Coping With Change in the Workplace

While change is inevitable, it is also one of the greatest causes of stress in our lives. Change in the workplace is no different. Downsizing, relocation, mergers, reorganization or restructuring, and technology are all causes of change at work that can create challenges. The following list of tips may help you successfully cope with change in the workplace.

- **Recognize that change**—whether good or bad—causes stress. Take appropriate steps to manage your stress. Get plenty of sleep, exercise, eat well and find outlets—taking a walk, meditating, journaling, etc.—for your stress. You may also want to consider taking a stress management course. For more information, please see *A LifeCare® Guide: Stress Management*.

- **Stay one step ahead.** Try to anticipate change so you can be better prepared to handle it.

- **Maintain a positive attitude.** Negative feelings are normal during times of change. Keep your spirits up and your self-esteem intact during the transitional period. Lend a helping hand whenever possible and keep doing your job despite disruptions you may experience.

- **Understand that the changes do not reflect your ability to do your job** but rather the company’s desire to adapt and grow.

---

Dan works for a computer software company that is undergoing a merger that may affect the structure of his department. Dan explains, “I know that the merger will be a great success for our organization, but I’m worried about how my day-to-day responsibilities will be affected during the transitional period and beyond. How can I make this transition a positive experience?”

- **Communicate any concerns to your manager**—along with positive solutions. For example, if you are concerned that you do not have the skills to manage a new project that has been assigned to you, express this to your manager and suggest that you set up a training session for your team to learn them. Additionally, if you will have a new manager, meet with him or her to find out what his or her expectations and goals are.

- **Stay focused.** It’s easy to get distracted when changes are occurring. Try to remember that you are still there to do a job and use whatever methods help you remain productive, whether it’s making a to-do list, re-evaluating your goals or coming in early to get work done before other co-workers arrive. If you find yourself getting distracted, switch to tasks like filing that require less concentration for a while.
- **Be flexible.** The key to successfully managing change is to realize that it is inevitable and work within the new parameters. For example, technology will continue to evolve. Rather than worry that your job or skills will become outmoded, take steps to learn new skills or take on different responsibilities.

- **Remain open-minded.** Be tolerant of organizational and management changes and remain open to new policies and procedures. They may wind up working to your advantage.

- **Know that things may get worse before they get better.** Implementing organizational changes can be a challenge for any company. The transitional period may cause some upheaval before the long-term payoffs become clear.

- **Investigate new career opportunities.** During transitional times, evaluate your current job and determine what aspects you like and what you would like to change. Assess the new professional opportunities that you might be able to take advantage of for positive change.

- **Maintain stability in other areas of your life.** While you may not be able to control the changes occurring at work, consider putting off making significant changes in your personal life to allow you to better cope with one transition at a time.

- **Keep a sense of humor.** Remembering to laugh and not take life so seriously is always a good idea when you’re feeling stressed.

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the changes taking place at work, ask if your employer offers benefits (e.g., seminars, counseling, etc.) that provide free emotional support on a variety of issues. Your human resources representative can tell you what services are available and how to contact them.

- **Maintain stability in other areas of your life.** While you may not be able to control the changes occurring at work, consider putting off making significant changes in your personal life to allow you to better cope with one transition at a time.

- **Investigate new career opportunities.** During transitional times, evaluate your current job and determine what aspects you like and what you would like to change. Assess the new professional opportunities that you might be able to take advantage of for positive change.