

Change is the new normal

Most people find comfort in familiar routines and patterns. When our life is going well, we often long to keep things the way they are. However, we must always be prepared for change because nothing is permanent. Life is about change and growth, and although uncertainty can be unsettling and even frightening, learning to embrace the challenges of change is an important life skill.

Technology is accelerating the pace of change and it seems to be taking a heavy toll on the work world. New communication tools mean we are always connected. Job automation and robotics are taking over jobs humans once did. Drivers are being replaced by autonomous cars; service staff are being replaced by artificial intelligence chatbots.

The five stages that are commonly associated with the grief process can often be applied to any major life change. Here's a simplified example of the process a service worker might go through on learning she is being replaced by a robotic chatbot.

- **Stage 1** Shock and denial: "What?! A robot could never do my job. That will never happen!"
- **Stage 2** Anger: "After 10 years, how could that jerk of a boss value a stupid machine over me?"
- **Stage 3** Bargaining: "Maybe we could job-share and I will supervise the robot."
- **Stage 4** Depression: "This robot does the job better than I did! I'll never get another job."
- **Stage 5** Acceptance / integration: "I really liked that last job, but being a robot programmer sounds interesting, too - and it pays better."



It's not just the workplace; we face change in our personal lives, too: Marriage, divorce, relocation, loss, illness, aging, and more. No matter the source, facing the challenge of change in our lives requires:

- Flexibility – a willingness to change or compromise.
- Adaptability - the quality of being able to adjust to new conditions.
- Resiliency – the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

People who have these life skills are equipped to face change and aren't easily knocked off course. They experience less stress, less depression, and better physical and emotional health.

Your EAP has several tools that can help you cope with change. First, we have various self-help resources and courses on **stress management**, as well as telephonic stress coaching and counseling.

Second, we have a new online resource called **The Resilience Journey**, a program with more than 40 interactive exercises designed to help you develop your resiliency. Simply login to www.EducatorsEAP.com to access these resources, or call to speak with a counselor.