



## Healthful Ways to Manage Change

"In this present environment, it can be challenging to retain a sense of control, especially if you're someone who likes to maintain the status quo," says psychologist Elizabeth Stirling, Ph.D., a change coach in Santa Fe, N.M. In general, says Dr. Stirling, it's more difficult to react to change that happens to you, such as getting laid off or experiencing a health scare. But the change you initiate, such as switching jobs or moving, also can be difficult.

"The unknown is always a little scary," says Dr. Stirling, especially if you haven't done a lot of changing previously, or if change wasn't fostered during your upbringing. "But personal change can get easier if you adopt a positive attitude and an environment that diminishes the fear of the unknown and heightens your sense of adventure," she says. Dr. Stirling offers the following tips for riding the waves of change with your sanity intact.

**Solidify Your Support.** To cope with change effectively, align yourself with a group, such as a religious organization, and/or nurture relationships with friends and family members with positive outlooks.

"You need cheerleaders, people who are going to encourage you when change happens," says Dr. Stirling. "When someone says your new job sounds exciting, your confidence gets a boost."

**Appreciate Nature.** For general stress relief associated with change, "connect with nature to get a sense of being part of a larger whole," suggests Dr. Stirling. "Go for a leisurely walk in the park or sit by a river. Experiencing a deep sense of sacredness of all things, like the splendor of a spring day, can ease stress and put your issues into perspective."

**Look on the Bright Side.** With many changes come a sense of adventure and the opportunity for personal growth. If possible, "tap into the benefits of change," says Dr. Stirling. "Ask yourself: 'What will I gain by making this change?'" Even negative changes offer opportunities for learning.

Overall, "staying positive can help you reach your potential and recover faster from setbacks," says Dr. Stirling. But seek psychotherapy if change occurs and you're chronically anxious about it or stuck in the grieving process after several months.

**Flex Your Change Muscles.** Change gets easier when you do it often, so force yourself to experience enjoyable change frequently, especially if you haven't changed much in a while or you feel stuck in a rut. You might, for example, take a different route to work every other week, get involved in a new hobby or enroll in a class that interests you.

**Stay in Good Physical Shape.** Before and during times of change, it's important to stay in good physical shape and not let your eating habits slide. "Healthy nutrition and regular exercise can help your body support you," says Dr. Stirling. You'll be in a stronger position to recover. "By eating healthfully and exercising regularly, you'll gain a sense of personal control that can translate to the change at hand," she says.

### Access Online Resources

Go to [ibhworklife.com](http://ibhworklife.com) to access online tools and resources including articles, webinars and self-directed courses to help you cope with change in positive ways.

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