

The Positive Side of Change

Even if a change seems bad at first, it could have a positive outcome.

The key is to change your mind-set.

- Think of that tax audit as the first step toward getting your finances under control.

- Think of a job duty change as a chance to grow with new opportunities.
- Think of a family illness as an opportunity to become closer and “pull together” with other family members.
- Think of a diagnosis of high blood pressure or high cholesterol as a chance to start making healthier choices in your life.

The Power of Positive Thinking

Looking on the bright side may do more than improve your mood. Try it! People who learn to push negative thoughts aside and focus on the brighter side of situations are more likely to take care of themselves — eat right, exercise and get regular checkups — and avoid feeling discouraged.

Any change, happy or worrisome, can cause stress in your life. Because fear of the unknown is what makes most people uncomfortable, staying flexible and open-minded can help you manage the challenge. After all, change and adapting to it are a part of life — at work and at home. Having a healthy attitude is the key to coping. If you focus on the positive side of change, you might find it renews your energy and inspires new ideas.

Take That Tiger by the Tail ... and Turn It Around

Don't let change get you down. If you're constantly affected by changes you can't control, manage negative feelings constructively and make some positive changes of your own. **Here's how:**

- Look at your day-to-day activities one by one. Which ones can you change to make life simpler for yourself? If you're packing for a move, for example, concentrate on one room at a time, and don't be afraid to ask for help.



- If you've taken on new responsibilities at work, organize your activities into small batches that span throughout the day instead of tackling all of them at once. Congratulate yourself for small accomplishments, and remember that you got this job in the first place because you deserved it.
- Find the positive. Mistakes, communication breakdowns and broken equipment are all sources of frustration, but they can also be a jumping-off point for future success. Instead of wallowing in negativity, find ways to fix the problem and move forward with fewer errors.

- Have a purpose. Every day, recommit yourself to your overall goal. Perhaps it's to reach a certain milestone on a project, to solve a problem, or to improve systems and procedures. Devote the bulk of your time to realizing this purpose, then minimize distractions.
- If a family member is ill, make an effort to learn what you can do to help. Can you clean the house and shop for groceries? Help him or her do research about the illness? Or just be there to listen?

- When you just can't take it anymore, take a walk. Exercising is a great way to clear your head and soothe your body.

Don't let change control you — make your own positive changes and learn to take it all in stride.

Dealing With Change

How to Survive in a Fast-Paced World



Change: A Part of Life

Some changes you can't control: family illness, work demands, road construction on your commute, a tax audit. Any change, big or small, causes stress in your life. Even happy changes, such as buying a home, getting a promotion or having a baby, can cause upheaval in your life. And those upheavals can have a negative impact on your health.

Any change causes stress. A little stress can help you perform better — your heartbeat speeds up, your reflexes sharpen, you feel energized and on top of things. But too much stress can be bad for your health, both mentally and physically.

The key is to welcome change as part of your life. Think of a tree swaying in the wind. If it's too stiff, it will break. If it's too flimsy, it will bend with the slightest breeze. It has to be both flexible and strong to survive.

Take a Minute to Relax

Focus. Choose an object you like looking at, such as a favorite photograph or a candle. Focus all your attention on the object for two to three minutes as you inhale and exhale deeply. If your mind wanders, return your thoughts to what you're looking at.

Breathe. Close your eyes and focus only on your breathing. Notice how your breath feels as it enters and leaves your chest. Try saying a soothing word with each breath, such as "peace" on the inhale and "calm" on the exhale.

It takes only five minutes to lessen your stress. Do these techniques daily, and you might find that stress doesn't knock on your door as often.



10 Ways to Embrace Change

You can learn how to prepare yourself to keep up with change in your life.

1 Get plenty of rest. You can't handle change if your body is run down. Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night.

2 Manage everyday stress.

When stress piles up, it can make you short-tempered, tired and edgy. Try to take 20 minutes for yourself each day for quiet meditation, relaxing reading or music time, or pursuing a hobby. And get enough rest.

3 Avoid a "bad habit" binge. Stressful change may tempt you to overindulge by overeating, smoking or drinking too much coffee or alcohol. These behaviors can actually make you more susceptible to stress. Ask yourself why you feel the need for these unhealthy habits, and find more positive ways to cope.

4 Take a visual vacation. If you feel overwhelmed by changes you can't control, close your eyes and picture a quiet scene — a mountaintop, meadow or lake.

5 Talk it out. When you're feeling overwhelmed, call a friend, family member, co-worker or counselor for help. Or talk to a minister, rabbi or another person from your religious community. If you're religious, a spiritual community can be a good source of support.

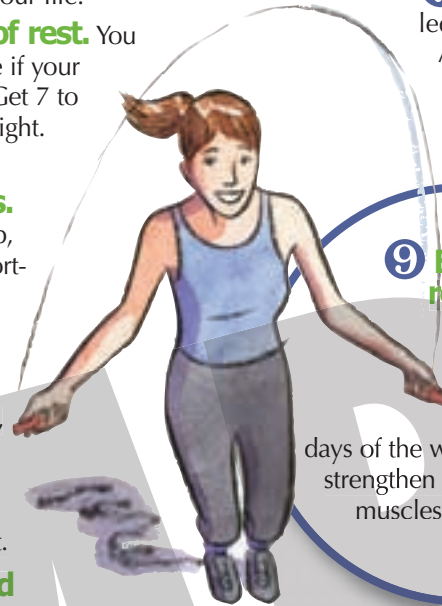
6 Get involved. Helping others — volunteering at a soup kitchen or becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister — can help you put your own problems in perspective.

7 Ask for help. If changes at work or at home have led you to take on more than you can handle, speak up. Ask a family member, friend or co-worker to shoulder part of the load.

8 Be flexible. If you feel as if everything's against you, you could be fighting change. Give in occasionally. If you know you're right, stand your ground calmly and rationally. Arguing only leads to more stress.

9 Exercise regularly.

Get at least 30 minutes of heart-pumping activity most days of the week to relax and strengthen both your muscles and mind.



10 Find something familiar. A major life change can make you feel as if your whole world is different. Focus on things in your life that haven't changed. Call a good friend, read a favorite book or rent a favorite movie. Spend time in a place in which you've always felt comfortable. You'll see the change in a more positive light when you feel grounded in the familiar.

