

## WELLNESS TIPS

### COPING WITH CHANGE

The end of a semester comes with change, such as new summer activities, clerkships, and beginning residencies. Change is inevitable. It can be invigorating, but it also can be painful and associated with anxiety, dread, or feeling overwhelmed, especially when it is unexpected, not desired, and out of one's control. Today's Wellness Tips focuses on coping with change.

William Bridges describes adapting to change as involving three stages of transition (Center for Creative Leadership):

Accepting the Ending – Acknowledge things are different and perhaps grieve.

Living in the Neutral Zone – This can be uncomfortable, with an ending but no clear beginning. Do not expect to know everything. Set short term goals. Acknowledge what you had and look forward to new possibilities.

Reach Your New Beginning – This is a fresh start. Jump in, create ways to cope with new problems. Benchmark your successes (especially small ones).

What are your thoughts about the future and the upcoming change?

Thoughts such as all-or-nothing thinking, negative predicting about the future, or making assumptions about what others are thinking can contribute to increased feelings of anxiety. Avoid blaming self-criticism. Ask yourself: "How likely is this to happen?" "How is this thought helping me?" "What would my friend say if I shared this thought with them?"

Acknowledge any negative or uncomfortable emotions.

It is not helpful to suppress emotions and it is important to manage them. Avoid becoming pulled into negative thought patterns that can intensify emotions.

Think about how you have coped with difficult times in the past.

What was helpful about how you managed that you could also do now? Is there anything you could do differently this time?

Recognize how much of the situation you can control.

Although there may be a lot you cannot control, there are areas in which you DO have control. Focus on the choices you can make, including small things and how you choose to cope with the change. This includes maintaining a balanced schedule for sleep, eating, exercise, and leisure.

### Use problem-solving and set goals

Give yourself direction in taking action with both desired and undesired change. Seek assistance in developing a plan if you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed. If the change is unwanted and beyond your control, accepting this fact can help you regroup and move on.

Seek support. Maintain regular contact with friends and family. If you are in new circumstances, establish connections with others. Seek help early if you are struggling.

### Practice responding and managing If you are not currently experiencing a major change.

Identify something that you would like to do that is outside your comfort zone, develop a plan, and go for it. This will increase your resilience and confidence that you can do it.

Relaxation techniques, mindfulness, yoga, and exercise can be helpful for anxiety and stress.

It is normal to feel stressed when change occurs, even when it is a planned and desirable change. Being proactive will help you adapt and manage the changes you are experiencing.

If you would like to talk with someone about upcoming changes you are experiencing, or for any other questions or concerns, feel free to contact the MSCC to talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment.

Center for Creative Leadership. "How to Transition Through Changes." November 16, 2020.

<https://tinyurl.com/ae5up6rh>

Reachout.com. "7 Tips for Dealing with Change."

<https://au.reachout.com/articles/7-tips-for-dealing-with-change>

Check the MSCC Website for past Wellness Tips:

<https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>

Medical Student Counseling Center [osac-mscc@uiowa.edu](mailto:osac-mscc@uiowa.edu) 319-335-8056 1240 MERF

Be proactive, stay safe, and stay well!

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