



Embracing change in the workplace

To thrive in today's highly competitive world, one needs to continually adapt and innovate. That means change is now the norm for most employees. But any change, whether it's positive or negative, personal or professional, can be stressful because it involves the unknown, and we tend to fear the unknown. Finding ways to embrace change is the key to success.

Understanding change

Change is something we can't control, but we can control how we adapt to that change – how we transition from an ending to a new beginning. But how we perceive a change often affects our transition. For example, if we see a change as positive and full of opportunities, we'll embrace it and adapt quickly. However, if we think the change might have a detrimental effect on us then we're likely to be resistant. Also, the greater the perceived threat, the greater our resistance and more difficult our transition will be.

Easing the transition

We might not be able to escape workplace change, but we can make it less difficult. Here are some tips to embrace change and ease the transition.

- 1. Understand the situation.** Get as much information about an impending change and how it will affect you. Speak to your manager and coworkers. However, when discussing organizational changes with coworkers, remember that their understanding or perspective might be different than yours and often this misunderstanding could spark office rumors.
- 2. Recognize your reactions to change** and its critical role in the 3 main stages of the transitional process
 - Endings. This is a time of loss and regret. We may experience a lot of emotions, including disappointment, sadness, or even anger.
 - The Neutral Phase. Changes have begun and we may feel uncertain, anxious, confused, and resistant.

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- Beginnings. We've accepted the new reality and understand our new role. We are more optimistic about the future.
- 3. **Have a positive attitude and an open mind.** Yes, change can be frustrating and stressful, but it can also be professionally advantageous. Focus on how things might work to your advantage and what new skills you may need to acquire.
- 4. **Think long-term.** Organizational changes can be a challenge for any company and the transitional period may cause some upheaval before the long-term rewards become clear. Remind yourself that current uncertainties will pass.
- 5. **Do what you do best.** Workplace changes can consume everyone's time and attention and that can cause productivity and efficiency to slip. Keep performing your job to the best of your ability and remain focused on your own performance.
- 6. **Be flexible.** This can be an opportunity to help influence change and become the go-to person on your team. Demonstrating a willingness to accept new challenges and help coworkers will also make people more likely to support you and your professional goals.
- 7. **Manage your stress.** Find healthy ways to cope with stress – a walk, a long run, yoga, meditation, massage, or take a few minutes to read a book or listen to music.
- 8. **Build a support team.** Talking about your concerns and feelings with trusted friends and family members helps keep things in perspective. If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out to your Employee Assistance Program for resources and support.
- 9. **Maintain a sense of humor.** Humor also helps keeps stressful situations in perspective.

Finally, remember that nothing stays the same.

Circumstances could change again soon, making you wish you hadn't wasted energy getting upset about the original change. If you're able to maintain a good attitude, you'll keep your options open. You might even find unanticipated benefits!

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Relationships in a digital world

Technology has changed the way we communicate. Texting, emails, video calls, and especially social media have, have become the new norms, replacing telephones and face-to-face conversations. These digital means of communication have also changed the way we develop and maintain relationships.

Just 20 years ago, most of us had a handful of close friends and a larger circle of acquaintances (neighbors, coworkers, business associates etc.). Today, that circle is even larger, with hundreds of virtual friends through social media and digital connections.

Advantages of relationships in the digital world

- Maintain family and cultural ties. Many of us have family members across the country or around the globe. This can increase any feelings of alienation and loneliness. But social media allows grandparents in India and cousins in the United States to be part of our daily lives and for us to stay connected to our culture and roots.
- Find old friends and make new ones. One of the key elements for good mental health is having supportive friends. Even the shyest person can meet new people online.
- Improve our self-esteem. Don't we all feel good when our posts receive several "likes" or positive comments or our complaints receive sympathy?

The downside of relationships in the digital world

- While digital technology has tremendous benefits, it can also hamper our ability to establish and maintain relationships in the real world. As more people are choosing screen-to-screen relationships over face-to-face ones, so more are finding the complexities and nuances of real life interactions increasingly difficult.
- In fact, electronic devices and the online world can be barriers to how we interact in the real world and actually inhibit the development of deep, meaningful and lasting relationships. Online "friends" or "followers" rarely know us well or care deeply about our well-being. They can't replace real-life confidants and loved ones.
- The digital world also allows us to present an edited or idealized version of ourselves or only communicate what we want people to know. No one sees and hears our less than perfect moments.

Keeping digital relationships real. While the digital world allows us to stay in touch with old friends, share your interests with new friends, and increase your professional network it's important to continue developing and nurturing relationships in the real world.

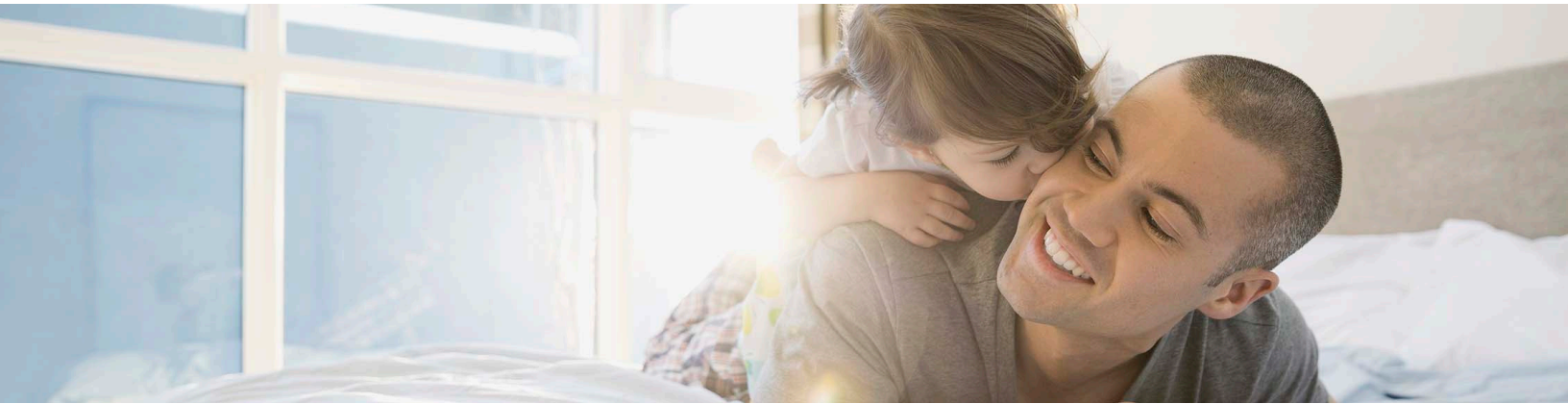
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The secret is balance

- Keep online relationships in perspective. Online relationships are no substitute for real-life ones. An emoji or acronym such as LOL can't replace shedding a tear or a laugh with a trusted friend or family member. The digital world may connect us with hundreds of people, but it can also increase our sense of social isolation.
- Find offline ways to boost confidence. It's great when people in our online community "like" or "share" our posts, but we can become so accustomed to receiving constant validation online that we expect it offline as well. In addition, basing our opinion of ourselves on other people's values instead of our own can make us unhappy. Instead, we need to focus on self-validation. We can do this in many ways, including:
 - Creating a support system. We need to surround ourselves with people who accept us for who we are, believe in us, listen to our problems and support us. If you need help, contact your Employee Assistance Program for resources and support.
 - Stop judging ourselves. While it's good to be realistic and acknowledge both our shortcomings and our strengths, it's not beneficial to constantly criticize ourselves. When your inner voice becomes harsh or negative – "I'm a failure," "I'm an idiot" -- remind yourself that you'd never say those words to someone else. Instead, say "I'm only human and am doing my best." Our imperfections make us unique and our mistakes help us grow.
 - Helping others. Seeing the positive impact we have on others is the best form of validation.
 - Limit time online. The digital world can be an essential business tool as well as fun and entertaining. It's hard not to respond to every email and text alert. Make a pact that the whole family unplugs for an hour every evening or on Saturdays. Instead, spend time together – play board games, get outside or simply have dinner together and catch up on the day.

It's important to find a balance. The digital world can, if used properly, enhance your real-world relationships. For example, Skype allows far flung family and friends to speak face-to-face and social media platforms provide a means to share updates, news, photographs and videos. However, online relationships cannot replace real-world interactions that contribute to the development of deep, meaningful and lasting relationships.

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