever side of the situation you land on, it is normal to feel threatened, under-appreciated and resentful, because there's an element of control you lose—whether you're forced to take on more work, or look for a new job. While you may not be able to control the circumstances you're facing, you *do* have power over *how* you react to the change.

Allow yourself permission to go through the grieving process and feel these emotions, and then move on. If you feel "stuck" in the anger or depression phase, look to a trusted friend or professional to help you arrive at acceptance and move forward from there.

Watch the talk. In times of uncertainty, it's easy to start second-guessing your abilities and dragging yourself down with negative self-talk. Constantly feeding yourself negative messages about your skills and worth can result in time off work, hostility, anxiety, a lack of motivation and even depression. Stop this bad habit in its tracks by challenging what it says directly. Respond to thoughts of "you're not good enough," by citing examples of all you've done that prove otherwise. Write out a list of all the things you feel you're good at, and those you think need improvement and then devise an action plan.

Look to your employer if you believe additional training might help. If budget cuts make this impossible, investigate lower-cost alternatives, such as webinars or information interviews, for learning. You will gain respect for showing this sort of initiative and willingness to build on your skills.

Keep it positive. Resist the urge to unload complaints while on the job. Instead, identify a time for stress relief at work. Take some of your lunch break outside so that you can avoid gossip; a midday walk will also help elevate your mood.

Share your concerns with your loved ones at home. Just like your work can suffer when you are having problems at home, your home life can suffer when you are having problems at work.

Prioritize. While there may be enormous pressure to "outdo" the colleague next to you, worrying about this can take focus away from your work. Instead stay focused on managing your time well. Take a few minutes at the start of the day to set goals and priorities and get yourself organized. Go over your duties and look for ways to streamline processes. Is a disorganized desk dragging you down? Taking 30 minutes to sort through your inbox or work area may save you hours of sifting through the clutter to find what you need.

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Empathize. In stressful times it can be tempting to criticize others, especially when they're in a position of power. Try to put yourself in his or her shoes. Restructuring is tough on everyone—and being the person that initiated the change can be the worst position to be in.

Be gracious. If you missed the promotion, how you react can put you first in line for the next. A few weeks after getting the news, ask your manager for a performance review. Bring your action plan with you. This will demonstrate your enthusiasm for your work and your dedication to your career.

At any point of your life where there is an ending, or a new beginning, the reaction has the potential to define your life and character. Reacting to on-the-job change is absolutely natural. But by remaining positive, open-minded and flexible during a restructuring or major workplace change, you'll not only rise above the fray and build your employer's confidence in your abilities, you'll also help transform a stressful event into a pleasurable occasion.