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## Managing Change

The one thing that is certain in life is that everything changes.

Some of us sail through all changes and situations without any apparent signs of stress or strain, others find it harder to cope with any periods of change and imbalance in their lives. Being “stressed” is merely an inability to maintain a comfortable balance at any point in time, which makes us act a bit differently to our usual controlled selves. It is normal for people’s behaviour to change at times when they are under pressure. Often one element of their make up becomes dominant, which may not be the one they (or others) particularly like, or one of which they are even aware. So it is important that good relationship and coping mechanisms build up in good times and are there to help you to cope in the more difficult times.

These coping mechanisms, can be support from your group of friends or they can be methods that are internal and specific to you. Whatever they are, it is useful if you at least acknowledge their importance and that you are aware of any gaps that might exist in your support team!

Does your team cover everything you might need?

- |                                |   |  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Understanding when you need it | - | Enthusiasm and drive when yours is failing |
| Good Listening                 | - | Tough talking when it is required          |
| Encouragement to persevere     | - | Patience                                   |
| Humour                         | - | Provide different perspectives             |

On the other side, what do you give back to your support team?  
Do you help them to maintain their balance?

Change and uncertainty often run hand in hand. When previously established rules get suspended and new ideas and opportunities appear, we often need to grab them or lose them. Our readiness may not run exactly in line with the timing. There are times of indecision and fear of the unknown because we might prefer to linger in the comfort of the past and ask for a bit more time to adjust to a new idea. Change often doesn’t allow us the time to adjust. When our inability to control a situation causes us stress, we may need to deal with it in some way or another.

We all go through a specific process to help us cope with change, which has been described by Kuber-Ross as a Transition Curve. In simple terms, our perceptions of a situation adjust to change over time, so that we can eventually or even immediately adapt successfully to a change situation.

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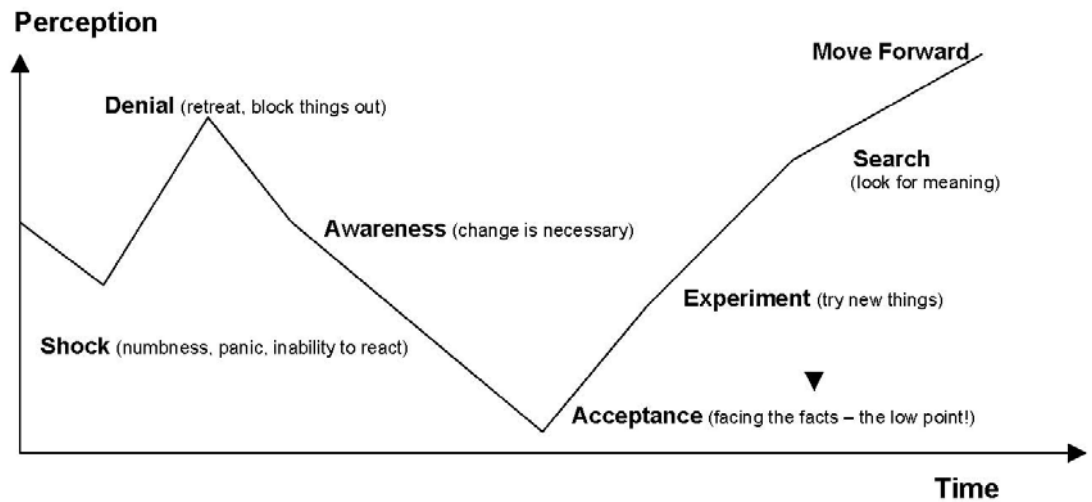
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In times of change we rely on our coping mechanisms to enable us to get to a point where we feel content with the new situation and then can move on. We use whatever is the best method for us. Do you talk things through or solve



problems alone? Who do you share your problems with? Your own thoughts on these two questions will give you some indication as to how you prefer to deal with situations. There is no wrong or right way of dealing with major changes, the one that works for you is the best for you.

The Transition Curve is designed to explain a persons reaction to major change, but equally it will relate to smaller problems where you have to face an inevitable situation. So it is useful to consider the process just in case it relates to anything that comes along – at least you will know that once you have passed the “acceptance junction”, it will only get better.

### Shock

Shock is basically an inability to cope with something. It can be as simple as an intake of breath or as extreme as the inability to talk, numbness, panic, sweating, pounding of the heart or dizziness. For some it lingers, for others it is a fleeting but intense blow, for which they were not prepared, but which passes equally quickly.

### Denial

The blocking out of something you don't want to hear or see in an attempt to try and make the situation go away. An inability to accept something, the head in the sand with the attitude - “nothing has changed I'm going to carry on as before”.

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### **Awareness**

The realisation that change is perhaps necessary and probably unavoidable, coupled with the thought of “how am I going to cope with this situation”.

### **Acceptance**

When the reality of the situation hits home! Things are not going to stay as they were, they have to change. This may be a low point because it is the realisation that there is no going back.

### **Experiment and Search**

This is a time of testing out what might replace the past situation. New ideas are tried to see if they fit in with a person’s own values and styles. There may still be a mourning for the previous situation, but there is a realisation that it was in the past and it is the future which is now important.

### **Moving Forwards**

Accepting and adapting to the new situation. Behaviours and styles possibly change to such an extent that the old situation gradually becomes a valued memory.

This article was produced by Caroline Salmon at Leap Consultancy for [Prime Initiative](#) who are a not-for-profit national organisation dedicated to helping people aged over 50 to set up in business.

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