

*Practical resilience tips
for work and life*

Navigating Change & Challenging Situations

We (as humans) have an amazing capacity to adapt to change and challenge – especially if we take deliberate effort to use helpful coping strategies back by experience and science. While everyone of us, and our personal circumstances, and coping strategies are different, we know that some form of reaction will occur when we meet a challenge - no matter how tough, old, smart or experienced we might be.



Regardless of the complexity, significance or difficulty of the challenge – there are tips and tactics that can be put into place. They help us move from shock, through mixed emotions, and toward acceptance and trying new things.

NAVIGATING (getting through it)

Navigating challenge or change is an active process of acknowledging reality, considering options and taking action. It takes effort and can be stressful. Good coping or 'resilience' in the face of challenge strikes a balance between:

1. Acknowledging personal reactions and impacts as part of being human and
2. Inviting ourselves to change, by trying new actions and approaches that are likely to serve us (and others) well

RECOGNISING GOOD ADVICE

Sometimes we're still in the 'shock and absorption mode' and not ready to change, yet at some point this advice will ring true:

- Accept that the change has happened
- Don't take it personally (unless it is)
- Remember we have the capacity to adapt in time (you've adapted many times in work and life already)
- Set limits on 'worry time' – sit and write plans instead
- Ask yourself, 'by changing to adapt, what will I gain/maintain?'
- As best you can, maintain healthy lifestyle routines
- Sometimes we need support, and sometime that will be me
- When in doubt, check-in with others and clarify expectations

RECOGNISING REACTIONS

By recognising personal reactions to challenging situations and change, and acknowledging these as human, we can begin move from awareness into helpful action. Seek help if these reactions persist and affect your functioning.

Common reactions:

- Shock, confusion
- Uncertainty
- Concern, worry or fear
- Stress or tension
- Sadness (sense of loss)
- Frustration (anger)
- Self-doubt
- Overthinking scenarios
- Not sure how we are feeling
- Interest, energy, excitement

Why might things be challenging?

- Not prepared or expecting it
- Involve strong emotions
- Feeling out of the comfort zone
- Sense of 'lack of control'
- May involve confrontation
- Takes effort and time
- Unsure of what to do
- They push our buttons (triggers)
- Required to be assertive and ask for what we want

RELAXATION TACTICS

We recommend you find healthy ways to relax on cue. Relaxation tactics change the pathways of the brain, calm the stress response and increase our clear-thinking capacity. We move from reacting to responding.

- *Controlled breathing:* Begin to breathe deeper and slower, relax the tummy
- *Body-scan muscle relaxation:* Relaxing the muscles from top to toe, releasing tension as you breath out
- *Use constructive, helpful thoughts:* "There is a way through this, and I can get help. I have a plan, and I'll follow my plan. Just breathe, pause and think about it. Many others have experienced this same thing. I don't have solve it today, but I can take step and seek advice..."

REOCUSING ON OPTIONS & INTENTIONS

Whether the situation involves dealing with unexpected news, making a change you didn't want or responding to other people's behaviour... this can be made easier by stopping and getting into a problem-solving mode. Write down and/or talk with a trusted person about these things:

1. What is the specific situation or behaviour of concern to you?
2. What impact did this have on you (is having on you)?
3. What sensible options are there for you to navigate this?
4. What further information or help do you need right now?
5. What are you thinking about this & what is your intention or plan?

REFOCUS WITH QUESTIONS

Putting one's mind back on task, or to the bigger picture if needed, can be done by pausing and answering self-directed questions (which activate the control centers of the brain). For example:

- What do I need to be doing right now, that's sensible and serves me (and others) well? (the task at hand, talking, thinking or planning?)
- What single action can I start right now that can help me navigate the situation? (even it doesn't yet solve the situation)
- What will I think, say and do next time this situation or concern happens?

REFOCUS ON WISE ACTIONS

Once you're in state of composure, it becomes easier to choose helpful, wise actions, even if that is do nothing

- Just listen or observe
- Continue carefully and see what happens
- Clarify the issue or need (get more information)
- Accept things for the time being and cope for now
- Give feedback or ask for change
- Step back and check my thinking and assumptions
- Tactical withdrawal (leave it for now and get advice)
- Ask for help or advice

REFOCUS THROUGH YOUR VALUES

No matter what has happened, how you feel, what they did or didn't do - you can, with composure, refocus your next action according to your values. By doing so, we're more likely to engage the 'responding mode' and communicate more skillfully. Some examples include:

- Respect
- Patience
- Kindness
- Helpfulness
- Flexibility
- Courage
- Friendliness
- Forgiveness
- Acceptance
- Assertiveness
- Honesty
- Diplomacy
- Safety
- Connection
- Cooperation
- Fairness

RECONNECT TO THE GOOD THINGS

Recall the good things and reconnect to people and sources of support. This is a wellbeing booster. Consider these:

- My go-to-person for advice and support
 - My existing skills and abilities that I could use now to help me
 - My past accomplishments that show I can adapt and navigate challenges
 - My (healthy) go-to-activities that help make me feel good
- And... the good things in my life I can appreciate and be grateful for

HEPLING, CHECK-IN CONVERSATIONS (coworkers)

A great way to support each other is to have some set questions to ask, when doing a check-in. Go beyond the quick chat and take time go through these sorts of questions, listed below:

1. How are you going?
2. How has the situation affected you and your work?
3. Did you want to talk more about it? You might already have a strategy to tackle it. I'm happy to listen and help if I can.
4. What could I do (within my role or as a workmate) to help you at the moment?
5. Can I check in again with you later?

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

If these sorts of tips are not enough to help you navigate the change or challenge that you're facing, reach out to professional support for a tailored and personalised support plan.

- Your doctor or counsellor
- Your Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- Your HR business partner or Health and Safety Team