



## **Thriving in the Midst of Change**

Presented by Maria Sowden-Weingarden

# Thriving in the Midst of Change

## What is Change?

Change is the introduction of something that moves us outside of our comfort zone. Depending on your point of view, change can be for the better (a new desk at work that fits you perfectly) or the worse (having no drawers in which to store your supplies).

Here are some key points about change:

- Change affects everyone differently; there is no “normal.”
- Change is an essential element of the world and it must be accepted.
- Adapting to change is about our attitude.
- We need to grieve for what we are letting go of.
- Change is an opportunity for self-motivation and innovation.
- We can identify strategies for accepting and implementing our changes.

Change is the situation: the move to a new building, a retirement, or renovating a house. Transition, on the other hand, is a three phase process people go through as they come to terms with the new situation that change has brought.

## Change is a new car. Transition is learning how to drive it.

With a new car, I am:

- Thrilled with the notion of driving a faster, sleeker, and better model.
- Excited by all its fancy features and functions.
- Anticipating how much fun it will be driving my dream car.

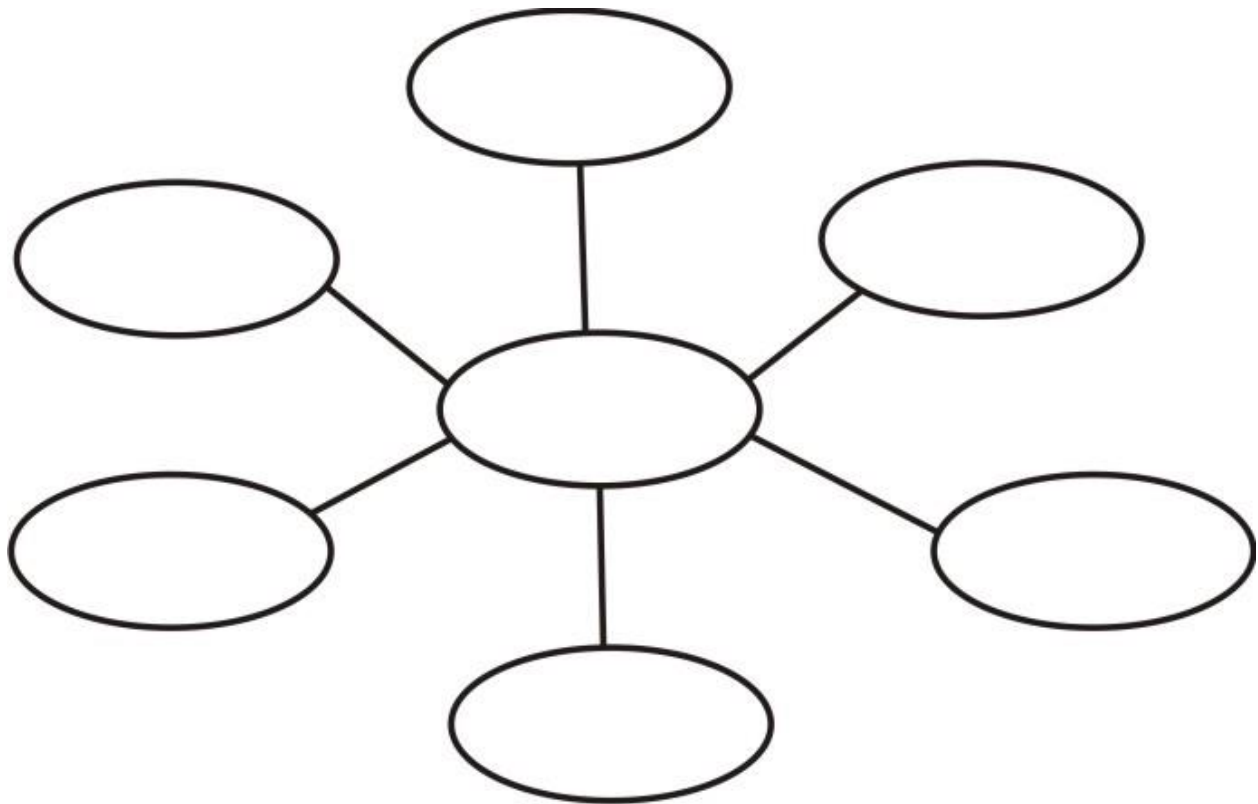
However, I’m also:

- Fearful and uncertain of how to use all the features, like the navigation system, heated seats, and electronic controls.
- The instruction manual looks complicated and I’m anxious and worried that I won’t be able to figure everything out.

I must:

- Give up something to get something. I gave up the old familiar car.
- Unlearn what I knew about my old familiar car and adjust to controls that are very different.
- Temporarily give up my cushion of comfort.

**Activity #1: When you hear the word 'Change' what words or phrases would you use to describe your initial reaction?**



## Activity # 2

Think of a change you have experienced.

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Did you feel threatened at the time? Did it open new insights, opportunities, or possibilities?

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What did you do that helped you accept the change and move on? What things did other people do that helped?

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Do you remember feeling like you were confused or angry?

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Did you have moments of anticipation and energy?

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### Activity # 3: Change Resiliency Quiz

Change today happens rapidly. No longer are there short periods of change, followed by long plateaus of stability. Most of our lives today are a continual, unrelenting series of changes, with little time for self-renewal. Keeping energized, optimistic and inspired in the face of change demands specific skills. You need to learn how to respond quickly and flexibly to new demands. These skills are called change resiliency.

Score each item according to how much of the time each statement applies to you.

**The Scale: 5(always), 4(often), 3(sometimes), 2 (rarely), 1(never)**

	always	never
<b>I focus on things I can do something about.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I seek out the support of people.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I have discovered a sense of meaning and purpose in life.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I engage in optimistic Self Talk.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I live in the present appreciating the past and focused on my desired future.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I am imaginative and brainstorm possibilities.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I leverage personal strengths and resources.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I have a deep awareness and compassion for others.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I actively listen and seek to understand.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I partner with others for mutual success.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I ask questions because I am curious to know how things work, and am open to experiment.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I am constantly learning from my experiences.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I expect to have things work out well for myself and others.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I play with new developments and find the humor in situations.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I adapt quickly to change, and am highly flexible.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I am emotionally intelligent managing my emotions well.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I listen well and read others with empathy.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I think up creative solutions to challenges and invent ways to solve difficult problems.



I manage the emotional side of transition.



I convert misfortune into good fortune.



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## Scoring

**89-100**

### **CHANGE MASTER**

You are doing a great job staying resilient in times of unrelenting change. Congratulations!

**60-88**

### **LEARNING**

You are somewhat change hardy. However, there is still room for improvement.

**51-100**

### **RED ALERT!**

Your change resiliency skills need some considerable attention. You need to change certain behaviors and learn new skills.

## Six Responses to Change

As we have already seen, people react differently to change. As a leader within an organization (whether you have the title or are a natural leader within your team), furthering your understanding of what leadership means will help you support people as they make the transition unfolding before them. You can use the following terms to put language to how people react to change and to understand what that means for managers who are responsible for implementing change in the workplace.

1. The **Innovators** will be those who want to try new ways of doing things or who have responsibility for continuous improvement. They will be pushing for change, eager to make things more efficient and up to date, and ready to try something different.
2. The **Early Adopters** on the team will be the first to embrace the changes. They may even rush in before they fully understand the change and why it is necessary. They welcome change, either because they immediately see the benefits or, perhaps, because they prefer variety to routine.
3. The **Early Majority** are those who are influenced by initiators and early adopters and who prefer to be ahead of the wave rather than swamped by it.
4. The **Late Majority** is more cautious. They hold back until they are sure they know what they are doing and until they believe the change has a fair chance of working. Only then do they come on board.
5. The **Late Adopters** are the last to come on board and they may not come willingly. They are not easily convinced of the value of change, but they can be moved to accept the change.
6. The **Diehards** resist the change. They do not come on board. They may be terminated, or they may be moved to a backwater position in the organization where their resistance interferes with operations less. They can become angry and bitter about the way things are going.

Managers and change leaders have noticed something interesting about groups that move into a transition. When 5% of the people in a group adopt a change, the change is embedded. That means that people have started to change to the desired behavior, and people around them are beginning to observe the change and make adaptations as well. When 20% have adopted the change, the progress is unstoppable. If you are successful getting your Innovators and Early Adopters on board and provide adequate support, the success of your change is assured.

## The William Bridges Transition Model

William Bridges is a highly respected authority on change in the workplace. He says that many change initiatives are set up to fail because they are “change heavy and transition light.” Since change and transition are both inherently different, they must both be addressed here.

### Describe transition.

At its most essential, transition is what helps you come to terms with change. A transition can be explained as having three stages: an ending, a neutral zone, and a new beginning.

### Ending

This is the adjustment to not doing something in a familiar way. We need to let go of something that is well known, even dependable.

- You must let go of the old situation before you move on to the new and this is extremely difficult for most people.
- People must give up old roles and things they identified with to make a successful transition.
- Letting go requires courage and faith.

### Neutral Zone

Here we are in a sort of waiting period, hanging in mid-air, without access to what we did in the past and with no instruction about the future.

- An "in-between" place that is often strange and confusing, uncomfortable and fearful.
- Emptiness that represents the absence of something. It feels like "nothing".
- Period where people seem to have lost purpose and meaning in reality
- Personal effectiveness declines.
  - Anxiety arises and motivation falls
  - People miss more workdays than at other times
  - Old weaknesses may emerge
  - People are overloaded
  - People become polarized
  - People are tired and respond slowly
- Individuals are not sure what is happening to them or when it will be over. People wonder if they are going crazy or being enlightened.
- People may "zone out" at work or at home.



- A temporary state of loss, that is to be endured. It is meant to be a time that we take to move away from the activity of our life.
- In the emptiness and confusion, the ground is being prepared for the emergence of a new life, a new beginning.

### **New Beginning**

Here we embrace the little known or unknowable and start over. When we are ready to make a beginning, we will shortly find an opportunity. Life often presents it to us. The transition process involves an inner realignment and a renewal of energy, both of which depend on immersion in the chaos of the Neutral Zone. It is out of the emptiness of the Neutral Zone that new form emerges. You can support and enhance the process, but you can't produce the results.

- We come to the beginning only at the end in the transition process.
- Important beginnings may emerge from the darkness outside our awareness. They are not always planned.
- Beginnings can have a mysterious and sometimes accidental quality to them.
- Genuine beginnings begin within us even when they are brought to our attention by external opportunities.
- Can be an exciting, high-energy phase where you commit to launching a new event or state of mind.
- Beginnings can also be indirect and unimpressive. They do not always come with exciting high energy.
- May encounter inner resistance to move forward, even when you really want to.

The adjustment period to change depends on the individual. It is easiest for those who can “flex” their approach in different circumstances at life and work, but it can be devastating for people who are unable to let go. Change can be awkward at first, but like being propelled into a steep turn on a rollercoaster, it can also be exhilarating. It can motivate you to do your absolute best. During change, time can be very slow for the reluctant, and a whirlwind for anyone who is ready for it.

## The “Denial-Resistance-Exploration-Commitment” Model

Some people may struggle with change for numerous reasons.

1. Individual circumstances.
  - People may be used to doing things a certain way, and don't want this to change.
  - They may be concerned that they will not have the skills, experience or time to manage the impact of a change.
  - They may personally disagree that the change will be a good thing.
2. Issues with the process of change or how it is communicated.
  - People may not be able to see the reason behind or the suggested benefits of a change.
  - They may not have confidence in those who have made the decision to change something.
  - They may feel they have not been consulted about a change.
3. Concerns that the change will make things worse, not better, in the future. For example, people might be concerned about:
  - relationships with other volunteers, including Unit Leaders/Commissioners
  - having less fun and fewer opportunities in their current guiding role
  - expectations and general conditions of volunteering in their role.

Negative reactions to a change from members of your team could have a serious impact on local guiding, including negating the benefits of intended changes or affecting other local volunteers negatively. It is therefore essential to support your team with change and respond to resistance to change. You may know of other volunteers' concerns about change and be able to predict how and when best to intervene to offer support.

The “Denial-Resistance-Exploration-Commitment” Model shown below is a popular four-step change model demonstrated famously by the characters in “Who Moved My Cheese?” This model easily relates back to the Bridges model. The Denial phase requires acknowledging that change is necessary and that it is happening in order to Let Go. Then the Resistance-Exploration phases while in the Neutral Zone, and finally the breakthrough to the New Beginning and a Commitment to the new desired future state.

## Activity # 4: Supporting People Through Change

Provide two to three things that you could do to help others during each of the four phases of change:

Shock and Denial

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Anger and Fear

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Exploration and Acceptance

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Rebuilding and Commitment

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## How to support others transition through the four phases of change.

**Shock and denial.** Girlguiding members were not expecting this change and are shocked. They disagree with the change and deny that it will happen or that they will be part of it.

Top tips to support others at this stage:

- Preparation. Give people warning about upcoming changes, so they have time to discuss and understand what these will mean for them individually.
- Prevention. Try to predict what might come up in terms of resistance and, be prepared with strategies to support other volunteers. Talk about tricky issues directly rather than avoiding them.

**Anger and fear.** Team members are worried what might happen and, may be fearful of how the changes will affect themselves and local guiding. They may be angry that changes have been brought in.

Top tips to support others at this stage:

- Communication. Be open and willing to talk about the changes and what they will mean. Encourage appropriate feedback and discuss how people's views can be taken into account.
- Learning and development. What support and training opportunities are available that will help team members to accept change more readily? Consider both formal training and facilitating informal learning, such as through peers.

**Exploration and acceptance.** Team members begin to explore what the changes might mean in reality for them, and to think about the benefits as well as challenges. People start to accept that the change is going to happen. Top tips to support others at this stage:

- Enable action. Encourage others to put changes into action in their roles and, provide them with the information and resources they need to do this.
- Be patient and persistent. Be prepared to go through things more than once or have the same conversation about the change in different contexts. You may hear concerns voiced for a long time after something has changed, but in time the change will become part of normal guiding life.

**Rebuilding and commitment.** Team members are committed to the change and to making it a reality in the long term.

Top tips to support others at this stage:

- Be realistic. Accept that however well you manage change within your local area, there will probably still be some resistance. Try not to take it personally, rather accept that some things take a long time to become established.
- Celebrate success. Recognise when volunteers have tried hard to accept a change and, celebrate the progress that has been made.

## **Additional Tips for Supporting Others Who Are Struggling with Change**

### **1. Manage your own emotions**

Before thinking about other people's emotions, you need to be aware of your own emotions. How do you feel about the changes? Are you feeling positive about them or do you also have concerns? Managing your own emotions doesn't mean denying your feelings or putting on a false front – it's about behaving in a way that means your feelings don't cause damage to others. You express your emotions through your tone of voice, language, body language, and behaviour, and how you manage these determines how they affect others. Be aware of how you come across and look at what needs to change. People will need to feel that they can trust and rely on you as a steady rock during the change process, and you need to manage your thoughts, feelings and behaviour so that you are calm, collected, and objective.

### **2. Prevention**

Try to predict what might come up in terms of resistance and be prepared with strategies to support other volunteers. Talk about tricky issues directly rather than avoiding them.

### **3. Be patient and persistent**

Be prepared to go through things more than once or have the same conversation about the change in different contexts. You may hear concerns voiced for a long time after something has changed, but in time the change will become part of normal guiding life.

### **4. Understand People**

Make sure you understand and acknowledge people's emotions. Really listen to people and take time to understand their specific fears: What are they concerned about? How strongly do they feel about it? Do they perceive it as a good or a bad thing?

Don't judge people by your own reactions to the change – everyone is different and things which you don't consider stressful or worrying may be really frightening for others. Empathize with people and really try to understand their feelings and perspective.

You can help people to articulate the reasons for their concerns or fears by asking open questions, accepting that this is how they feel, and it is very real for them, and making sure you don't criticize or disagree with them.

### **5. Give People what they need at different stages**

People go through a similar emotional path when dealing with significant change as they do when they experience a bereavement.

**6. Listen and validate.**

Accept that capable and committed people will experience confusion, anxiety, and doubt, as well as enthusiasm for the change. Don't try to talk people out of their emotions. Make it safe for people to express their emotions. Provide safe opportunities for people to vent, one-on-one, and in small groups. Allow people to say goodbye to the past and cherish their memories. Provide support that enables people to move forward and embrace the future. When emotions are acknowledged, and people are treated with respect, people are more likely to engage with change.

**7. Meet people where they're at.**

You can't force someone to accept change, nor can you 'speed up their process'. Everyone moves through transition at a different pace. Respect their process.

**8. Create hope for the future.**

Focus on the change vision and create a sense of hope for the future. In doing so, you can help people shift out of anxiety, and turn their concerns into curiosity. Conversations about possibilities can inspire positive emotions of excitement, confidence, team spirit, and a sense of accomplishment. Being open to new possibilities creates enthusiasm for what the future holds. Change requires a tremendous amount of energy. Sustaining change over the long term means tapping into the power of positive emotions.

**9. Allow people to voice their thoughts and feelings.**

It's a trap to dampen any negative feedback from people by insisting that everyone 'be positive.' Encouraging people to share their ideas and their feelings builds commitment to interim goals and the longer- range vision.

**10. Understand diverse perspectives.**

Empathizing with others helps us to understand different points of view and demonstrate caring. While we don't necessarily need to agree with these different perspectives, we do need to understand and acknowledge them. Ask yourself, *If this was happening to me, what would I want to happen? How would I like to be treated?* Different groups in the organization may be reacting to change very differently. Different emotional needs must be recognized and addressed according to the situation.

**11. Be realistic**

Accept that however well you manage change within your local area, whether it was instigated by you or someone else, there will probably still be some resistance. Try not to take it personally but, accept that some things take a long time to become established.

**12. Maintain a sense of humour.**

Even during difficult times, maintaining a sense of humour can help both you and others to put things into perspective and avoid getting caught up in anger or anxiety.

**13. Celebrate success.**

Recognize when volunteers hard to a change and celebrate the progress that has been made.