



Handling Change

■ by Brian Smith McCallum, MS, Licensed Professional Counselor

WHAT, IN A WORD, IS THE ONLY CONSTANT IN THE UNIVERSE? CHANGE.

Change is inevitable and, ironically, its reality is immutable. Psychologists have remarked that humans are hard-wired to resist change; in fact, some individuals have such difficulty coping and functioning in the face of life's stressors that they develop a clinical condition known as Adjustment Disorder.

Change can be welcome: a marriage, the birth of a child, a job promotion; these positive changes, though, can be accompanied by additional demands, responsibilities, and stress. In short, eustress can morph into distress.

Change is at the core of counseling, too. Motivated individuals aspire to change their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; skilled helpers facilitate this process of transformation in others.

Change can be unwelcome as well. Unwanted change manifests in the form of a job loss, a medical crisis, a financial emergency. The aging process, likewise, brings with it myriad changes: the loss of loved ones; the loss of physical and mental faculties, the loss of dreams, etc.

How, though, do we cope with and manage change, whether it's desired or undesired? Maladaptive coping techniques include overeating, imbibing excessive alcohol, abusing substances, etc. Here, in contrast, are tips to positively handle transitions.

➤**First**, absorb Scripture that deals with God's immutability or unchanging nature, which can serve as an anchor for the soul. The following verses (NIV) may provide comfort:

- Malachi 3:6: "I, the Lord, do not change."
- Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."
- James 1:17: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

➤**Second**, acknowledge your fears, doubts, uncertainties, sadness, etc. Grieve losses to this end, and consult the Psalms...especially the Psalms of Lament (e.g., Psalms 13, 69, 142).

➤**Third**, resist isolation and pursue community; confide in family, friends, a small group, pastor, counselor. Hebrews 10:25 exhorts as follows: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..."

➤**Fourth**, establish a ritual or routine, especially a physical one. As you are physically able, take a brisk walking or jog for thirty minutes - - three to four times a week; doing so not only strengthens the body, but also recalibrates the brain and floods it with endorphins, nature's antidepressant and anxiolytic.

➤**Fifth** and finally, reframe your thoughts. As challenging as it can be to do so, we are responsible for what flows through our minds. Noted psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and existential therapist noted the following in his work *Man's Search for Meaning*: "Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing: the last of human freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." ■



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