

The Times They Are A-Changin'

A look at the natural stages of coping with change

Throughout our lives and careers we all have to cope with times of change, either of our own making or where we are pushed into it.

There's no denying that change can be scary, but that's normal. There are several perfectly justifiable and normal stages that we go through. The first is normally panic, followed by confusion and then a need to find out more information. You can't subvert those stages, but by helping people through that process and by encouraging them to do things that are positive and productive it can change their view of the situation.

When career coaching, the first and the only piece of advice I would give would be to stop panicking. Of course, that's very easy to say and quite hard to do.

In my experience people tend to react far too quickly. For example, if they are losing their job they will often write their CV the day after they know they are going and send off several applications straightaway. But they are still at the very beginning of a personal change process where they are learning about what they need to do and how to get there.

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Really taking some time to explore what they're good at, what they enjoy doing, what the most important thing is for them about their new role and what outcome they want, is a vital process. It provides the best possible start to know how to move forward and I've found that getting this key stage right saves people huge amounts of time, effort and anxiety later. If it's not carried out properly they'll keep coming back to it.

It's also often the case that things are not as bad as they seem. So it's a good idea for people to write down the worst case scenario. After writing it down and thinking about what would be the worst that could happen, it usually doesn't seem as bad, some of the anxiety disappears and it becomes more manageable. We have a tendency to over think.

I also like to challenge people's assumptions about what they can do and help them think things through calmly and rationally and above all to do things that are productive to help them change their view of what's around them. By following this process it's possible to start that person's own journey to where they want to go by helping them come up with the solutions themselves.

Peter Mayes is an Accredited Coach with the Association for Coaching and a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development).

He began his consultancy in 1997 after working within large organisations as a senior manager and trainer. He specialises in helping medium to large sized organisations in manufacturing and service industries focusing on issues with their key people and teams. He also works with individuals who are taking the next step in their career. With a proven track record Peter's unique mix of operational improvement productivity based experiences and people based development allows him to see things from a business and personal perspective.

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