Many of us find change challenging to deal with, yet change is a constant part of life. Change that we initiate is easier to cope with than change imposed by others, although it may still be stressful.

Sources of significant change

Life experience changes:
Changes naturally occur throughout the normal course of life. For example, children growing up and moving out, friends and family dynamics changing and people passing away. Some of these changes are easier to deal with than others, but each can disrupt aspects of our lives and can be causes of stress.

Technology changes:
Technology is also constantly changing. Some of these changes are readily welcomed whereas others may take some time to get used to. In our personal life we have some choices over which technologies we use, but in the wider world and at work we may have to adapt to using technology that we see no need for.

Control
Change can sometimes set off a feeling of being out of control. Although we vary in the amount of control we like to have, it’s rare to find anyone who doesn’t want any control over his or her life. Change can trigger an anxious feeling that nothing will ever be right again or that our life is no longer our own.

Some changes, such as children starting school or leaving home, can be predicted. Others, such as natural disasters and death, may occur without any warning. All changes require some adjustment, but the unpredicted changes may be the most likely to cause major disruptions to our life.

Change can trigger a broad range of physical and emotional responses. These include:
- anxiety, nervous feelings, panic attacks
- excessive thinking
- poor sleep, nightmares
- loss of appetite or over-eating
- irritability
- feeling “stressed”
- poor work performance
- difficulty in making decision
- sadness
- increase in consumption of caffeine/alcohol/nicotine
- nausea, headaches, back pain, increased blood pressure, upset stomach.
Coping with change and transition

Almost every kind of change involves some loss, even if only loss of a familiar routine and loss of how things have been. This can trigger memories of other losses. If you find yourself especially tearful or feeling overwhelmed, it may be beneficial to talk to a qualified counsellor. Sometimes past losses need to be revisited and resolved.

Minimise the impact

- Seek the positives rather than focusing only on negatives. What are the benefits of this change?
- Keep other aspects of life much the same.
- Make an effort to fill your life with more of the activities and people you enjoy.
- Establish routines in other aspects of your life that connect with what you value.
- Temporarily put off non-essential activities.
- Keep a sense of humour and use it to put things in perspective.
- If any tasks seem too large to deal with, break them down into smaller steps and tackle one at a time.
- Seek out information to answer questions before imagining the worst.
- Stay focused on what you have to do today, rather than worry about what tomorrow might bring.
- Become actively involved in the changes rather than be passively swept along in it.
- Be kind to yourself and pamper yourself a bit more than usual.
- Use forced change as an opportunity to spring clean other aspects of your life and to get rid of clutter and things you no longer want.

No matter how small or large your life events are, many of them are an inevitable part of everyday life and can cause high or low levels of stress and anxiety. Some of these life events will require you to make large or small changes to your life. Knowing how to deal with these changes will help you to re-focus your life and goals.

For more information on coping with change and transition visit our website: www.livewell.optum.com
or contact us directly on:
Australia: 1300 361 008
New Zealand: 0800 155 318