

The Survivors Guide to Change

When we are in charge of a new initiative, where success involves the contribution of others, our dream outcome is that instantly, people will line up to support our cause. In reality, all change is met with some resistance. The more dramatic the variation from the status quo is, the greater the resistance to the initiative. This is compounded by 'the progress effect' of change. This is when you start to make progress towards your new plan. When people see that the idea has moved from thought to reality, resistance actually increases. At this stage, those in opposition will have their eyes peeled. No glitch will be overlooked. No error will be forgiven.

Resistance to change exists in two forms, active and passive. Active resistance is obvious. It can manifest as arguments, blaming, stubborn refusal or, in extreme cases, intimidation. Passive resistance is far more subtle, and can be equally or even more detrimental than active resistance. It can involve ignoring instructions, deceiving others, procrastination and worst of all, pretending to be on board while actively sabotaging efforts.

No one feels completely comfortable during change. Even the change champion, or the instigator of the change, is moving through uncharted territory. In evolutionary terms, we are actually hard wired to be apprehensive of change. It is one of our primitive "survival" instincts, and for some, a much stronger one than for others. However, to embrace a new future of happiness, success and all its associated opportunities, every person will need to defy the instinctive emotions that foster resistance, such as suspicion, stress and fear.

When the change is initiated by you, these feelings might still be present but should be less intense than when the change is enforced or encouraged by others. When encouraged by others to move in a direction we are naturally resisting, it can feel like a threat. In this situation, trust is essential to the change process. With trust, each person will be able to more effectively resist those negative emotions such as suspicion and fear. However, with the impression

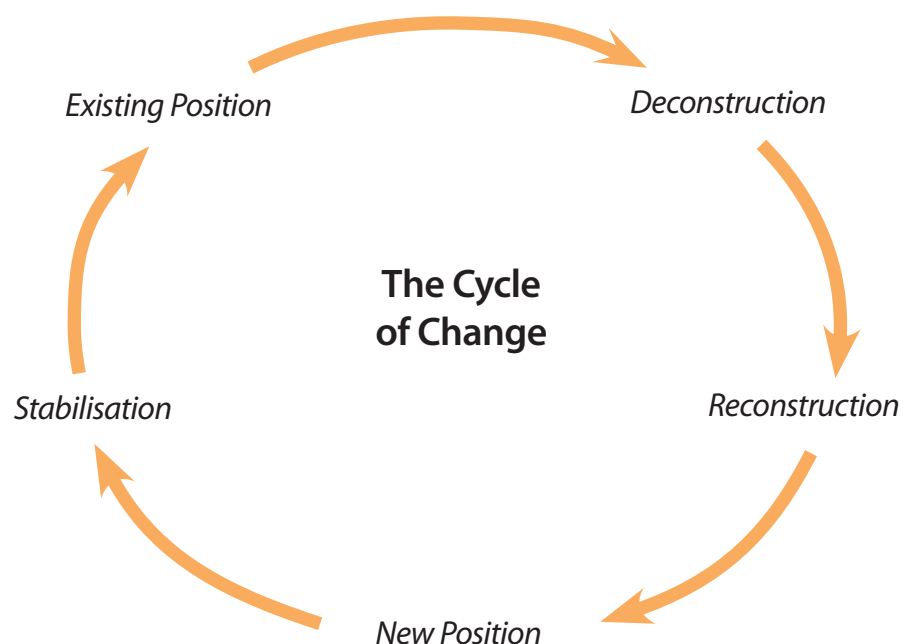
of treacherous motives, it will be impossible to eliminate resistance to the change.

Facing such resistance, it's not surprising that some well intentioned ideas and initiatives are never realised. In fact, it's quite amazing that any new ideas are ever introduced. Just ask Charles Darwin! In order to move forward through any type of change, the change champion, and everyone else involved, can benefit from understanding the process of change and our natural human responses to change.

When change occurs, the movement from an existing stable position to a new position can be extremely

threatening. This is because the current position of reality needs to be deconstructed before it is reformed. This deconstruction can be traumatic because what is familiar and comfortable is dissolving before our eyes. It is natural to resist, particularly if we perceive a lack of control over the change. Add to that, the possibility that the new position may not be what is hoped or planned, or might just be wrong. All of this uncertainty can generate significant stress. Even if the change is planned, such as a new job or a new baby, the uncertainty and deconstruction can create major threat triggers.

The overall process of a change is cyclical and begins with our existing position.



The key phase for resistance is deconstruction, which is surrounded by confusion, ambiguity and fear. If we can move past this situation, we will reach reconstruction. With reconstruction comes the ability to see the benefits of the change. Some of the upside will move into focus as we begin to find our place in the new position. We may oscillate between deconstruction and reconstruction for a time before successfully settling into our new position.

During stabilisation, some resistance may continue. It usually manifests in the form of backward glances and is reflected by comments like "it worked

better with the old system", "I've never had to do that before", or "you've changed". Eventually we stabilise in our new position, our old life becoming a distant memory as our new life becomes our new reality, or our new existing position. What was once uncertain is now our comfort zone. Those who succeed through this cycle are those who look forward to their new future, rather than those looking back at their old past. And the quicker we adopt the ability to look forward, the more chance we have of happiness and success during, and after, change.

Change is inevitable and unrelenting. It will always be part of our lives. The

faster we look forward to the future, the greater the chance to spot the opportunities on the horizon. 💡

© Successful Minds – March 2010



e: info@successfulminds.com.au
w: www.successfulminds.com.au
