

Seeing Change As A Positive Experience

from the American Counseling Association

It's inevitable. Change happens. Often it's something minor, but it can also be a major change that leaves you feeling frightened, stressed and unsure of what's coming next.

But change doesn't have to be upsetting or a negative situation. It's your choice whether you want to see a transition as an opportunity for growth and improvement, or whether you want to desperately hang on to the status quo and stay in your comfort zone.

There are things you can do to emphasize the good in change:

- Decide on a positive attitude - When you look at a transition as an opportunity to grow and add to your world, you can approach change as something to enjoy and look forward to. Make this your mantra:

"Happiness is a decision."

- Use your support network - If a change has you feeling sad, confused or overwhelmed, look for support from others. It may be family or friends who are willing to listen in a non-judgmental way. Or you may be more comfortable speaking with a member of the clergy or a therapist. It may surprise you to receive help and support from unexpected places.

- List the stable things in your life - When things are changing it's easy to feel totally off balance, but the reality in most cases is that there are many things in your life, from friends and family who love you to familiar daily routines that will still be there for you. Simply listing them can remind you of the stability still in your life.

- Give yourself time - Life changes can happen in an instant, but orienting yourself to what has ended and what is coming can take time. Losing a job... experiencing the death of someone close... being widowed or divorced... they're all changes in which you need to allow yourself time to adjust to your new life situation.

- Explore the opportunities in the transition - It's often said that for every door that closes, another door opens. When a change happens, take the time to explore what new chances and options it may be bringing. Think in different directions and about the new things that might be possible.

For most of us, change is never easy but it often provides opportunities that might otherwise have been missed. Approach change as a positive experience and you just may find it is.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

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