

# Change in the Workplace

The logo for Aquilis, featuring the word "Aquilis" in a dark blue, cursive script font. The text is set against a light blue background that has a soft, wavy gradient. The entire logo is centered on the page.

A booklet produced by Aquilis Counselling Service  
for staff employed by  
Portsmouth Hospital University Trust, Cosham, Hampshire

## Welcome

This booklet contains information and worksheets to help you understand your feelings around your experience of change in the workplace.

## Coping with change



Change when we choose it can be a rewarding, beneficial and a hopeful experience.

However it can be a different experience entirely, if change happens and we are not expecting it or if we do not want it.

## Why Change Can be Difficult to Accept

For many people the prospect of change can be a worry, our brains are hardwired to resist change. Once the amygdala in the brain interprets change as a threat, it releases fear hormones for fight or flight. This is why change can feel unsettling, we no longer have familiarity, we have to re-evaluate the experience of the unknown.

Change can feel scary because we must adapt to a new way of doing things, everyone experiences change differently. Research shows that peoples' responses to change can follow a particular pattern called the change curve.

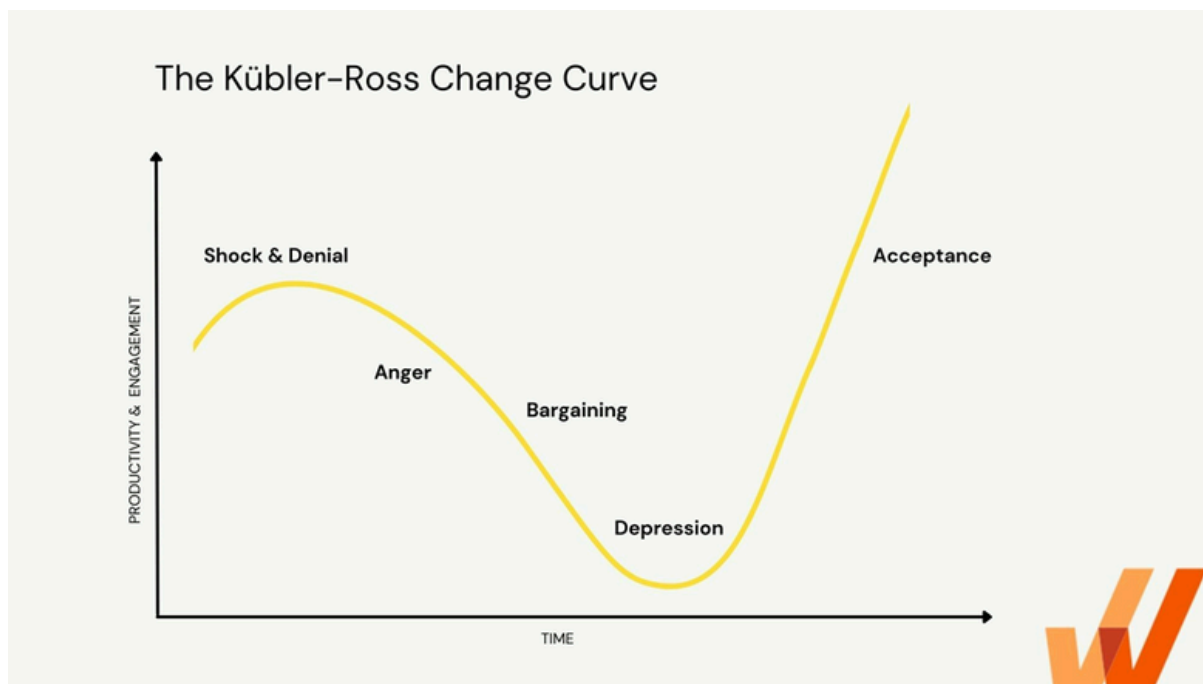
Learning about our patterns of response and understanding the change curve can help us undergo changes in our life.



## Understanding the Change Curve

The change curve is from a model based on work developed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in the 1960s. It was initially used to describe the grieving process and has since been adapted and used to help people understand how they respond and react to significant change.

The change curve shows the stages we go through after a change. Through knowledge of this curve and where you are in relation to it, will help you understand your feelings and emotions with more clarity. There is no right or wrong way to go through each stage and the journey will be different for each person. There are no time limits to each stage, as this depends on the circumstances you experience and the change itself. You may notice that you move back and forward between the stages.



The five original stages of grief - denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance - have adapted over time with many different models available. The change curve builds on these emotions showing the different stages of transition.

## Shock /denial

You may feel shock or denial as your first reaction to a big change or you may blame others. It is also usual to go from blaming others to blaming yourself as you are still in shock and trying to make sense of the unsettling emotions that change can evoke. Some of the shock can be due to the fear of the unknown or feeling that more information is needed for the change.

## Anger

The stage where the reality of the situation is apparent anger (or a myriad of other emotions) are not unusual. The shock may have reduced but you may feel doubt and uncertainty as you begin to move towards acceptance.

## Bargaining

During this stage you may find that your focus is upon what you or others could have done differently to help prevent a loss or change.

## Depression

The lowest point of the curve is depression the anger may have dissipated but there is realisation that the change is going to occur and can't be stopped. This can be accompanied with a feeling of isolation. Try to speak to your support network or try some of the reflective exercises within the pack to help.

## Acceptance and integration.

The stage where you may start to notice that the change is inevitable, and you have accepted this change. You will recognise what this change means to you and will be aware of what future opportunities will arise from the change. You do not have to like the change but may be thinking about how you can adapt to it.

You may feel more optimistic and hopeful focusing less on what has been lost and looking at the positives of the situation.

Exploring what has changed and why and what will now become a new normality. At this stage people can feel better about the change and develop new growth opportunities.

## Taking Control

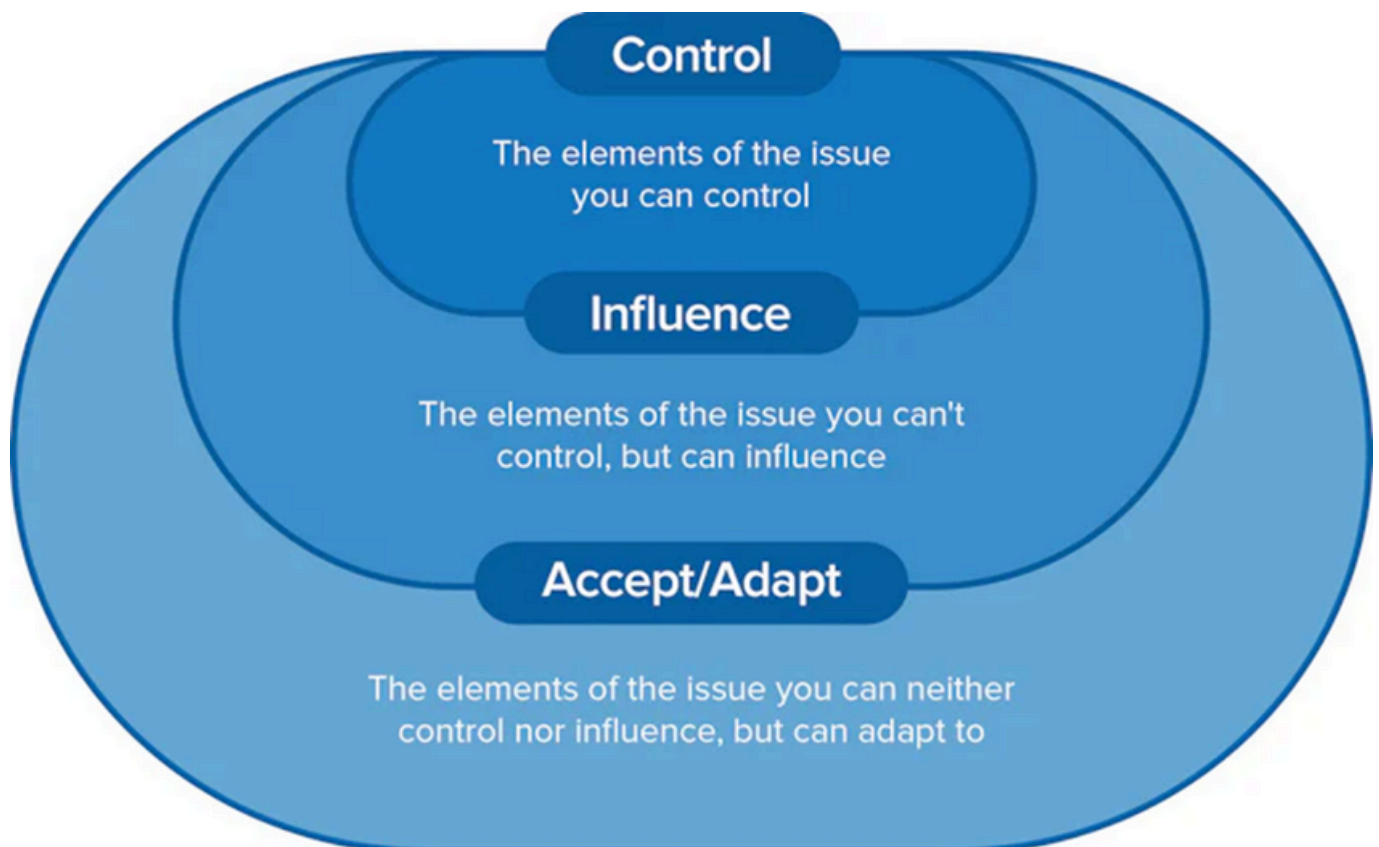
For many of us change can feel more of a concern than something we welcome. When change happens around us our brains are wired to take the path of least resistance choosing options that involve the least change. This means that change can feel challenging when it occurs.

Try thinking about the things that you can control, it may be helpful to use the diagram below to think about a change you have experienced in the past and how you adapted to this.

Consider what you could control: your thoughts, actions, self-care boundaries or your mindset.

Consider what you could influence: the things that we don't have control over but could influence e.g., working relationships or friendships.

Finally think about what you could neither control nor influence but could adapt to e.g., a change in working hours.



## Additional Ways to Help You Feel in Control

- **Take control of your time- plan your day to ensure that you include activities that you enjoy supporting your wellbeing. This will help you to feel more in control. Perhaps a walk or some time in outside space to help boost your mental and physical health.**
- **Use mindfulness – practice living in the present moment. Mindfulness can be helpful when coping with ongoing change. Noticing your thoughts and feelings in the present moment will help you to feel less anxious or stressed.**
- **Avoid unhealthy coping strategies- things that allow a quick fix like alcohol or cigarettes may mean you feel better in the moment, but they can have a long-term negative impact on physical and mental health.**
- **Be aware of negative thought patterns not only will they make you unhappy and anxious but can have a negative effect on overall health.**
- **Keep to a routine, stressful situations can be come more difficult if we are tired. Try to go to bed and get up in the morning at similar times and get enough rest. Ensure you eat a healthy well-balanced diet and avoid becoming dehydrated. Lack of self-care can affect your mood or memory**

## Journaling

Writing a journal can be a safe space to write and explore your feelings.

Practice journaling in the space below.

Try asking yourself:

- How do I feel today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What worries do I have?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Is there an emotion that I'm avoiding right now, what could this be?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What have I learnt about myself and others in relation to change?



## Weekly Reflections Page

Use this page to write or draw your experiences from this week, use as a template for whenever you feel it may be a helpful tool.

Consider:

- o What went well this week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- o What changes have I experienced?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- o What plans do I have for this week?

## Change Reflection Plan

What is the change?

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What do I think about this? What are my Negative thoughts?

*What are my worries about this change? who can I speak to?*

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What are my positive thoughts?

*What is within my control and what can I do to make this change feel less difficult?*

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What resources do I have to help me cope with this change?

*e.g., emotional professional support, financial*

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What do I need to help me build upon these resources?

*Consider what would help, who you may need to talk to*

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*“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are  
challenged to change ourselves”*

*Viktor Frankl*