



Change is the only certainty

Julie Crawley from EAPworks shares her insights into living with uncertainty, or having to cope with sudden change.

“Life is what happens when we plan something else” – so said John Lennon, and oh, how true this seems in today’s world of unprecedented change on a personal, organisational, local, national and global level. It has also been said that life is a series of endings and beginnings.

In our work as a national EAP provider we support both individuals and workplaces undergoing chosen and un-chosen changes – ranging from “normal” individual life changes such as changing countries, relationships, and careers through to forced change such as redundancies and job losses, and critical incidents with accidents, bereavements and unplanned tragedy.

Change that is sudden, unexpected and has a major emotional and psychological impact is the most challenging to deal with as there is no time to prepare practically or psychologically. We are experiencing this in NZ on a scale never known before, with the profoundly sad Christchurch earthquake and its ongoing implications for individuals, families, work families and the city as a whole. People are left reeling, and through it all we are reminded of our shared humanity, our strength and our fragility, our interdependence, and the fact that even the strongest person has limits. Shock, disbelief, fear, anger, sadness are just some of the feelings that are common. Always, people have to face a world of the “new normal” where, for some, life will never be as it was before.

Although change is commonplace, everyone experiences change differently depending on their personality and temperament, background experiences and beliefs about the world, as well as the strength of their own resilience routines, support and coping strategies. We can’t always control what happens to us but we can choose how we respond to it.

When we are living with uncertainty, or having to cope with sudden change, the following can be useful:

1. Get accurate information - ask for information from a reliable source – if in doubt, check it out.
2. Remind yourself of all the aspects of life that are NOT changing.
3. Remind yourself what you do have control over. Concentrate on those things.
4. Focus on aspects of daily life and relationships that comfort us and offer stability.
5. Access your inner and spiritual resources.
6. Keep connected to your family, friends and workmates.
7. Value yourself – maintain good self care - exercise, eat well and take time to do the things you enjoy. If change is occurring in one role of your life, remember the other

roles that are not changing.

8. Remind yourself that it is normal to feel a whole lot of different feelings at times like this – sad, scared, uncertain....
9. Remember that you have already been through lots of changes in your life – and that you have done well! Remind yourself of what you are good at and the skills and knowledge you have gained.
10. Keep doing your job/life routines to the best of your ability and keep learning and developing new skills.
11. Think through options for your life and work – have a Plan A *and* a Plan B !
12. Be open to new opportunities – maybe you will have to do things differently...and that often a crisis can lead to new opportunities.

Some resources you may find useful are:

www.skylight.org.nz

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/page/5-home>

<http://www.letsthive.co.nz/>

<http://www.embracethefuture.org.au/resiliency/>

<http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/index.php>

You tube videos – “Managing transitions”