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## With Every Season Comes Change



Rather than focus on the health observance for this month, I decided to reflect on the one thing in all our lives that is the only constant...change. With the onset of Fall, many changes are anticipated: turning our clocks back an hour, seeing the leaves change color, feeling the crispness in the air, preparing our homes, minds, and wallets for the influx of company, cooking and spending that is about to occur. As mentioned, the only constant in life is change. But with change, even expected change, comes fear, uncertainty and stress. What can you change yourself so that whatever life tosses your way, you can adapt?

First let's look at why most of us are predisposed to resist change. For many the mere mention of the word many stir up feelings of uneasiness or fear. One simple explanation to resisting change is due to the risk associated with it. You may see it in your procrastination to start a project (work or home), your attempt to stop smoking by having "just one more", or your acceptance of more and more responsibilities even though your plate is already full! Many times we put ourselves in these predicaments by the choices we make. So why is it that so many of us have a hard time initiating or following through with our desire to change? Change often does not happen in a moment, instead we go through stages of change, each with their own purpose and necessary actions to help us propel to the next stage. Keep in mind this is not a linear movement, meaning we don't always move from one to the other. Instead we many regress back to an earlier stage and have to start again. This is where many of us just say "oh forget it, I'll never change." But its precisely that attitude that keeps you stagnant and resistant to try again. A renowned psychologist, James Prochaska, proposed that we find ourselves in this internal battle because of our perception of change. Read through Prochaska's Stages of Change. Think of something in your life that you may be struggling with. Consider what stage you may be in and what actions you might take to progress to the next.

## The Stages of Change



**Pre-Contemplation:** This first stage is where you are aware of the change that needs to take place, yet you have no desire or conscious intention of altering, changing or stopping the behavior.

This may be due to lack of insight or full awareness of the problem. It could be due to repeated attempts that were unsuccessful, leaving you feeling hopeless to try again. It is in this stage when you may start to feel the pressure of others who are aware of the change needed. For example, your son or daughter wanting you to stop smoking because of what was taught in school about the potential health risks.

**How to progress:** It's essential that you instill motivation towards change within. This can be done through educating yourself on the behavioral change; Looking at the positive outcomes to changing or continuing your behavior; Look at how your behavior conflicts with your personal goals or values. Individuals typically move past this stage once they realize the advantages of making the effort.

STAGE 1

**Contemplation:** At this stage, you acknowledge that you have a problem and begin an internal debate about pursuing change. This could be the most challenging stage since here you may get "stuck" going back and forth between measuring the pros and cons of a certain behavior. There is a sense of uncertainty. You may not be quite ready or committed yet to take the steps needed towards change. But at least you have recognized that there is a need. You are one step (stage) closer to making it happen.

**How to progress:** The best way to overcome your uncertainty is to do a "cost and benefit analysis". Actually sitting down with a pen and paper and writing out everything you can think of for both sides of the behavior (continue or change). *Let's take that example of smoking:*

STAGE 2

**Example:**

**Advantages of Continuing:** Stress relief, smoke breaks, social aspect

**Disadvantages of Continuing:** Not good for my health, expensive, smell, partner upset with me

**Advantages of Changing:** Save money, improve health, improve relationships, won't smell bad

**Disadvantages of Continuing:** Will miss the social aspect, might miss having the outlet for stress relief

You may see clearly an advantage but fear you have no alternative. For instance, dealing with stress. Identifying another way of dealing with your stress will help you in moving forward with the change.

**Preparation:** Individuals progress to the preparation stage of change upon committing to the intention to change in the immediate future. You realize that the advantages of making the change clearly outweigh the costs of continuing it. It is at this stage that one may begin to *actually take or experiment with small steps towards change, typically within the period of one month.* For example; someone who would like to eat healthier may purchase a nutritious eating cookbook or an individual struggling with anger issues may look into possibilities for professional help.

**How to progress:** Your success may lie simply with how committed you are to exploring all the avenues of how you will achieve this change. It may help to:

- Draw up a contract with yourself
- Set specific and measurable goals
- Detail how you will accomplish the task

STAGE 3

**Example:** "I will go to the gym Monday and Wednesday after work for 45 minutes for the first week of my behavior change." Also develop a detailed plan for contingencies so you stay on track. If you are trying to quit smoking, know what your response will be when a friend offers you a cigarette. Plan to reward yourself when you have reached a goal. Get a massage, buy yourself new sneakers, etc. Be sure to share your commitment with trusted friends and family members who will help you stay on track and will follow up on your progress with continued encouragement. *(continued on page 2)*



## The Stages of Change (continued from page 1)



**Action:** During this stage of change, your plans are starting to produce positive results (within one to six months). This may require the most commitment and require you to delegate a large amount of time to sticking to the new plan. This is particularly challenging if those who “supported or were enablers” to the behavior are still influential and apply pressure to “give in”.

You may also start to notice increase praise and encouragement from those who support your change. It's important to continually reflect back upon the advantages of the commitment you have made, check in with your plans, as well as provide yourself positive reinforcement. **Acknowledgement of the progress** you have made thus far and reflection upon what you have gained is essential. Lastly, **be kind to yourself!** It is likely that you are working towards a long term change: If, for instance, you miss a day at the gym don't view it as a full blown relapse into past behaviors; trust you will have plenty of days in the future to exercise and get back on track the next day.

STAGE 4



**Maintenance:** During this final stage of change, your once desired behavior is now a reality and you have been successful for the past six months in keeping on track. Now you finally realize that the one thing you doubted is actually possible! Your new behavior is firmly established and the threat of returning to the old way becomes less intense or frequent. This is the most important of all stages. For it is here that you can sustain life-long change and new lifestyle habits. Know that relapsing to old behaviors and re-cycling through the stages may always be there, so it's crucial that you continue to plan for events that will challenge you and trigger old feelings. Things to keep in mind:

- Remember what helped you through previous stages—cost and benefit analysis?
- Reflect on mistakes you made can help you to avoid them in the future
- Maintain a healthy-reflection on set backs and avoid over-analyzing, passing judgments or feeling guilty about yourself. Realize to error is human. Show yourself some compassion and just keep going! You can and will change!

FINAL STAGE

## Coping With Change

Change can be positive (such as a promotion), painful (losing someone close to you), out of your control (manager replaced), or a choice you've made (relocate or take a new job). Your reaction to change can vary from excitement to fear, resentment or a confusing mixture of emotions. One thing is for certain, **your attitude** to change will determine your experience and the effect it will have on your well-being. Let's look at some of the different ways people tend to approach change, the reactions that may occur, and how you can best cope with it.

### Types of Coping with Change

1. **Escape coping**—this is basically avoidance. This maladaptive approach to coping is characterized by ones attempt to avoid the stressor. Coping refers to adopting behaviors that will “protect” oneself from feeling the emotional and psychological effects. This could be a result of either doing or not doing something. It actually increases anxiety towards the stressor that is being avoided. This attempt at avoidance can be exhausting!
2. **Control coping**—this is positive and proactive. You refuse to behave like a “victim” of change and instead manage your feelings, get support, and do whatever you can to be *part of the change*.



Sometimes, you can't stop change from happening. But you can choose how you deal with it.

### Process of Reacting to Change

Because change can be so challenging, we usually react to it in four stages:

1. **Shock and disorientation**—especially if the change is sudden or huge enough to change your fundamental outlook on life.
2. **Anger and other emotional responses**—you may find yourself swinging between optimism and pessimism. Important to avoid emotional suppression and equally important to manage them through acknowledging how you feel. Try not to be judgmental of yourself as you attempt to work through all the emotions you will undoubtedly experience.
3. **Coming to terms with the new situation**—this is where you start to shift away from focusing on what was lost and turning towards what's ahead. This process may be slow and you might be reluctant to acknowledge it, but it's an essential part of coping with the change. The only commitment you should make to yourself is to try each day to move forward. Explore what the change means now in your life. You may behave resentfully and not want to cooperate but this will only bring more stress and harm to you and possibly others that you hold dear. Search for and emphasize the positive aspects of your developing situation and most of all, be patient. Coming to terms with some changes in life will be a gradual process.
4. **Acceptance and moving forward**—this is the stage where you finally come to accept your changed circumstances. Acceptance does not mean you give up or forget about your former situation. You will maintain those valuable memories, skills and relationships...the point is you are moving on. Set small, achievable goals. Once again this is where self-compassion must be present.

It's vital that you avoid pretending that everything's OK if it's not. So, if you find yourself regressing to Stage 2, give yourself time to recover. Use positive affirmations to raise your confidence, and ask for help from friends or a mentor.

**Resource:** *MindTools (2018); Psychology Today (2013).*

## Resilience and Well-being

Definition of Resilience: "the capability to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity or risk. This capability changes over time and is enhanced by protective factors in the individual and environment." (Stewart, 1997)



Beyond enduring horrible conditions, we truly need resilience every day to cope with stress, navigate relationships with other people, address health problems, confidently pursue opportunities, and stay centered in the face of adversity. Resilience is not only about breaking even and meeting the struggles and obstacles that come our way – **resilience is practicing the skills to thrive!** The most resilient person is not the one who never fails, but rather the one that fails, learns and thrives because of it. Being challenged, sometimes severely, is part of what activates resilience as a skill set.

More than five decades of research point to the fact that resilience is built by attitudes, behaviors and social supports that can be adopted and cultivated by anyone. Factors that lead to resilience include:

- Optimism
- the ability to stay balanced and manage strong or difficult emotions
- a sense of safety
- a strong social support system

The good news is that because there is a concrete set of behaviors and skills associated with resilience, **you can learn to be more resilient.**

### Adapting to adversity

Resilience is the ability to roll with the punches. When stress, adversity or trauma strikes, you still experience anger, grief and pain, but you're able to keep functioning — both physically and psychologically. However, resilience isn't about toughing it out, being stoic or going it alone. In fact, being able to reach out to others for support is a key component of being resilient.

Resilience is built  
by attitudes,  
behaviors &  
social supports



### Resilience and mental health

Resilience can help protect you from various mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. Resilience can also help offset factors that increase the risk of mental health conditions, such as being bullied or previous trauma. If you have an existing mental health condition, being resilient can improve your ability to cope.

### Tips To Improve Your Resilience

If you'd like to become more resilient, consider these tips:

- **Get connected.** Building strong, positive relationships with loved ones and friends can provide you with needed support and acceptance in both good times and bad. Establish other important connections by volunteering or joining a faith or spiritual community.
- **Make every day meaningful.** Do something that gives you a sense of accomplishment and purpose every day. Set goals to help you look toward the future with meaning.
- **Learn from experience.** Think of how you've coped with hardships in the past. Consider the skills and strategies that helped you through rough times. You might even write about past experiences in a journal to help you identify positive and negative behavior patterns — and guide your future behavior.
- **Remain hopeful.** You can't change the past, but you can always look toward the future. Accepting and even anticipating change makes it easier to adapt and view new challenges with less anxiety.
- **Take care of yourself.** Tend to your own needs and feelings. Participate in activities and hobbies you enjoy. Include physical activity in your daily routine. Get plenty of sleep. Eat a healthy diet. Practice stress management and relaxation techniques, such as yoga, **meditation**, guided imagery, deep breathing or prayer.
- **Be proactive.** Don't ignore your problems. Instead, figure out what needs to be done, make a plan, and take action. Although it can take time to recover from a major setback, traumatic event or loss, know that your situation can improve if you work at it.
- **Practice authenticity.** Being true to yourself. Sometimes in stressful times we "surface act", telling others we are fine when we aren't. It's exhausting. Honor your full range of emotional experiences. This is much healthier and puts you on track to resilience more so than striving to experience only positive emotions. Mindfulness can help you stay connected to your true feelings.
- **Detach for awhile.** Taking time off, getting away to recover is critical for all of us to stay resilient. Don't keep putting off vacation time. What are you saving it for?

### Exercise mindfulness—

maintaining a moment by moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations & surrounding environment through a gentle, nurturing "lens", according to the Greater Good Science Center at Berkley.

Mindfulness:

- Predicts judgment accuracy and insight-related problem solving
- Enhances cognitive flexibility
- Facilitates job performance
- Decreases stress while improving resiliency and work engagement.

**A wise man adapts himself to circumstances, as water shapes itself to the vessel that contains it. --Chinese Proverb**

**Resource:** MayoClinic—Build skills to endure hardship; Harvard Business Review on Emotional Intelligence (2016); Greater Good Science Center at Berkley.



## Boost Your Health With A Dose Of Gratitude

While it seems pretty obvious that gratitude is a positive emotion, psychologists are now learning that it can make you happier and change your attitude about life - like an emotional reset button.

Studies also show that when you stop and "count your blessings," you not only shift from feeling bad to feeling very good, but there are amazing health benefits as well. Practicing gratitude regularly can create a more positive outlook, improved mood, reduced stress, and increased fulfillment. Here are some tricks for cultivating gratitude (or paying attention and noting the abundance in your life):

- **Keep a gratitude journal.** This is the most common gratitude practice, and one of the most effective according to research. Get a journal and write down 5 things you are grateful for. You can do this each night before bed, or even just once a week, but do it regularly. It's not how often you do it that counts—it's how regularly and how sincerely. Those who do report fewer physical symptoms, feel better about their lives as a whole, and maintain greater optimism about the future.
- **Post positive reinforcements** such as quotes, notes or cards from friends or family, and pictures of an amazing day you had – any tangible reminder representing all of the good things in your life.
- **Create a list of benefits in your life.** Some people need to write it out so they have a visual reminder and can maintain mindfulness of their gratitude. After making the list, ask yourself "To what extent do I take these for granted?"
- **Talk to yourself** in a creative, optimistic and appreciate manner. Show some self-compassion. If you are in a particularly challenging situation, seeing how it can ultimately benefit you is a healthy approach. So the next time you have to deal with a difficult person at work or home, look at it as an opportunity to improve your patience and understanding skills.
- **Reframe a situation** by looking at it with a different, more positive attitude. See the lesson revealed not the failure or mistake!

This is a  
wonderful day.  
I've never seen  
it before.

MAYA ANGELOU

Even in the face of tremendous loss or tragedy, it's possible to feel gratitude. In fact, adversity can boost gratitude, recent findings show. In a web-based survey tracking the personal strengths of more than 3,000 American respondents, researchers noted an immediate surge in feelings of gratitude after Sept. 11, 2001. Gratitude in the aftermath of 9/11 helped buffer people against the negative effects of stress, making them less likely

Grateful people tend to be more optimistic, a characteristic that researchers say boosts the immune system.

## 15 Steps To Achieve Gratitude

1. Appreciate
2. Stop Labeling
3. Optimism
4. Release Your Past
5. Avoid Comparison
6. Kindness
7. Stop Using Excuses
8. Nurture Relationships
9. Forgiveness
10. Avoid Impressing Others
11. Commit To Your Goals
12. Care For Your Body
13. Believe
14. Dream
15. Give

PreventDisease.com

It's no secret that stress can make us sick, particularly when we can't cope with it. It's linked to several leading causes of death, including heart disease and cancer, and claims responsibility for up to 90% of all doctor visits. **Gratitude**, it turns out, can help us better manage stress. "Gratitude research is beginning to suggest that feelings of *thankfulness* have tremendous positive value in helping people cope with daily problems, especially stress," says Robert Emmons, University of California Davis Psychology professor.

How is it that some people manage to feel grateful in the face of challenging life circumstances, while others sink into despair? "So much of gratitude is about one's perspective and framework for looking at the world and at self. People who tend to be more mindful of the benefits they've received tend to focus their attention outward," Emmons explains.

Start a "Gratitude Board" in your office. Have employees post their response to "I am thankful for...". You'll be surprised at how good it feels. And sometimes noticing the smallest things make the biggest impact on our hearts and on others!



## Slow Cooker Turkey and White Bean Chili

Nothing beats a slowly simmered chili on a cold October day. Made with ground turkey, bell peppers, smoky chipotle peppers, white beans, and served with sharp cheddar cheese and avocado. This bowl of chili is a hearty, healthy & cozy dinner that you can feel good about eating. Recipe from [www.halfbakedharvest.com](http://www.halfbakedharvest.com)

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 2 small yellow onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced or grated
- 2 pounds ground turkey or chicken
- 2 red peppers, seeded and chopped
- 2 chipotle peppers in adobo, finely chopped (use 1 pepper for less heat)
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2-3 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1 can (28 ounce) crushed tomatoes
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon apple butter
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 can (14 ounce) white beans, drained
- cheddar cheese, avocado, green onions, and cilantro for serving



 prep time	15 minutes
 cook time	6 hours
 total time	6 hours 15 minutes
 servings	8
 calories	192 kcal

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR TWO COOKING VERSIONS:

#### SLOW COOKER

1. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When the oil shimmers, add the onion and cook about 5 minutes or until it begins to caramelize around the edges. Stir in the garlic and cook another minute. Add the turkey and brown all over, breaking up the meat as you go, about 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat. I know this is an extra step but when working with ground meat, it's a step you have to take. If you have a slow cooker that also browns meat before you start slow cooking...bonus!!
2. Transfer the turkey to the bowl of your slow cooker. Add in the red bell peppers, chipotle peppers, chili powder, smoked paprika, cumin, cinnamon, and salt. Stir in 2 cups chicken broth, the tomatoes, tomato paste, apple butter, and bay leaves, stir to combine. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours or high for 4-5 hours. During the last hour of cooking, stir in the beans. If your chili is too thick, add the remaining broth to thin as desired.
3. Remove the bay leaves and ladle the chili into bowls. Top with cheddar cheese, avocado and green onions. Eat!

#### INSTANT POT

1. Set the instant pot to sauté. Add the olive oil and onion and cook about 5 minutes or until it begins to caramelize around the edges. Stir in the garlic and cook another minute. Add the turkey and brown all over, breaking up the meat as you go, about 5 minutes. Turn the instant pot off.
2. Add in the red bell peppers, chipotle peppers, chili powder, smoked paprika, cumin, cinnamon, and salt. Stir in 2 cups chicken broth, the tomatoes, tomato paste, apple butter, and bay leaves, stir to combine. Cover and cook on soup/chili for 25 minutes.
3. Once done cooking, use the quick release and release the steam. Stir in the beans. Remove the bay leaves and ladle the chili into bowls. Top with cheddar cheese, avocado and green onions. Eat!

*One of the deep secrets of life is that all that is really worth the doing is what we do for others.*

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