



Work Life Services Newsletter June 2020
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COVID-19: How to Cultivate Resilience in Times of Change

A significant number of changes are happening in our lives right now due to COVID-19. You might be unexpectedly working from home, homeschooling your kids, caring for an elder, or experiencing other major life changes. This has most likely left you feeling uneasy, overwhelmed, or anxious. What is it about change that creates this common response and how can we understand change better in order to effectively manage it?

Do you classify yourself as 'a person who doesn't like change'? This is a very common statement, and one you have probably thought yourself or heard from family members, friends, and clients. Somehow, over the course of our life experience, most of us have created this story that change is scary, bad, and something that is better to avoid altogether. Does this sound familiar (even if just a little bit)?

Rightfully so, it seems that the imperfect, unpredictable, and often messy nature of change scares us. Especially given the real threat that COVID-19 presents to our safety and health, this worldwide change seems bigger and scarier than ever. While we can't control the virus ourselves, we can control the thoughts and feelings within us that relate to the fear.

Let's start by asking why change feels scary to begin with. Perhaps it's because it tests our resilience and our beliefs in our ability to overcome. Maybe it challenges our perspective taking and ability to see the positive rather than solely focusing on the negative. It could also be that change pushes us to develop new skills rather than stay in the comfort of our current success, or it opens the door for unknown failures and unpredictable challenges. Do any of these scenarios resonate with you? If not, consider how change feels to you and why that is the case.

Now that we have some perspective on why change can be so difficult, it's time to do something about it. Again, we may not have control over the COVID-19 virus itself, but we do have control over our sense of fear and the thoughts and feelings that are brought to the surface due to this challenging crisis.

What we are going to do is flip the script. Instead of living in the fear and worry thoughts, we are going to come back into the present moment and ask ourselves: How can I use this change to grow? How would this growth impact our life experience?

1. For starters, the imperfect, unpredictable, and often messy nature of change would no longer be as scary or something to avoid. You might embrace the mess it creates and use it as an opportunity to approach your daily activities differently. You might look to find the magic in the mess, as they say, and take more family walks, Facetime with family daily, or finally try out that meditation app you have been hearing so much about.

2. By not living in fear of change, you create time and space to prepare for change—mentally, emotionally, and physically. This preparation and proactive nature provide an opportunity for you to feel confident. You know that no matter what the change may be, you can handle it. For example, I can use my fears to plan and help me take action today. Today I will call and FaceTime with my loved ones to connect and show my love. Today I will try some creative ways to teach my kids, including the things I wish they had more of, like mindfulness, gratitude, and growth mindset. Or, today I will think creatively about the other possible forms of toilet paper we have available, such as paper towels, tissue boxes, and baby wipes.

3. Fearing change can often create a looming cloud that hangs over us when change strikes. It makes us hyper focused on all the negative aspects of change that we fear. But, without this cloud of fear blocking our view, we would be better able to see the situation through a more balanced perspective. We could then see the positive aspects more clearly and experience many more positive emotions. Wouldn't it be nice to experience joy, gratitude, interest, hope, serenity, or amusement right now instead of fear?

4. Finally, having this newfound belief in your abilities would allow you to embrace the character and skill growth that comes with change. You would no longer fear the potential for setbacks or unknown challenges, as they would all be opportunities to grow. You would have the space and perspective to approach this unimaginable change, not from the perspective of difficulty, but rather from the perspective of growth, opportunity, and hope.