



Big Fish Coaching

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Coping with change and uncertainty – 5 key strategies for state management

By Dawn Harvey

In times of uncertainty and change we often hear phrases like ‘expect the unexpected,’ and ‘the only constant is change.’ Although we may find this philosophy acceptable in theory it can still be very difficult to manage our own state effectively when the change is happening to us or those close to us.

Change is about adjustments, transformations and transitions. It is the ongoing cycle of birth, growth and death. Sometimes the change happens so slowly we barely notice. Other times one single moment will alter a life forever.

There are very few things in life that are absolutely certain – the most referred to being death and taxes. Yet a common human tendency is to resist change and fear uncertainty. Resistance and fear however are not useful in these situations. They waste time and sap energy that can be better spent dealing with the current situation and moving forward.

So how can we equip ourselves to deal more effectively with change or uncertainty? Just as we can keep our body fit and flexible with regular exercise, we can keep our attitude fit and flexible to help us deal with change and the unknown. Here are five ways you can begin to develop a more effective attitude and manage your emotional state:

Acknowledge impermanence – When you expect situations to change the shock is reduced when it happens. This means less time spent railing against the situation. Expecting change can be achieved by choosing not to identify too closely with any situation. The good times will not last forever and neither will the bad. It's also useful to practice refraining from labelling a situation good or bad. It is simply the present moment.

Accept the inevitable - The less resistance you exhibit towards the change, the quicker you can pick up the new cards you have been dealt and take action. Resistance wastes time and energy that can be better spent dealing with the current situation. A great way to move forward from resistance is to take the initiative.

Take the initiative – When you choose to face the new reality you can decide what would be the best outcome from the current situation. This means applying positive rather than wishful thinking. It is important to recognise what you can and cannot influence. Formulate a goal that is within your sphere of influence. This gives an emotional commitment to the way forward. It also allows the filters in the subconscious to let in opportunities relevant to the goal. You are more likely to achieve the outcomes you focus attention on.

Control your inner demon – You have control over what you put into your mind and how you act. You may not appreciate the choices life hands out but you can choose your response to any situation. Choose what you focus your attention on. Keep focused on your goal and silence the inner demon by refusing to listen to negativity.

Be flexible – Nature understands the benefit of flexibility. A tree that flexes in high wind will be less likely to uproot. Inexperienced sailors however fight against the wind rather than using it to meet their destination. We can choose to

use the wind regardless of how obscure a course it appears to be taking us on. Everyone has their own view of reality, opinions and ways of operating. Reminding ourselves of this allows us flexibility and this in turn prevents us from being derailed by events for too long.

As with any exercise regime it's important to stick with it to get results. With commitment and practice this way of thinking moves from being a conscious effort to an unconscious way of operating. As this happens an inner core of strength develops allowing us to live peacefully with uncertainty and to adapt quickly when faced with change.

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