

*Change is
old news:*

how you thrive
through it is new

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

– John F. Kennedy

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Shift happens

Aren't you just the tiniest bit bored of hearing about change? The change curve. How management should lead change. Change management strategies. Successfully implementing change. **Change change change change change.**

Well, the truth is; so are we. And that's because, when a shift is looming in your organisation, the actual change is the least interesting part. A new structure, changes in strategy, leadership, mission or culture. Those are changes that can – and most likely will – happen to you during the course of your career.

So they're a given. And with the pace of technology as fast as it is, we're rapidly moving towards a future

where, according to [World Bank research](#), the proportion of jobs threatened by automation can be as high as **85%** in some countries. So – expect change. And lots of it.

In fact, change is not just a given: it's also a constant. Change is the new normal: so much so that you should start to take for granted the fact that, whatever you're doing now, this time next year you'll be doing something – if not everything – differently. Given the constantly shifting landscape, change is starting to become much less of a phenomenon and more of a quietly constant undercurrent to all of our working lives.

It's all about you

What's much more fascinating to us – as you'd expect from a people development company – is what's going on for the people affected. When you are facing change, you're also going into a deeply personal journey: one where you will face up to who you are, what you need as you go through change, what aspects of change you find challenging, and how you can thrive – not just survive – through change. And that personal development journey – well, that's where the real gold lies.

Thrive at the speed of change

When you learn to lean into your personal approach to change, you'll be able to thrive at the speed of change – not be left, gasping and adrift, in its wake. In this book we'll help you understand:

- **Why self-awareness is the key to thriving through change**
- **How developing a growth mindset raises you up out of the turbulence**
- **Why resilience is the required skill of our times**

Keep reading, and find out how you can thrive at the speed of change. Because change is coming, soon, to an organisation near you.

Chapter one

Change is standard:
humans are unique

Change is standard: humans are unique

New technologies are enabling changes in life and in the workplace all the time, and in the midst of this it's possible to begin to feel, well, a little lost. Let us know if this sounds familiar.

You're woken up by the alarm on your smartwatch; before you get out of bed you've replied to a couple of texts, sent an urgent email to a client and, while you're in the shower, you ask Siri to set a reminder of your mum's birthday next week. You Instagram the beautiful morning sky (not a selfie, you haven't even had your coffee yet), you go online to order that coffee, and then book a car to take you to work through an app. Where, in this data-filled, data-fuelled morning, did

you spend any time just quietly sitting with yourself; thinking thoughts, making plans, taking decisions or just pondering the meaning of life? Sometimes we can forget to put ourselves front and centre of our own lives, and that our existence isn't for the consumption and approval of others.

The truth is that we're all so busy conforming to social norms, fuelled by the ubiquity of technology, that we've forgotten the most impressive and magical fact about humanity – that each one of us is 100% individual. And this is just as true when it comes to change as what's our favourite Instagram filter.

Get with the (change) programme

Ah, change. That terrifying-yet-monotonous undertone in all our working lives. It's become so regular it's almost constant. In fact, change is the new normal. What isn't normal – is you!

Every one of us is unique. We are each a beautiful, irreplaceable mass of human emotions, likes, dislikes, preferences, habits formed, inhibitions, attitudes and beliefs. We know this, but we've pushed it down over time because society demands – or certainly, is more comfortable with – uniformity.

So maybe, in order to ride the bumps that change can cause, we need to step back from constantly doing-liking-posting-tweeting-retweeting-sharing-sending and re-focus on ourselves. Because you can't truly understand why you react to change the way you do, what your needs are when you're in the grip of change, what your own unique emotional journey through change looks like, unless you first understand that most elemental of things – yourself.

Self-awareness is non-negotiable

Very few of life's endeavours are made better by only having half the story. You wouldn't jump into a novel at Chapter Three any more than you would attempt a marathon without doing some training first. So why would you try to live your own life at surface level, without ever going deeper than you would with a passing acquaintance?

When it comes to change, it's that much more critical to develop an awareness of how you – you – approach and cope with it. Otherwise you're looking at a career filled with moments of stress, unhappiness and nail marks in the desk that they've moved out from under your iron grip.

“It isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions. Change is not the same as transition. *Change* is situational: the new site, the new boss, the new roles, the new policy. *Transition* is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external, transition is internal.”

– William Bridges, *Managing Transitions*

Change happens; it's transition that takes time

The thing to learn about change is that it's like the tide. It's external to you, not within you. It's powerful and compelling, and it will keep happening, relentlessly, whether you like it or not (and you might, we're not suggesting that change is all bad, just that change is, and always will be).

For a long time, how people journey through change was understood solely through the change curve – a model which suggests that a change event suddenly happens, after which we all move through the same range of emotions (denial, anger, acceptance, and so on) at the same rate.

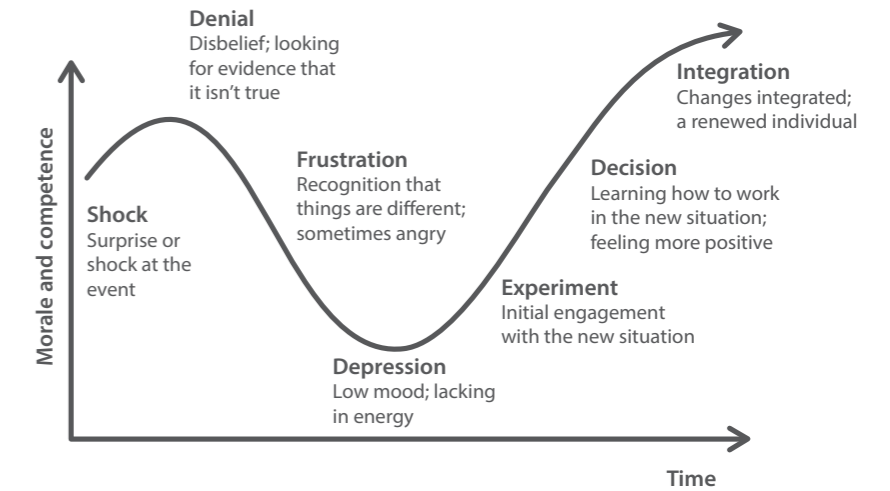
Well, we get that. There is a certain familiar feeling that ripples through people during changing times. But core to our belief is that people aren't all the same. We don't all experience events in the same way – one person's positive change could be your worst nightmare, for example – and so it feels a little restrictive to claim that we all move through change uniformly.

That's why we like to overlay onto the change curve the transitions model created by William Bridges, which recognises that the locus of change is external, but processing it is all internal.

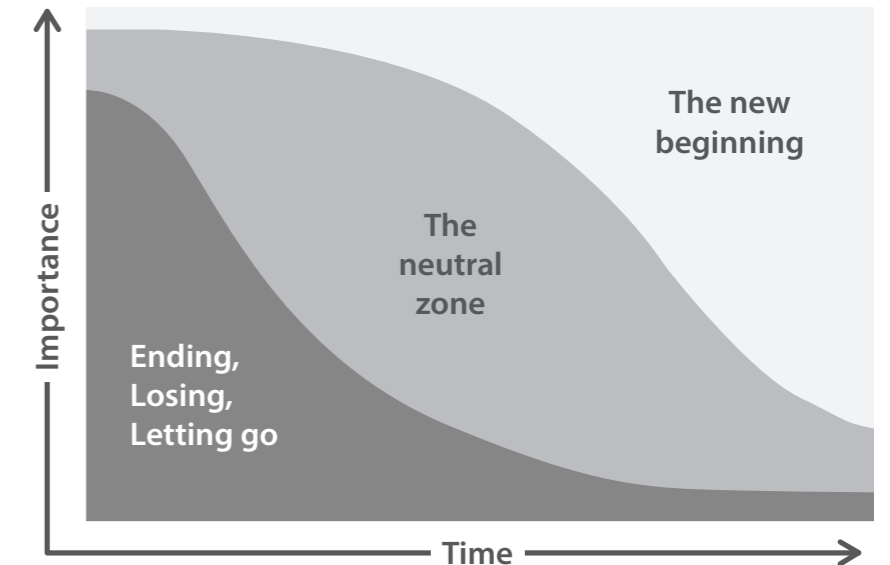
Beliefs about change used to look like this



The Kübler-Ross change curve



but if you add this you recognise individuality



Chapter two

The internal journey
is where it's at

The internal journey is where it's at

Everyone's internal journey is uniquely theirs, and something that they'll transition through at their own pace. Recognising what your own journey looks like will help you ride the waves of change as they come at you, time and time again.

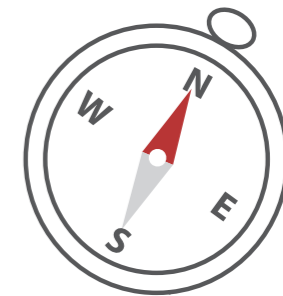
In his transitions model, Bridges recognised that we all go through three stages when a change occurs:

Stage one – **Ending and letting go**

Stage two – **Neutral zone**

Stage three – **New beginning**

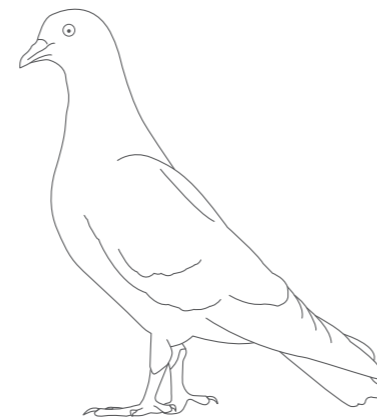
But this isn't a cookie-cutter process like we've seen before in the change curve. We all go through these stages at our own pace, and with our own emotions and needs. For example, some people will rapidly let go of the status quo and move through stage two into the new beginnings phase as soon as they can. Others are more likely to hang around stage one for a while, working through the loss of what they're comfortable with. There's no one size fits all.





Everyone is a complex, irreplaceable mix of preferences and behaviours. But experience has shown us that everyone has a preferred way of being, working, communicating, and adapting, and we can, generally speaking, divide that preference into four main groups. Now, we don't pigeonhole, so we're not saying that you'll experience change in one of four ways, and that's that. Far from it: you might recognise some feelings from one group and some reactions from another. That's ok: that's your own individual preferences and human complexities shining through.

With that in mind, let's take a look at how people in each of these groups might transition through a change experience when one comes along.



Baby, you're a firework

The Firework, as the name suggests, is all about the initial impact. In the ending/letting go phase, they will be all over it. Inherently optimistic, they'll be super-keen to grab the change with both hands and turn it into an opportunity. They'll have tons of creative ideas and be desperate to share their thoughts with their team. They'll be galvanised by the idea of the new.

But in the neutral zone, quiet doubts may start to emerge. Fireworks can very quickly feel deflated, and once the initial buzz of change has come and gone, they can feel defiant and indignant if the change isn't quick enough for their liking. They might feel frustrated at keeping the old and new balls in the air, and want to quickly move on to the new future, leaving the past behind. The thing about Fireworks is they're Extraverts,

and they love to share. Positive thoughts, negative ones, it's always good to talk as far as they're concerned. So keeping change moving along at pace may limit the damage they can do to the motivation of those around them when they're feeling impatient or sceptical.

As the new beginning phase appears, Fireworks might indulge in some real possibilities thinking. It's a whole blue sky out there, and for Fireworks, there's no limit to what this new change might offer. They're in, committed, and have a million ideas. Only one problem: they won't necessarily want to stick around to implement them. With a ton of balls to keep in the air, Fireworks can often be big on ideas and small (okay, tiny) on the details.

Get your facts straight

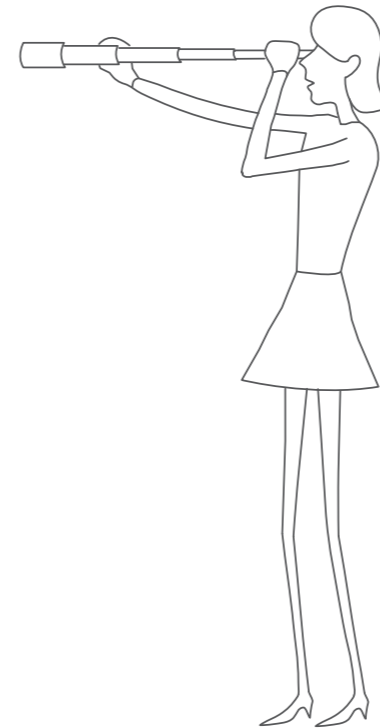
On the other hand, The Fact-Seeker won't be anywhere near as likely to jump in with both feet. For them, the endings phase is exactly that – an often painful letting-go of a tried and tested part of their life. They'll want to be able to parcel it up neatly, and tuck it away before they're ready to move on to something else. And more than that – they'll need to be convinced that the change is the right thing to do before they'll be willing to commit. Fact-Seekers want answers, details, justification and evidence before they'll make a move. As far as they're concerned, if you don't have those things, why would you implement any change?

As they begin to feel well-researched enough to close off the old, Fact-Seekers need to be given time.

Time in which to have their many questions answered. Time in which to become convinced that the new course of action is the right one. They'll also need a whole heap of time to interrogate any new systems or processes, or they'll remain forever sceptical. And a Fact-Seeker who isn't on board can become quite a blocker or a negative influence in a team, so letting them paddle around in the neutral zone until they find their feet is time well spent indeed.

The good news is that as they amass evidence about the efficacy of the change, Fact-Seekers begin to get on-board and ready to move on to the New Beginnings phase. But that doesn't mean the analysis is over – for Fact-Seekers it never is! It'll still take them time to fully commit to the new, as they're constantly assessing and

analysing as they go. But – and this is important – once they're fully convinced about the change, they'll become its most consistent and well-argued supporters.



The Conscience

The Conscience is similar to the Fact-Seeker in that they want answers before they'll be willing to make a move, but their motivation is different: the Conscience wants to make sure that anything new that comes along is for the good of the people involved, and certainly not to their detriment.

The Conscience in any organisation or team is like the barometer for people-centred change; is it disruptive (and not in the cool 21st century way!), is it going to be more than people can handle, is the change motivated by people or are people just innocent bystanders in the change process?

In the endings/letting go phase, these are the kinds of questions that The Conscience will seek answers

to. And if they don't like what they hear, they're apt to dig their heels in and become stubbornly obstructive. Consciences are naturally pretty risk-averse, so they like their changes slow, measured, and sensible. If it doesn't seem like this is the case, they'll struggle to move on.

But if they can be reassured, they'll wade out into the calmer waters of the neutral zone where they'll hang out, keeping an eye on those around them and generally being The Conscience of the oncoming change. Because if they feel that the change is for the good of the majority, The Conscience will back it, creating a sense of calm and control for those who work alongside them.

Once they move into the New Beginnings phase, The Conscience is a massive boost to the team. A natural

listener, they'll happily counsel their colleagues into the new start zone too, until they're sure that everyone is comfortable and ready to move on together. They'll be a quiet but firm ambassador for the change that's coming down the line if they know it's the right path to take.

Keep rollin' on

In any team there's a Steamroller. Someone who just wants to get things started, keep them moving, and get stuff done. They're a powerhouse of activity; you'll be able to recognise them because they tick off their to-do list while other people are grabbing their morning coffee on the way to work.

And when it comes to change The Steamroller is no different. They're not interested in all that

backstory that the Factseekers and Consciences wanted. They just want to know a) how it will affect them and them alone and b) how soon they can get on with it.

There's very little 'letting go' for a Steamroller. They'll commit quickly, and just want to dig in and get on with it – particularly if it might lead to new status or success for them. They're results-focused, so if this change has a clear, positive, and immediate outcome, they're all in, baby.

Out there in the neutral zone, they're likely to feel frustrated for a time. Caught between the old and new, they're impatient to set off into the new

direction. They're bored of talking about what's going to happen, and just get there already! Their expectation is that everyone is as rapid as they are, and they just don't get what the hold-up is. At this point, they may ruffle feathers by being scornful of those who aren't quite as quick to jump on the change train.

But once they see things coming together, they're ready to take the bull by the horns. No pity party for what's in the past, they'll see any change as a launchpad for something newer, bigger and bolder than before. Just a note to The Steamrollers out there: you may be ready to go, but <whisper it> you don't know everything yet. With change comes learning, so don't let your impatience get the better of you too soon.

Chapter three

Raise yourself up out of the turbulence



Raise yourself up out of the turbulence

When change is happening all around you – new manager, different company structure, new processes and systems, different targets to hit, for example – it can be easy to feel like you’re at the mercy of something much bigger than yourself. Company-defining changes are far from the control of most of us mere mortals, so it can be tricky not to feel like you’re being tossed around like a leaf in the wind: rudderless, directionless, and powerless.

We get it. We’ve all felt that way at one time in our lives – or lots of times in our lives! But you can’t enjoy

a really satisfying career if you are constantly twisting in the wind or waiting for the other shoe to drop. We’ve already established that change is external; it’s coming – soon – and there’s nothing you can do to prevent it. So what can you do to ride those waves that threaten to wipe you out time and time again?

Well, the first step – as we saw in chapter one – was all about raising your level of self-awareness so that you can better understand how you might experience your transition through change.



Choose your mindset

However, there is something else that's within your grasp: your mindset. The mindset that you choose to have is key to how you transition through modifications, variations and transformations. To raise yourself up out of the turbulence that dogs so many of us in these times of fast-paced change, you need to do some work on **you**.

It may not feel possible during disruptive times to get your game face on and show up with a mindset that you've deliberately chosen to adopt. It can feel easier to take the path of least resistance and just react, in the moment, to what's going on around you. But that's kind of exhausting, not to say unproductive and even destabilising.

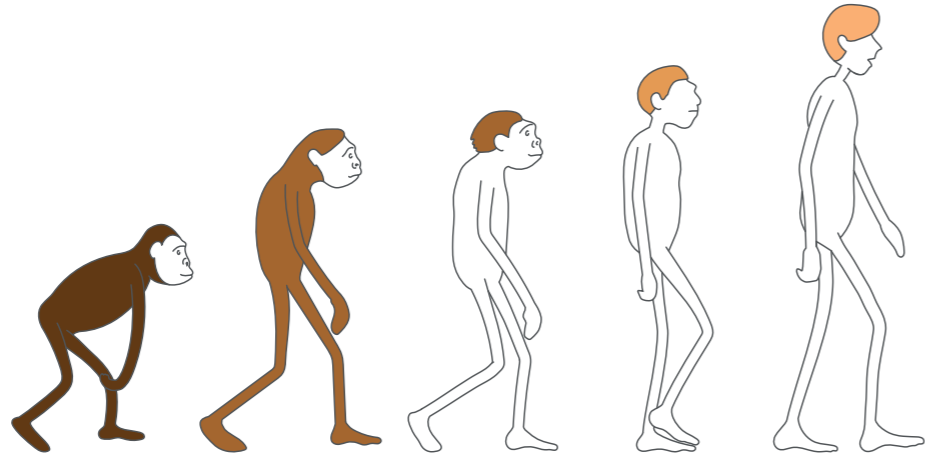
First of all, what are we talking about when we say mindset?

Well, there are two opposing mindsets available to everyone: a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.

With a fixed mindset, people hold the belief that their talents and aptitudes are pre-determined and can't be changed.

This can lead to people thinking *"I can never afford to make a mistake at work, because I don't want to look stupid."*

With a growth mindset, people believe their potential is always unknown, and that talents and abilities can improve with effort. A growth mindset leads to thinking like, *"If I make a mistake that's ok, because I can learn from it. Any feedback I get will help me develop and grow."*



With a fixed mindset, it can be difficult to see change as an opportunity, and not something that's bound to show up your inexperience or lack of skill in a particular area. Which is fine-ish, we don't all have to be trying to climb to the top of our trees at every moment. Sometimes people are happy where they are, and that's just lovely.

However – as we've already said, change is coming, lots of it, and regularly. So if you're holding tight to

that fixed mindset, how is that going to work out? Let's imagine that the next change is evolutionary in nature, i.e. your company is phasing in an entirely new IT system. You're possibly going to have to adapt to a new computer, different systems and databases, new ways of submitting invoices and expenses, get used to being IM'd by colleagues instead of emails landing in your inbox, have lots more virtual meetings than face-to-face meetings, deal with a new smartphone or tablet – and this list is really just for starters.

For someone with a fixed mindset, this is panic stations-time. I'm used to my laptop, I'd struggle with a new phone, I only just figured out the old expenses system, what do I need this new headset for, I'll never get used to this new database, I'm no good at setting up conference calls, and so on and on until they spin themselves right out of the door. Before you know it, this fixed mindset has not only curtailed the development of new and necessary skills, it's seriously dented their career prospects as those around them experience that panic as negative, nit-picky and obstructive.

“The growth mindset allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives.”

– Carol Dweck, leading Professor of Psychology

Go for growth

Let's take a look at what could happen if you adopt a growth mindset every day on the way to work.

Because that is what we're talking about here: approaching your work every day with the question 'how will I choose to show up today?' ever-present in your mind. It's not false or fake, nor a disguise or a mask, but it's a useful approach to adopt, especially in turbulent times of change. It puts you in charge of you, instead of putting you in the eye of the storm.

Anyway, where were we? Yes, the growth mindset. Compared to the fixed mindset, the outlook here is much more open to possibilities and the idea that nobody yet knows their full potential. With a growth mindset, learning never ends. There are always new skills to work on, new goals to set, or new projects to get stuck into.

So when a whole new IT system starts to be implemented? Yes, there will still be feelings of trepidation, uncertainty, even fear. But this can be conquered by the mindset that this is a learning curve, and learn you absolutely can. Someone who adopts a growth mindset doesn't fear mistakes either, so there's no big deal if anyone accidentally prints 10,000 customer brochures instead of ten (Us? No, never ...). With a growth mindset, failing is useful as a learning tool, failing fast and learning from it is even better, and failing on the way to getting things right is considered to be one of the ways in which we develop resilience.

“I’M NOT AFRAID TO MAKE MISTAKES. I EMBRACE MISTAKES. THEY MAKE YOU WHO YOU ARE.”

— BEYONCÉ

Chapter four

Resilience will
see you through

Resilience will see you through

You know, it's possible that change is getting a bad rap here. After all, not all – or even most – change is bad. Sometimes antiquated systems and processes are junked for something befitting the 21st century. With new projects come opportunities, new team members bring fresh perspectives, different priorities bring the chance to do something challenging and exciting. And in a world where one in two Americans has left a job at some point to [escape a bad manager](#), better managers must be on offer elsewhere.

Yes, change is sometimes just what the doctor ordered. But that doesn't mean that there isn't a cost to it. Even the happiest of changes – a promotion, a successful innovation, a big contract won – are still changes.

There will still be adjustments to be made, no matter the genesis of the change. Every single change rubs up against us personally in some way.

But maybe this is useful. Changes that are essentially positive might chafe uncomfortably at first, but when we come out the other side (mostly) unscathed, this teaches us something: that change can be endured, and possibly even enjoyed. The lesson we learn from change is one of resilience. In fact, some research suggests that resilience can be increased by considering challenging situations you've been through that you thought would be terrible, but actually turned out to be just fine.

Learning to bounce back

Over the last few decades, we've all seen changes that have been difficult to grapple with at first. On a personal, micro level our social networks have undoubtedly widened, but also grown shallower, making our real life relationships become that much more vulnerable and precious: that's a shift. As we see more and more virtual teams networked across the world, we've all had to learn new ways to stay connected to our colleagues and friends. And in macro terms, we're looking at a future where millions of jobs could be [replaced by artificial intelligence](#) globally. We've also seen the global political landscape shift in unexpected ways.

“May you live in interesting times.”

– ancient Chinese curse

If you ain't got it, how do you get it?

Resilience isn't a black or white, all or nothing, kind of deal. Nobody is born with it, and nobody is born without it. It's something you can learn to develop as you move through some of the changing moments in your life. But how can you get yourself ready for the next big moment you'll need to be resilient for?

Follow a good example

Who do you see around you in the workplace that seems, well, able to cope with change just that little bit better than everyone else? What tactics can you borrow from them that might help you stay robust in tricky times? Maybe they put paid to their fears by getting answers to any questions they have; perhaps they cope by adding their voice and ideas to what's coming, so that they feel a sense of ownership over the change; maybe they're the strong silent type who keeps their own counsel until they're ready to jump in. Whatever it is, if you think it might work for you, try to employ it in your own way. There's no sense in trying to become someone else in order to cope: that's not

resilience, that's avoidance! But if you can take the best traits you see from the resilient people around you, and work them in your own way, you'll start to get a feel for what might help you to become stronger in the face of change too.



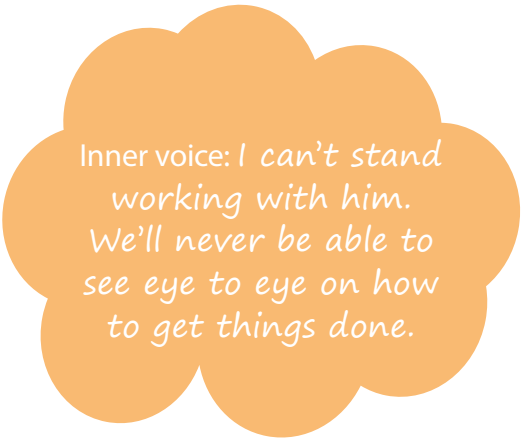
Talk it out

It's not always easy to discern your inner voice, when you're face-down in work all day, and simultaneously surfing Netflix, joining a live Peloton ride and checking Twitter at night. But to stay resilient (or become resilient) you need to try to find quiet, so that you can listen out for your inner voice. And when you do that, you need to try to understand if your inner voice is working for or against you.

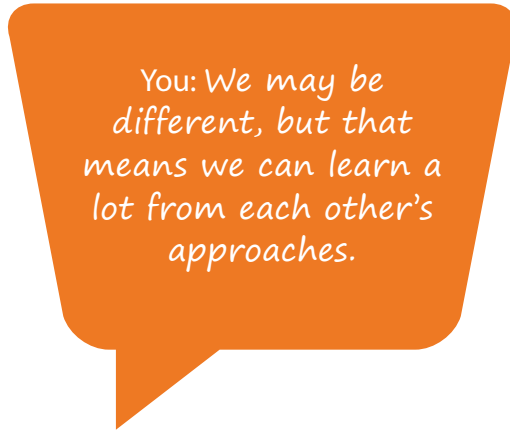
So, let's say your manager announces that your team bonus structure has changed, and in order to be as successful as you were last year, you now need to work in partnership with a colleague. Your natural preference is for working alone (and reaping the big rewards alone too!) and you feel, well, a little

claustrophobic at the thought of working so closely with someone day in and day out. This is a change that's tough to take.


Now, instead of looking for a new job, complaining to your manager or having a rant in the kitchen with your **best work friend**, sit still. Stay quiet. Let your mind quietly poke around itself for a while. What is it saying? If it's relentlessly negative or catastrophising, you need to ask yourself if there isn't something a little self-defeating going on. Try to replace that inner narrative with something more akin to a growth mindset.



Inner voice: *I can't stand working with him. We'll never be able to see eye to eye on how to get things done.*



You: *We may be different, but that means we can learn a lot from each other's approaches.*



You: *With two of us collaborating successfully, the bonus could be even bigger. And there are other reasons to enjoy work, like partnership, teamwork and recognition.*



Inner voice: *Why should I share my bonus with someone else? I like my rewards BIG!*

Conclusion

Change? Change is change. It's constant. It's confusing. But it's coming.

Change is so ubiquitous in today's world that it's now vital that you instead start focusing on yourself, and how you emotionally transition through times of turbulence and stress. When you know yourself that much better you'll understand how you move through the phases of transition. What that journey looks like for you, and you alone, is vital knowledge to help you ride the waves of change as they break over you.

By shifting from a fixed to a growth mindset, you'll be able to put a stop to the 'uh-oh' feeling that change sets off in you, and really ramp up the resilience that will lead you onto greater career success, even when waters are choppy.

If change is coming your way – and let's face facts, it is – then we can help. When we work with you, we'll always start with what's right at the heart of dealing with change – people. By helping each individual understand how they react to change, why that might be, and why others do it differently, we can build in the resilience that is so key to coping with ongoing transformation.

Find out more about how we help our customers transition through times of change, and face other pressing business challenges, at www.insights.com



You see? If you simply let that inner voice play unchecked, it could become the negative soundtrack to your life, pushing you into rash decisions and poor workplace choices. By taking back control of your inner voice, you can become that much more stable and less susceptible to the vagaries that change can impose on all of us.

Get in touch

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