

Fostering Change

Lifeline Corporate Training along with Heart and Soul Coaching produced a webinar to help you understand and respond to change. The *Fostering Change* webinar can be found at

<https://www.selfcareproject.com.au/covid-19%20resources/>.

I hope that the webinar and these notes give you ideas and strategies to help you to negotiate change, both now and with the many changes you will experience in your life.

The video was made during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the information is timeless and is relevant across all times in your life.

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Fostering Change webinar notes

The amount, the extent, and the pace of change we have experienced recently have been enormous. It has been largely unexpected, and there is still a great amount of uncertainty about how things will play out.

In this webinar we cover

- The nature of change
- How we experience change
- Strategies to better meet the challenges of change

The Nature of change

Change is a constant in our life. From the moment we are born till the end of our life, we experience change. These changes provide texture to our life. Some are part of our natural progression through life, and some are from specific events. Some are expected, some are unexpected. Some changes are positive and we look forward to them and welcome them, other changes can be difficult and can cause suffering. Some people like change and search for it, other people try to limit change in their life.

I limit change |—————| **I welcome change**

In what ways do you welcome change, and when do you try and restrict it?

Some changes are significant to how our life unfolds and we look back and see them as 'life defining' moments. Life transitions are often significant times.

What have been some of the significant times of change in your life?

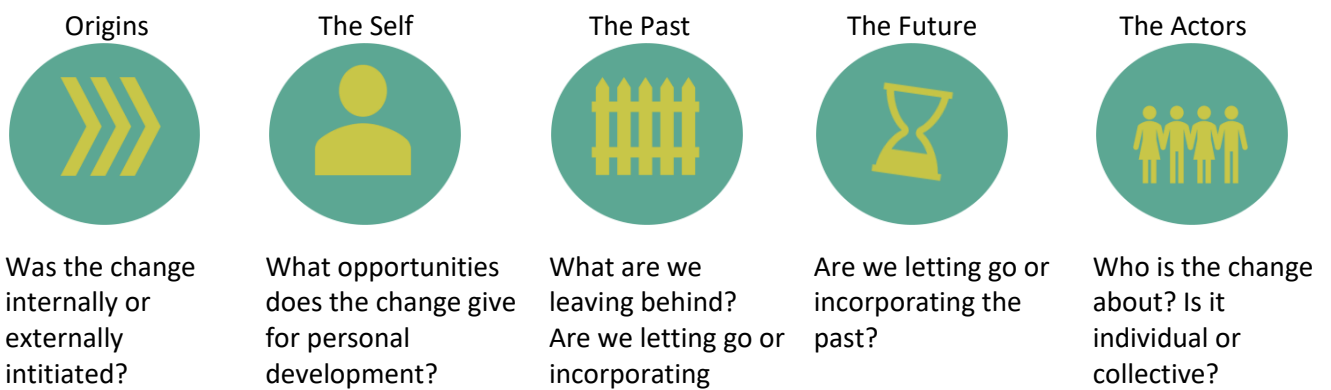
What were your thoughts and feelings at the time, and how do you look back at those changes?

Three common impacts of change

- Disruption
- Nervous system responses
- Loss

Frameworks of change (4:34 min)

Francesco Duina poses 5 key questions when it comes to life transitions.



We can also adapt each of these elements to get a better understand of a particular change in our life.

How has the change come into your life?

How has it impacted you?

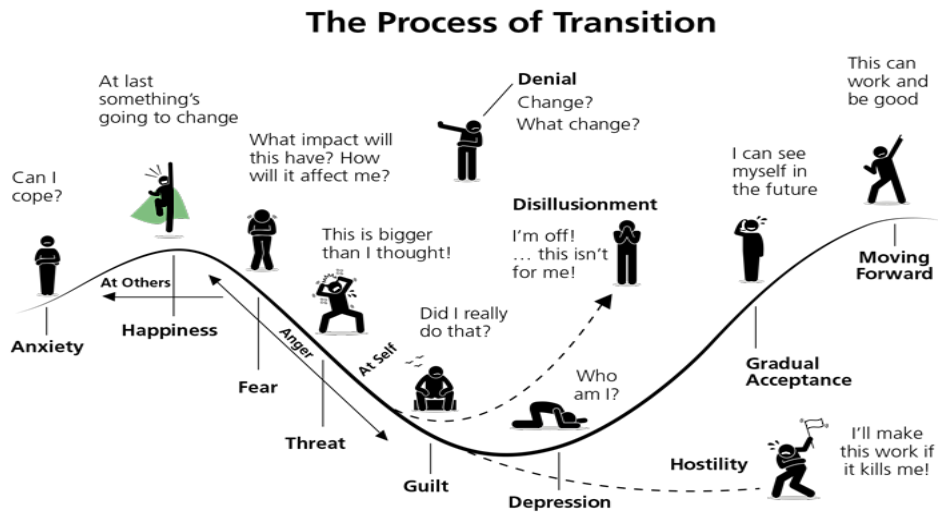
What was the past like?

What is the future looking like?

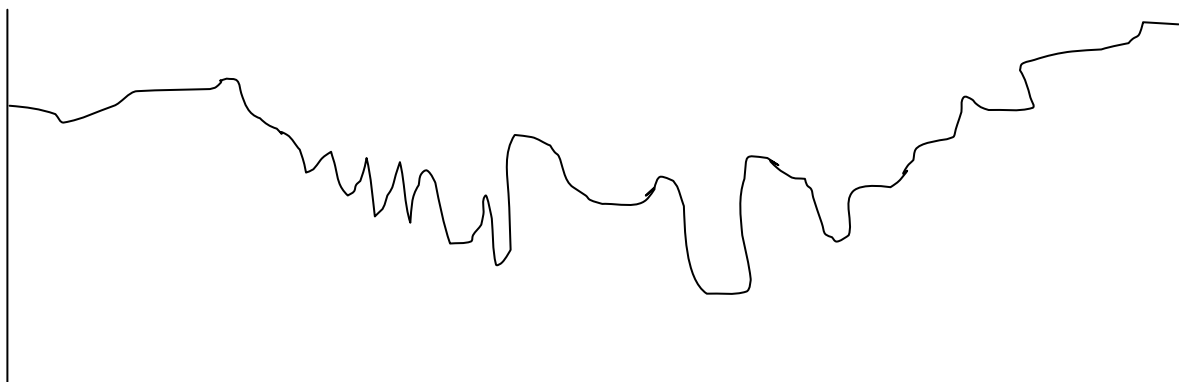
What are the different people and systems involved?

The story of change (6:15min)

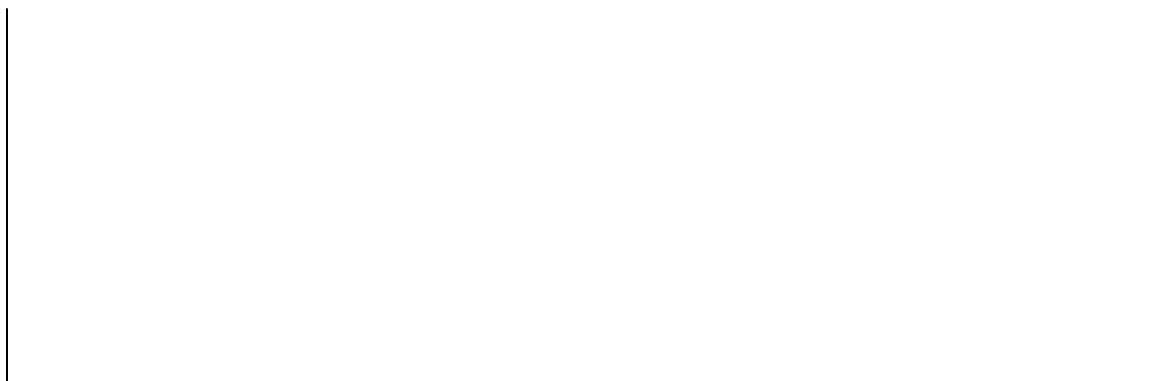
John Fisher describes some typical responses to change.



We can use this idea to map the story of a change in our life. Here's an example



Use a line to represent how a change has happened in your life. You might like to use the recent changes. Try putting words or pictures on the line to describe what was happening for you at the time.



In the webinar people described their experience of change and we discussed key points from their stories. (7:15)

- There can be multiple changes in different areas of our life at once. They may not be linked in their origin but they can combine in their impact.
- During change we may not know the options that will be available to us or how we will manage. New coping strategies will emerge over time and having an awareness of this can help leave the door open to them.
- Adapting to change takes time
- Change doesn't always have a clear start and finish. It is often a process with many changes along the way
- Not all change is negative and often there is a mixture
- There can be disparity and difference in people's experiences of change. This can cause some tension between them.
- We often use metaphors to describe what is going on for us and vague descriptions

Change and disruption (13:50min)

Change disrupts our life and it can be difficult to find our feet. This can feel uncomfortable and be a difficult thing to negotiate. We can feel that we are not 'in the old' but we are not yet 'in the new'.

When we pass from one state to another we experience an in-between or "liminal" state. We are neither **here nor there**, we are **betwixt and between**. *Turner 1969*

This stage is characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty and a lack of visibility – we are no longer who we were, but we are not yet who we will become.

Change and Stress (15:30min)

Stress can be an internal response to the changes that are happening. The main thing that governs our internal response, is our nervous system. This is our core, fundamental operating system.

Our nervous system can respond in different ways. It can mobilize and generate action. A positive example of this is problem solving and taking action. A stress mobilized response is fight and flight, so we might feel anxious and fearful. This is our nervous system trying to protect us from a perceived danger.

The other nervous system response we can have, is that we can shut down. We can feel that things are too much and we find that we are in a fog, or we feel hopeless and helpless and say to ourselves

“why bother”, “what’s the use”, and just want everything to go away and we withdraw. Again, this is the nervous system trying to do it’s best to protect us from what is happening. Sometimes we don’t have a lot of influence over our nervous system responses.

People on the webinar provided the following examples of what they have noticed;

- Irritability. Sometimes we know why, but at other times we don’t.
- Frustration and disagreement. People see things in different ways and there can be quite a bit of emotion around this. These responses can particularly come to the fore after the initial impact has occurred and the weeks and months go on.
- A lot of people are feeling overwhelmed with all of the changes. Having to cope with work, home, home schooling. The amount of change and the different levels of change has been enormous. Just even the amount of information we are receiving through TV and emails is something to be managed. This can overload us.
- Sometimes we want to avoid the difficult things and focus on the easier ones that are more achievable. This can be both helpful and unhelpful.

Our ability to notice what is happening can help us in our responding to change. The responses are normal, human responses and it is then up to us to work out how we are going to manage these.

What are some of the responses that you notice within yourself?

Change and Loss (22:50)

Even if change is expected or even welcomed, change always signifies the end of something. So when we experience change we also experience a loss, and associated with this can be a feeling of grief. The losses are big and small, and sometimes it is the small simple things we will really notice. You can’t compare the size and amount of losses between people with all losses to be honoured for what they are and how they impact us as they play out in our life

The participants gave the following examples of losses they had experienced

- The loss of freedom and choice, not being able to do the things I normally do
- The loss of work I enjoyed more
- The loss of being able to hug my parents
- The loss of plans, both work and personal, even if the new is better
- The loss of routine

What sort of losses, large and small have you experienced with a particular change?

Navigating our way through change (27:00 min)

Personal agency is our ability to summon our resources in order to respond to the changes that are happening. Here are some ideas

1. *Walker there is no road, the road is made by walking* - Antonio Machado.
Sometimes there's no preset way to manage change so we need to discover and develop the way as we go along. To do be able to do this it's useful to be able to regularly stop, pause, and take a breath. This gives us a bit of breathing space, and helps us to regather, reset and 'catch up with ourselves'. It also gives the unconscious mind space to process things in the background. Even brief moments of stepping back are useful.
2. Self care – Finding ways to look after yourself, finding ways to be kind to yourself in the midst of what's happening, and finding things that nourish and strengthen you. Here's the link to where you can find the Self-care webinar we recorded along with the workbook and notes. <https://www.selfcareproject.com.au/covid-19%20resources/>
3. The importance of doing small things along the way. These small steps help to mobilize your resources and help you to gain the sense of control, personal agency, and structure. It sends a message to the nervous system that 'we have got this' and it helps the nervous system calm.

Participants gave some ideas about what they did to manage change including

- Self care – grounding, connecting to nature and taking it in through the senses This gives a sense of 'being present' and not being distracted. It's like 'coming back to yourself'.
- Taking the opportunity when things are slower to achieve things you don't usually have time to do. You get a positive sense of achievement in 'ticking those things off the list'.
- Establishing a routine for myself. Work and home have often been quite separate, so working from home has been a challenge in many ways. The new routines provide a sense of safety. The safety comes from having a structure in which to operate in that allows me to do the things I need to do. Not having the trip home from work to wind down and think about things that need to be done means that I have had to establish different routines to allow me to do those things.
- Working out a plan to move forward and being able to visualize what I'm going to do step by step. This helps reduce my anxiety levels. Having a plan for the day. These things can provide order and structure which are really useful in times of change and upheaval. Writing things down can help concretize the plan which helps your mind and nervous system settle.
- Being able to recognize a pattern of how change is experienced and only getting concerned if things don't process through in line with what normally happens.
- Being able to name and recognize what's happening and perhaps identify a set of skills or attributes needed to respond to it.

What are some of the things you've done to help you find your way through change?

Circle of influence and circle of concern (39:53 min)

The Circle of Influence and Concern helps us to look at where we spend our energy, and the relative influence our actions might have on the outcome.

Positive benefits of change (41:20 min)

Change often brings positive things into your life that would not have been there without the disruption. We can learn, grow and change within ourselves as a result of responding to change. There is no timeline for doing this, but most change will at least have something positive, however small, that comes from the change. It doesn't negate the damage that some change brings.

What are some of the benefits that you've seen from change?

The group on the webinar gave examples of the positive benefits they have recently seen as a result of change.

- Having to innovate and doing this well
- Becoming more agile in adapting to
- More time for myself
- Personal growth – sometimes this is in hindsight 😊.

Webinar Conclusion

We finished the webinar by choosing some words that we would like to take forward into the future. This can be a really useful thing to do in times of change.

The *Fostering Change* webinar is proudly brought to you by Heart and Soul Coaching and Lifeline Corporate Training Queensland. The notes are produced by me.

Thank you for your time in looking at these resources and I hope you can take away some things that are useful for you. Further resources can be found at www.selfcareproject.com.au.

Go well and take care of yourself and each other,

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