

RESPONDING TO CHANGE

GOALS:

- To identify some of the skills we require in a rapidly changing world.
- To look at techniques that help us reduce the anxiety inherent in change.

RATIONALE:

This lesson pinpoints anchors of stability we all have or can develop, to help us face change.

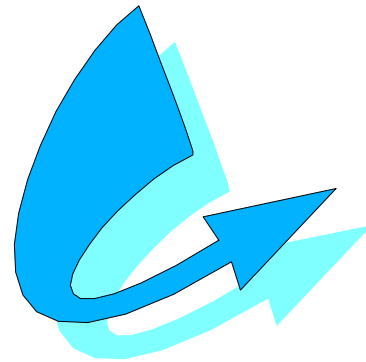
MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, masking tape, pens, pencils.

METHOD:

Warm up: What is Change

Ask participants to think back to the world in which their grandparents, their parents and they themselves grew up. What changes have taken place -- in values, technology, communications, governments, countries, travel, etc., since those days? In the large group, chart the changes. Allow time for discussion by writing 'CHANGE' in the centre of the flipchart and recording participants responses in a random order around the word CHANGE.



Exercise 1: Turning Point

Ask participants to think of a specific change which they feel was a turning point in their lives. Divide participants into triads or quads and instruct the groups to share these significant changes in their lives.

Questions to Consider:

- Did you initiate this change or did someone else?
- What were your immediate reactions to this change?
- What did you do about this change, at first; then later?
- In what ways were you satisfied with the way you responded to this change?
- In what ways did the change alter your life?

Theory: See Theory Box.

Exercise 2: Personal Stability Zones

Divide participants into groups of 3 or 4. Encourage participants to identify their own personal stability zones and record them on flipchart paper. These zones may be long-term relationships with people, places, objects; they may be rituals or beliefs. They are most likely relationships which are carefully maintained despite all kinds of change.

Questions to Consider:

- In what ways do your personal stability zones work for you?
- In what ways does carefully avoiding change in some areas help you to meet change in other areas of your life?
- Do you feel that all your personal stability zones still work for you or have some become meaningless rituals?
- What are the ways you can develop stability zones that will work for you?

Post the flipchart lists around the room and share in the large group.

Exercise 3: Action Plan

Encourage participants to identify and develop their own destimulation tactics as well as their personal stability zones to help participants in meeting unexpected changes and in planning for change.

EVALUATION:

THEORY BOX

We know that when we are asked to change again and again, the physical and psychological reactions to this overstimulation puts our adaptive system under great strain. All change produces stress and carries with it a physical and emotional price tag. The more radical the change, the steeper the price.

Overstimulation can occur on at least three levels: the sensory, the cognitive and the decisional. To help us function, each of us has developed strategies or destimulation tactics to lower the level of stimulation when we feel uncomfortably close to the limits of our adaptive range. We use these tactics every day, often unconsciously. By becoming conscious of them we can increase their effectiveness. By examining our own responses to overstimulation we can learn ways of consciously influencing change. We can begin by influencing small events, then expand our influence to larger patterns of experience.

At this point record suggestions from participants for the following:

TO REDUCE SENSORY BOMBARDMENT

- turn off machines
- pull drapes
- have a regular, consistent routine

TO REDUCE COGNITIVE STIMULATION

- refuse to read anything
- block out voices during conversation

TO REDUCE DECISIONAL STIMULATION

- ask a friend (or partner) to make a decision for you
- flip a coin

Each of us needs both roots and wings. Our roots may be transplanted from time to time, yet without them we would be continually blowing in the wind with no sense of our own selves. At one extreme is the person who sees all change as a threat, who actively resists change. At the other, is the person who enthusiastically embraces all change. Both are reacting to change, rather than examining and directing the change in light of their own needs and abilities. Our stability zones or roots give us the space, time and structure to help us deal with change and initiate our own responses to it.