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Change happens: Deal with it

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Having trouble with change?

Post these sayings where you can't miss them.

They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. — Andy Warhol.

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, The courage to change the things I can, And the wisdom to know the difference.

— Reinhold Niebuhr

We must change in order to survive.

— Pearl Bailey

Change happens: Deal with it

Ah, change: It's a beautiful thing. Well, that's one point of view. Another is that change can be scary. Even closer to the truth, regardless of your perspective, is that change is inevitable.

Some journalists have been around long enough to witness the evolution of media: from newspapers and typewriters to radio and television to computers and Web sites. The basic way we work is changing. Work has changed from that leisurely coffee break to craft that perfect lede and nutgraph to the quick trip to a coffeehouse with Wi-Fi to send over the latest update.

Today's journalists also are coping with other types of changes that hit other industries long ago. Downsizing. Early retirement. Job elimination. Job restructuring. Corporate takeovers.

Change, in other words, is getting personal. Change forces you to come to reality with the blunt force of WAM (What about me?). What about my future? What about my job? What about my plan?

So, with change being an inevitable fact of life, how does one cope?

Recognize that change happens

Life changes. Winter becomes spring, spring summer and summer fall. We grow from infant to teen to adult to senior citizen. Understand that change happens to everyone, including you. You have survived change before now, and you will again.

Spencer Johnson, author of "Who Moved My Cheese," noted in that bestselling book: "Noticing small changes early helps you adapt to the bigger changes that are to come."

Those small changes might be the request to move your work schedule or the addition of new duties that someone else used to do. Another clue: The co-worker who you never thought would leave heads to a different career field. Change is all around us, so notice.

Confront fears

The fear of change can be natural. We get comfortable with routines or a certain lifestyle, so we get nervous when change knocks on our doors. Fear also can be exaggerated into something bigger than it is. If you find yourself thinking "My life is over," rein in your thoughts quickly.

Remember this explanation of what fear is: False Evidence Appearing Real. Our imaginations can run wild, but then give them a reality check. Certainly consider the answer to the question: What is the worst thing that could happen here?

Plan for the worst, but expect the best. What-

ever happens, do not wallow in self-pity or wade through the lake of despair for too long. Life is ever-changing, so what looks bad today can look different next week with the right attitude.

Identify opportunities

Change also presents opportunities to grow, to learn, to contribute. Volunteer for the committee that will shape the policy. Getting involved gives you a license to share your ideas and shape the policy. It's like voting in an election. If you vote, you can complain. If you don't, you can't. Well, you can, but who cares if you didn't speak up when you had a chance?

Learn the new technology, but don't expect your company to pay for it. Instead, invest in yourself. If that means taking a course at a community college on building a Web site or courses for another career field, then do that. You are worth it, after all.

Take a personal inventory

When change creeps into your life or hits you like a freight train, consider this question: What is really important in my life? Chances are the most important things in life might be a list that looks like this: Family. Health. Spiritual beliefs. Self-respect. Integrity. Good friends. Peace of mind. Your job may be on the list, but closer examination might show you that it is not your job title, but perhaps the income. The key is to remember the things that matter most when change comes.

Prepare for change

Taking a personal inventory is one step in preparing for change, but the next step is creating an action plan for your stability. Because you have noticed that changes are occurring throughout the industry, take practical steps. Prepare your resume. Get new skills. Renew your contacts. Boost your liquid savings by starting or increasing your automatic savings deposit, cutting unnecessary expenses and debt, and delaying major purchases.

Discuss and act on change

You are not alone in the world of change, so look for opportunities to discuss change with family, friends, colleagues, bosses or even a professional counselor. Discuss what changes may be coming down the road and ideas on coping with it. If you are feeling stressed out about the changes, adopt a few healthy habits: exercising, walking, jogging, praying, meditating or laughing.

Whatever happens, you can survive. You've done it before, and you can do it again and again. That's the game of life. ♦