

MANAGING THE PERSONAL IMPACT OF WORKPLACE CHANGE

Change shatters our basic assumptions about life and the workplace.

- Life at work is predictable
- My job is safe
- I am in control
- Good things will happen if I am a good worker

Sometimes things happen that we cannot predict or foresee; things that we cannot control or prevent; things that bring undesirable consequences despite all our efforts to do well. This leaves us feeling vulnerable and insecure.

Change involves loss.

By definition, change means a transition from one thing to another; one thing is left behind, another thing takes its place; one thing is “lost”, another thing is gained.

Perceived losses can include:

- Loss of control
- Loss of relationships
- Loss of self-identity or self-esteem

Grief is a natural and normal response to loss.

Stages of Grief:

- **Shock, Denial, Avoidance** – Initially hard to accept that change is really happening. We may initially feel that it is temporary or that we can just keep on doing what we have been doing.
- **Bargaining** – We want to offer to work faster, harder, longer, better to keep changes from occurring.
- **Anger, Blame** – Involves a sense of betrayal. We may think things such as “management doesn’t care,” “management doesn’t know what they are doing,” “management knows more than they are telling us,” etc.
- **Depression, Hopelessness** – Reality sets in and we form perceptions of the losses that will be involved as described above. Those directly impacted less than others may develop “survivor guilt,” feeling guilty that they were spared the most adverse impact that friends/coworkers experienced.
- **Acceptance** – It may be that, once we reach that lowest point, we become open to the possibility that something good and positive may emerge from the change. We become willing to consider something different, something new. Acceptance involves making room for a new way of thinking.

We can approach change as a “Refugee” or an “Immigrant”:

REFUGEE

- Focuses on loss
- Vision is back toward what was and is no longer
- Feeling is grief
- Attitude is bitterness and cynicism

IMMIGRANT

- Focus is on new experience
- Vision is forward toward the future
- Feeling is fortitude
- Attitude is openness and flexibility

Being a refugee is a natural first response to change – but an unfortunate role to settle into.

What is
the choice?

<u>REFUGEE</u>
Bitterness
Withdrawal
Rigidity
Brokenness
Endings

OR

<u>IMMIGRANT</u>
Initiative
Participation
Adaptation
Bending
Beginnings

Things You Can Do To Help Yourself Through Change

- Take charge of your attitude, your self-esteem and your well-being – you can choose your focus during this transition. You can be a positive and powerful change agent.
- Avoid falling into “survivor guilt” – Empathize with those most impacted without unrealistically feeling responsible and guilty that you were less impacted
- Don’t wait for others to motivate you – Make this change your personal mission. Don’t wait for someone to come up with all the answers or make things better for you. Help create the future as you would like it to be.
- Monitor your self-talk – “I learn to believe what I hear myself say.” Condition yourself for positive action using positive self-talk.
- Look for opportunities – Don’t follow change blindly. Using your perspective, experience and observation, you can contribute to make the change faster, easier and more effective.
- Decide how you will respond to rumors – Verifying information will increase certainty and stability when it is most needed.
- Take care of yourself physically and mentally – Pay attention to the basics of self-care: eat well, sleep well, make time for physical activity, relax well, etc.
- Make choices consistent with your values – In all that you do and say, stay true to your most closely held values and convictions.
- Utilize your support network – Talk to those who are close to you, who care for you and who are trustworthy. Share your feelings with them.
- Ask for help as needed.

HealthPartners EAP is a phone call away: **866-326-7194**