

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

COPING WITH CHANGE

Effective coping skills can help us overcome our fear of the unknown

Even though change is inevitable in life, we often resist it because it takes us out of our comfort zones. This is true even if the change is a positive one, such as getting married or starting a new job. However, effective coping skills can help us overcome our fear of the unknown and manage change by accepting what we can and can't control.

We've all likely experienced times when we reacted in a negative way to an uncomfortable change. Whether it was having an angry outburst, procrastinating, withdrawing from others, overeating, or drinking too much, these responses can have long-term negative consequences. Healthy coping strategies have better outcomes and include the following:

- **Focus on what the change means and what your options are.** Be as informed as possible to get a clear understanding of what you're facing and the choices you have.
- **Talk with supportive people.** Are there people in your network you can turn to for assistance or advice?
- **Practice relaxation techniques.** Meditation, yoga, and exercise are calming and can help to stabilize mood.
- **Take care of yourself emotionally and physically.** In addition to stress management techniques, get enough sleep and eat healthy foods.

You can also shore yourself up mentally by becoming aware of, and challenging, negative thoughts and attitudes about the change. Do the negative 'stories' you tell yourself create anxiety or worry and if so, what evidence do you have that these thoughts are actually true? You can probably come up with examples that show otherwise. Another way to banish negative thinking is to share your worries with a trusted friend who can view the situation more objectively and help you gain a different perspective.

As Pauline R. Kezer famously said, "Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights." When we stop resisting change and instead look at it as an opportunity for personal growth, we find that we are not helpless and have more inner strength than we thought.

