

Meeting Change with Fear or Anticipation... It's Your Choice

by Gail Schuster, LCSW



An ancient Greek named Heraclitus observed, “The only thing that is constant is change.” It was true then and remains so. As long as we are living, we are changing. When we are young, we often are actively involved in choosing paths of change. As we get older, these changes can become a little scary, even if they are expected.

Perspective: Taking a leap, or being pushed off a cliff?

Some changes we choose; others are thrust upon us. Some view change as an opportunity, a new potential for growth or something to anticipate. However, feelings of fear, resistance, possible regret, and sadness often accompany change as well. When we are facing change, what might be the best tools to use to help us cope with it?

Tools to cope

- **Be honest with yourself.** - Admit that change is hard. New things challenge us to go outside of our comfort zone, and this can be unpleasant. Even positive change can leave us feeling uneasy until we grow comfortable with the newness. **Allow yourself to expect change to be hard;** by doing so you are validating your feelings while acknowledging that it is the changing that is causing the discomfort.
- **Prepare yourself.** - If we know that something is about to happen, **we can ease the discomfort by designing a plan.** Some plans are action plans, and others are strategies for dealing with situations and feelings that might arise. Taking action through planning empowers us and gives us the framework for going on.
- **Be kind to yourself.** - Kindness is a tool that can ease the stressful nature of change. If we take the time to **eliminate the judgment and expectations we so often impose on ourselves,** our ability to navigate the change we are facing will be strengthened.
- **Ease into it, and celebrate yourself.** – Finally, take small steps. Find the small victories along the way and celebrate them. It is not only reaching the final goal that defines success, but celebrating the little steps that are leading up to the change will reinforce your ability to meet the goal or to shape yourself into acceptance **and feel some control** if you did not choose to undergo this change.

If you are facing difficulty finding these tools in your life, or if you just want someone to talk through your feelings about changes happening or anticipated, please call CJFS to speak to one of our counselors. We are always available to chat with you and support you. 205.879.3438.