



## Coping with Change: Change and Stress

Change is a natural part of life. Most of us are continually making adjustments that reflect our changing needs or interests — switching majors in school, moving to another city, or adjusting to a new job. Some changes are sudden and unexpected, which can be a challenge to accept. Developing strategies for coping with change — whether it's planned, unexpected, difficult, or positive — and learning to focus on what you can control, while letting go of what you can't, can help you better navigate life's changes.

## Change and Stress

Change can seem very stressful at first, even if it will be rewarding in the long run. There are many kinds of change and everyone reacts differently to events whether they are happy ones such as the birth of a baby, difficult ones such as a divorce, or even smaller events such as an upcoming holiday or vacation.

**“Stress is just your body’s way of reacting to change. It’s okay to feel stressed even when something good has happened — in fact, it’s normal.”**

— Stephanie A. Sarkis Ph.D., *Psychology Today*



Typically, the more significant the change, the more stress you may face. Many people find it particularly difficult to move from one major stage of life to another — for example, leaving school, having a child, reaching midlife, becoming a stepparent or grandparent, or retiring.

Change can be both physically and mentally stressful, so, it’s important to recognize the signs of stress. These may include:

- headaches, neck aches, or backaches
- depression
- anxiety
- fatigue
- overeating
- difficulty sleeping
- irritability or mood swings
- poor concentration
- stomachaches or other digestive problems
- alcohol or drug abuse
- eating disorders
- heart trouble
- decreased sexual drive

Even if you look forward to a change, adjusting to new realities can be stressful. One key to coping with these kinds of difficulties is to remember that, with support, most people can adapt well. Depending on the nature of the change you face, you may want to turn to your family or friends, your manager or co-workers, a professional counsellor, or a support group whose members know what you’re going through and want to help. You can also call your assistance program to speak with a counsellor who can support you.