

# *Participant Handbook*

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## Coping with the Stress of Change

Presentation by:  
MHN Training & Development

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Slide 2

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## Learning Objectives

- Talk about the challenges associated with change
- Review common reactions to change
- Discuss strategies for dealing with the stress of change
- Consider how change can stimulate learning and growth
- Explore ways to build resiliency

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2

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## Why is Change “Stressful”?

“Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts.”

*by Arnold Bennett*  
British Novelist (1867-1931)

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3

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## Types of Change

- Unexpected or Unwanted Changes (beyond our control)
- Planned Changes (within our control)

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4

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## Major Areas of Life Change

- Loss
- Separation
- Relocation
- Change in a Relationship
- Change in a Direction/Job/Career
- Change in Health

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5

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## Why Is Change Challenging?

Change May Require You To:

- Readjust Your Behavior
- Rethink Your Thinking
- Redefine Your Feelings
- Reevaluate Values & Goals

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## What Are Common Reactions to Change?

- Endings
  - Stage 1: Shock
  - Stage 2: Denial
  - Stage 3: Anger/Fear
- Neutral Zone/Transition
  - Stage 4: Passive Acceptance
  - Stage 5: Exploration
- Beginnings
  - Stage 6: Challenge & Commitment

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## Learning from Change?

- Your past experiences with change provide:
  - A demonstration of your hardiness and resilience
  - A development of your personal “toolkit” of techniques and strategies to navigate change
- Determine what strategies have worked for you in the past
  - Use what has worked well for you
  - Don't use what has not worked well for you
  - Be open to other strategies that may be healthier or more helpful
- Rely on the personal wisdom you have gained, as well as draw upon insight and support from others

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## What Can You Change About Change?

- It is nearly impossible to change another person...
- You seldom can change the situation...
- You CAN change your perception and your reactions to the change itself!

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## Accepting What We Can Change

“...grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.”

*by Reinhold Niebuhr*

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Slide 11

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## “Reframe” How You Think About Change?

- Refrain from “Awfulizing”
- Challenge the “Shoulds”
- Avoid “All or Nothing” thinking
- Re-frame “failures” as new opportunities
- Stay in the present
- Express gratitude
- Be compassionate with yourself

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## Guidelines for Dealing With the Stress of Change

1. Recognize and understand the change
2. Identify your opportunities
3. Choose your action
4. Review your progress and make adjustments

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## Building Resiliency to Change and Stress

- Having a strong Commitment
- Having a sense of Control
- Seeing Change as a Challenge
- Participating in Creative activities
- Having a strong Support network

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### Using Positive Stress Management Strategies

- Change your Behavior
  - Use Humor
  - Get Organized!
  - Vent Emotionally
- Create Social Support
  - Identify Your Needs
  - Communicate
  - Use Your EAP
- Change your Lifestyle
  - Good Nutrition
  - Exercise
  - Get Plenty of Sleep
  - Use Stress Reduction Techniques
- Identify What's Important
  - Values/Goals
  - Talents & Abilities

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### Change = Opportunity

“The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.”

by *M. Scott Peck, M.D.*  
(1936-2005) Psychiatrist & Author

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Slide 16

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## Resources

- Internet/Online
  - MHN Online Services – [www.MHN.com](http://www.MHN.com)
- Articles & Books
  - Maddi, S.R. & Khoshaba, D. *Resilience at Work*. AMACOM.
  - Seligman, M. *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. Vintage.
  - Siebert, A. *The Survivor Personality*. Perigee Books.
  - Wolin, S., & Wolin, S. (1993). *The Resilient Self*. Villard.

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Slide 17

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## Handout A. Life Change Index. *By T. Holmes and R. Rahe*

**Instructions:** If an event has occurred in the past year, or will occur in the near future, write the number beside it on the line to the right of the number. Then total your points.

<b><u>Event:</u></b>	<b><u>Scale of Impact:</u></b>	
Death of spouse	100	_____
Divorce	73	_____
Marital separation or ending of close relationship	65	_____
Jail term	63	_____
Death of close family member	63	_____
Personal injury or illness	53	_____
Marriage	50	_____
Fired at work	47	_____
Marital reconciliation	45	_____
Retirement	45	_____
Change in health of family member	44	_____
Pregnancy	40	_____
Sex difficulties	39	_____
Gain of new family member	39	_____
Business readjustment	39	_____
Change in financial state	38	_____
Death of a close friend	37	_____
Change to a different line of work	36	_____
Change in number of arguments with mate	35	_____
Mortgage or loan for major purchase (home, etc.)	31	_____
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	_____
Change in responsibilities at work	29	_____
Son or daughter leaving home	29	_____
Trouble with in-laws	29	_____
Outstanding personal achievement	28	_____

<b><u>Event:</u></b>	<b><u>Scale of Impact:</u></b>	
Begin or end school	26	_____
Change in living conditions	25	_____
Mate begins or stops work	26	_____
Revision of personal habit	24	_____
Trouble with boss	23	_____
Change in work hours or conditions	20	_____
Change in residence	20	_____
Change in schools	20	_____
Change in recreation	19	_____
Change in church activities	19	_____
Change in social activities	18	_____
Mortgage or loan for lesser purchase (car, TV, etc.)	17	_____
Change in sleeping habits	16	_____
Change in number of family get-togethers	15	_____
Change in eating habits	15	_____
Vacation	13	_____
Holidays (if approaching)	12	_____
Minor violations of the law	11	_____
	<b>Total</b>	_____

**Scoring:** Identifying major life stressors can help you understand the variety of factors that may be contributing to your level of stress at a given time. Your total score may be indicative of how at risk you may be for stress-related illnesses. This scale can be interpreted as follows:

Under 150 points: No major levels of life stress are occurring at this time. A small or no chance for stress-related illness.

150 to 199 points: Mild levels of life stress are occurring at this time. Only a 33% chance for stress-related illness.

200 to 299 points: Moderate levels of life stress are occurring at this time. About a 50% probability for stress-related illness.

Over 300 points: Severe levels of life stress are occurring at this time. A high probability, 80% chance, for stress-related illness.

## Handout B. Examine Your Beliefs: Influencing Reactions to Stress

Another strategy to reducing stress is to understand the origin of your thinking patterns that may influence your reactions to stress. All of these components come together to influence our thinking patterns and our beliefs about ourselves and the world around us. If you find your stress levels mounting, it helps to stop and do a quick self-analysis. Sometimes, just a small change in just one of these areas, focusing on being kinder or gentler with yourself, can dramatically reduce your stress.

Belief Category	Definition	Examples	Self-analysis (Write your own example)	Your remedy (“Destressor” beliefs)
Perfectionism	Failing to see gray areas or compromises	I am a failure. Nothing is working out for me.		
Should statements	Arbitrary standards that lead to self-criticism or criticism of others	I should have seen that coming. He should treat me with more respect.		
Over-personalization	Taking too much responsibility for how things are working out	She thinks I’m lazy. I should be able to help him more.		
Selective attention	Minimizing positive experiences by focusing on negative thoughts	That compliment means nothing because he is just being nice. This was a complete disaster.		
Denial or blaming	Failing to accurately recognize your own responsibility	I am helpless, or hopeless. I can’t do it on my own. I’ll put that off until it has to be done.		
False-permanence	Thinking that my circumstances are more permanent than they are.	I’ll never live this down. This is never going to get better.		

## Examine Your Beliefs: Influencing Reactions to Stress (continued)

Belief Category	Definition	Examples	Self-analysis (write your own example)	Your remedy (“destressor” beliefs)
Over-generalizing or catastrophizing	Name-calling, negative summaries, or doom statements that predict continual failure.	I am a(n) idiot, failure, loser, ugly, lazy.  This is a downer, disaster, hopeless, awful.		
Magical thinking	Telling yourself that things would be better if only you were....	... stronger, smarter, more attractive, thinner, wealthier		
Emotional thinking	Acting as though your negative feelings are more real than your strengths	I don't feel motivated.  I can't get out of bed.  I feel terrible that it's over, and I can't get over it.		
Mind reading	Deciding what other people are thinking without ever checking it out	He doesn't really care, or he would treat me differently.  My boss hates me because I missed that deadline.		
Double standard	Treating yourself more harshly than you would treat anybody else.	You shouldn't give me so much slack.		
Unreasonable expectation of fairness	Holding onto frustration or offense when someone treats you unfairly.	I will never get over this.  I can't tolerate her abuse, but there is nowhere for me to go.		

# Handout C. Change Action Plan

1. **Recognize and Understand the Change:** Learn everything you can about the change.

Ask yourself questions such as:

- What information do I need to get to evaluate the change?
- What's the worst thing that can happen?
- What do I stand to lose because of this change?
- How is this change affecting me now?
- Who or what is in control of the effects of this change now?
- Is there a way to minimize the negative effects of the change?
- What result do I want to avoid?
- What result do I want to create?
- What do I value and what are my goals?
- What talents and abilities do I possess to help me deal with the change?

2. **Identify your opportunities:**

- What are my possibilities and opportunities for growing? For learning? For becoming wiser? Stronger? Healthier? More loving? More productive?
- What benefits or gains are hidden in this call to change?

3. **Choose your action:** Review your possibilities and then ask, "What is the most important thing for me to do next?"

- What action can I take today?
- What action can I take tomorrow?
- What actions should wait until a later date?
- Which choices best match my values and goals, and best utilize my talents and abilities?

Write down the action steps you are going to take.

4. **Review your progress and make adjustments:** Review everything you are doing in dealing with the change.

- Am I doing the right thing about this right now?
- Which strategies are working and which ones are not?
- Is there something else I should be doing?

## Handout D. How Hardy Are You?

Write down how much you agree or disagree with the following statements using this scale:

0 = Strongly Disagree

1 = Mildly Disagree

2 = Mildly Agree

3 = Strongly Agree

- A. Trying my best at work makes a difference.
- B. Trusting to fate is sometimes all I can do in a relationship.
- C. I often wake up eager to start on the day's projects.
- D. Thinking of myself as a free person leads to great frustration and difficulty.
- E. I would be willing to sacrifice financial security in my work if something really challenging came along.
- F. It bothers me if I have to deviate from the routine or schedule I've set for myself.
- G. An average citizen can have an impact on politics.
- H. Without the right breaks, it is hard to be successful in my field.
- I. I know why I am doing what I am doing.
- J. Getting close to people puts me at risk of being obliterated by them.
- K. Encountering new situations is an important priority in my life.
- L. I really don't mind it when I have nothing to do.

**To Score Yourself:** The questions above measure control, commitment, and challenge. For half the questions, a high score (like "3=Strongly Agree") indicates hardiness; for the other half, a low score (disagreement) does.

First, you will calculate your scores on control, commitment, and challenge. Then, you will add those scores together to get a score for total hardiness. See the scoring instructions on the next page.

## How Hardy Are You -- Scoring

- To calculate your scores on control, commitment, and challenge, write in your answers above the letter of each question. Then add and subtract as indicated.

<u>Column 1</u>	<u>Column 2</u>	<u>1.</u> <u>Column 2</u>	<u>Column 1 minus</u>
____ + ____ = ____ A      G	____ + ____ = ____ B      H	= _____  CONTROL	
____ + ____ = ____ C      I	____ + ____ = ____ D      J	= _____  COMMITMENT	
____ + ____ = ____ E      K	____ + ____ = ____ F      L	= _____  CHALLENGE	

- Add your scores for control, commitment, and challenge together to obtain a score for total hardiness.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & + & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & + & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & = & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \\
 \text{Control} & & \text{Commitment} & & \text{Challenge} & & \text{Hardiness Score}
 \end{array}$$

### 3. Score Interpretation:

10 to 18 points: A Stress Hardy personality

0 to 9 points: Moderate hardiness

Less than 0 points (a negative score): Low hardiness



## Handout E. Active Relaxation Techniques.

### Progressive Relaxation

This technique is often most useful when you tape the instructions beforehand. You can tape these instructions, reading them slowly and leaving a short pause after each one.

- Lie on your back, close your eyes.
- Feel your feet. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and sink into the bed. Start with your toes and progress to your ankles.
- Feel your knees. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your upper legs and thighs. Feel their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your abdomen and chest. Sense your breathing. Consciously will them to relax. Deepen your breathing slightly and feel your abdomen and chest sink into the bed.
- Feel your buttocks. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your hands. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your upper arms. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your shoulders. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your neck. Sense its weight. Consciously relax it and feel it sink into the bed.
- Feel your head and skull. Sense its weight. Consciously relax it and feel it sink into the bed.
- Feel your mouth and jaw. Consciously relax them. Pay particular attention to your jaw muscles and unclench them if you need to. Feel your mouth and jaw relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your eyes. Sense if there is tension in your eyes. Sense if you are forcibly closing your eyelids. Consciously relax your eyelids and feel the tension slide off the eyes.
- Feel your face and cheeks. Consciously relax them and feel the tension slide off into the bed.
- Mentally scan your body. If you find any place that is still tense, then consciously relax that place and let it sink into the bed.

### Toe Tensing

This one may seem like a bit of a contradiction to the previous one, but by alternately tensing and relaxing your toes, you actually draw tension from the rest of the body. Try it!

1. Lie on your back, close your eyes.
2. Sense your toes.
3. Now pull all 10 toes back toward your face. Count to 10 slowly.
4. Now relax your toes.
5. Count to 10 slowly.
6. Now repeat the above cycle 10 times.

## Deep Breathing

By concentrating on our breathing, deep breathing allows the rest of our body to relax itself. Deep breathing is a great way to relax the body and get everything into synchrony. Relaxation breathing is an important part of yoga and martial arts for this reason.

1. Lie on your back.
2. Slowly relax your body. You can use the progressive relaxation technique we described above.
3. Begin to inhale slowly through your nose if possible. Fill the lower part of your chest first, then the middle and top part of your chest and lungs. Be sure to do this slowly, over 8–10 seconds.
4. Hold your breath for a second or two.
5. Then quietly and easily relax and let the air out.
6. Wait a few seconds and repeat this cycle.
7. If you find yourself getting dizzy, then you are overdoing it. Slow down.
8. You can also imagine yourself in a peaceful situation such as on a warm, gentle ocean. Imagine that you rise on the gentle swells of the water as you inhale and sink down into the waves as you exhale.
9. You can continue this breathing technique for as long as you like until you fall asleep.

## Guided Imagery

In this technique, the goal is to visualize yourself in a peaceful setting.

1. Lie on your back with your eyes closed.
2. Imagine yourself in a favorite, peaceful place. The place may be on a sunny beach with the ocean breezes caressing you, swinging in a hammock in the mountains or in your own backyard. Any place that you find peaceful and relaxing is OK.
3. Imagine you are there. See and feel your surroundings, hear the peaceful sounds, smell the flowers or the barbecue, feel the warmth of the sun and any other sensations that you find. Relax and enjoy it.
4. You can return to this place any time you need to. As you use this place more and more you will find it easier to relax as this imagery becomes a de-stress conditioner.
5. Some patients find it useful to visualize something boring. This may be a particularly boring teacher or lecturer, co-worker or friend.

## Quiet Ears

1. Lie on your back with your eyes closed.
2. Place your hands behind your head. Make sure they are relaxed.
3. Place your thumbs in your ears so that you close the ear canal.
4. You will hear a high-pitched rushing sound. This is normal.
5. Listen to this sound for 10–15 minutes.
6. Then put your arms at your sides, actively relax them and rest.

## Handout F. Top 10 Stress Relievers

It's a fact of life: Everyone experiences stress. But when it goes unmanaged, daily stress can harm your health and reduce your quality of life. Fortunately, stress doesn't have to overcome or overwhelm you. Try these stress reducing suggestions.

By managing — and reducing — the stress in your life, you can improve your overall wellness.

1. **Make a list.** Write a to-do list, breaking down tasks into smaller steps. Prioritize the items and tackle them one at a time.
2. **Take care of yourself.** Get enough sleep and eat a healthy diet. Avoid — or limit -- alcohol and caffeine.
3. **Set realistic goals.** Don't expect perfection from projects or people — including yourself.
4. **Mind your schedule.** Don't take on too many responsibilities or agree to attend too many social events. If you're overwhelmed, eliminate some obligations or share the work.
5. **Talk it out.** Call on the support and guidance of good friends and family.
6. **Exercise regularly.** Thirty minutes of physical activity a day can help fight stress.
7. **Set aside time every day for stress management.** Meditation, deep-breathing exercises, yoga and guided imagery are all good techniques to try.
8. **Have fun.** Spend time each day doing a hobby or other activity that you enjoy.
9. **Resolve conflicts.** Work toward repairing — or coming to terms with — any broken or difficult relationships.
10. **Visualize success.** Imagine how stressful situations might be resolved in a less stressful way.

Source: <https://myhealthyliving.mayoclinic.org/stress-and-resiliency/tips/top-10-relievers>[1/13/2015 3:34:02 PM]

## Handout G. Handling Work Stress “in the Moment”

Perhaps you have heard a great deal about how to reduce stress at work. However, most of that advice is about what to do over the long term, such as get more sleep or exercise. But what do you do when you are overcome with stress in the moment – at your desk, say, or in a meeting? How can you regain control?

Here are some techniques to allow you to get a handle on your reaction to the stressful things that happen to you in the moment:

- **Identify your stress signals.** Train yourself to recognize your physiological signs of stress. Do your palms sweat, your neck stiffen, or your pulse quicken? When you are able to recognize the signs of the onset of stress, you will then be able to begin addressing the underlying causes.
- **Don't think of it as stress.** Many stressors at work relate to the desire to do well on important tasks or requests. When you strive for success, any related stress symptoms are telling you: “This matters.” Instead of interpreting the stress signals as “distress”, use that adrenaline pop to focus your energy, heighten your attention, and really apply yourself.
- **Use positive self-talk to calm down.** When you are stressed, the voice in your head is usually negative. It tells you, “I'm so angry” or “I'll never be able to do this.” Try talking to yourself in a logical calm tone and injecting some positivity into your internal dialogue. For example, “I have had an assignment like this in the past and I succeeded. I can handle this, too.”
- **Take three deep breaths.** Deep breathing is another simple strategy for alleviating in-the-moment stress. Taking three big breaths induces a relaxation response by activating your parasympathetic nervous system.
- **Enlist a friendly ear.** Look to a trusted individual at work to be a member of your social support network. Find a person who can respond in a thoughtful manner to any issues that you may need to give voice to. Sometimes you may need to vent, and other times it can be helpful to hear a different perspective.
- **Make a list.** Making a to-do list that prioritizes your most important tasks is another way to combat feeling overwhelmed. List all of the personal and professional tasks you need to do, and then figure out which ones are “important” and which ones are “urgent”. Attend to those tasks first.
- **Project an aura of calm.** Stress can be contagious. If you are tense and stressed, someone talking to you can sense it and will react to it. Force yourself to speak in a gentle and controlled way. If you are persistently calm, others will be too.

As a recap...

**DO:**

- Identify your physiological signs of stress are so you can work to alleviate the tension
- Counteract stressful situations by taking deep breaths
- Find someone whose judgment you trust who can listen and provide counsel

**DON'T:**

- Forget the reason you feel stressed in the first place – you are being asked to do something important and you want to succeed
- Let the negative voice in your head spiral out of control – talk to yourself in a logical, gentle tone
- Project your stress onto others – speak in a calm, controlled way and others will too

Adapted from: “How to Handle Stress in the Moment”, by Rebecca Knight. *Harvard Business Review* (Nov. 5, 2014)