

People's Reactions to Change

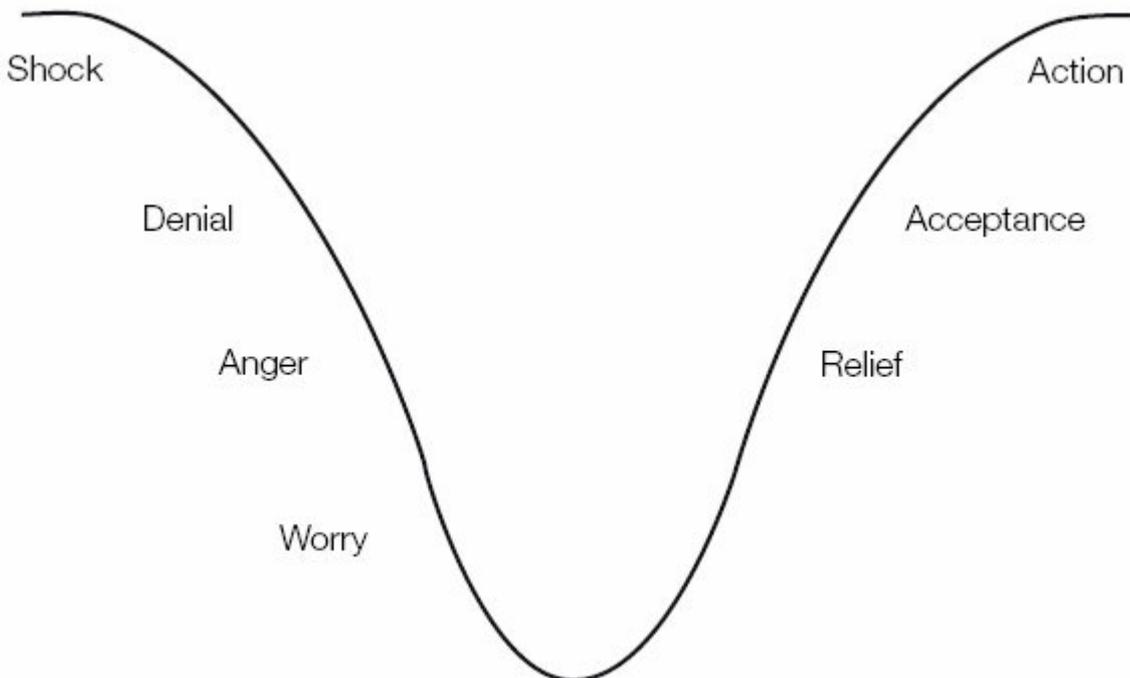
A number of writers and researchers exploring the human dimension of change have identified clear phases that people appear to generally move through as they face and come to terms with change. An adaptation of Elizabeth Kubler Ross' work on grief is 'The Change Curve' which describes people's reactions to change. The Concerns based Adoption Model developed by Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall (1987) explains how people will have concerns about new innovations and change and describes how to deal effectively with those concerns. Both models provide a useful way to look at how change affects individuals.

Elizabeth Kubler Ross - 'The Change Curve'

The work of Elizabeth Kubler Ross, who initially researched and wrote about bereavement and the process of grief that people typically experience, has relevance to change management. People dealing with personal loss and bereavement often experience a cycle ranging from initial shock, denial, anger and anxiety, ultimately moving through to acceptance.

When major change is involved, it is not unusual for people to experience a similar 'journey'. The speed and duration of the cycle will vary depending on the degree of change and its impact on people. As individuals we will all vary in our responses and the speed at which we adapt.

Nor is it a one-way journey. People may feel they have come to terms with a change, only to have something unexpectedly throw them off course, and they find themselves back in worry or anger. This sort of 'flip-flopping' is quite commonly observed and experienced.



Depression and resistance

Based on the work of Elizabeth Kübler Ross)

Watch [Bob McCulloch](#) as he describes a modified version of Kubler Ross' grief cycle as it relates to change

Ways to help people through the change curve

Shock	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get everything out in the open - as much information as possible - repeat it • Be realistic with promises - tell the truth - even if it means saying 'I don't know!! Have to get back to you' • Be alert to how people are reacting • Be patient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be non-defensive - don't argue too much • Be available • Accept there will be strong emotions, good and bad feelings - don't tell people how they 'should' feel • Allow time for people to absorb
Denial / Anger	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer instructions and steps clearly, and not too fast • Check for understanding - challenge assumptions - deal with concerns and rumours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be specific with what is required • Establish shorter time frames • Follow up - keep check with people • Empathise
Worry and confusion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept emotional display • Provide opportunities to sound off • Listen and be supportive • Build success experiences • Motivate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue direct control - clear expectations • Keep people involved • Tolerate mistakes/some inefficiency • Communicate
Relief and acceptance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect some setbacks - people will flip back at times • Allow for differences in recovery time • Reinforce hopefulness/be optimistic • Continue team building efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to manage closely • Provide feedback - especially positive • Reward • Emphasise achievements • Highlight benefits and positives

Concerns-based adoption model

The concerns-based adoption model helps us understand individual's concerns and how to address them when implement change. Hord and Hall theorize that when confronted with change individuals generally fall into one of seven stages, each one reflecting a higher level of interest or engagement with the change. Below are the levels and suggestions on how to work with individuals at each stage.

7 Stages of Concern

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model outlines seven Stages of Concern that offer a way to understand and then address educators' common concerns about change.

Stage 0: Awareness

Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or concerned with it.

- "I am not concerned about this innovation"
- "I don't really know what this innovation involves"

Stage 1: Informational

Interested in some information about the change

- "I want to know more about this innovation."
- "There is a lot I don't know about this but I'm reading and asking questions"

Stage 2: Personal

Wants to know the personal impact of the change

- "How is this going to affect me?"
- "I'm concerned about whether I can do this."
- "How much control will I have over the way I use this?"

Stage 3: Management

Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.

- "I seem to be spending all of my time getting materials ready"
- "I'm concerned that we'll be spending more time in meetings"
- "Where will I find the time to plan my work or take care of the record keeping required to do this well?"

Stage 4: Consequences

Interested in the impact on students or the University

- "How is using this going to affect students?"
- "I'm concerned about whether I can change this in order to ensure that students will learn better as a result of introducing this idea?"

Stage 5 Collaboration

Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective

- "I'm concerned about relating what I'm doing to what others are doing"
- "I want to see more cooperation among colleagues as we work with this innovation"

Stage 6: Refocusing

Begin refining the innovation to improve teaching and research results

"I have some ideas about something that would work even better than this"

Address Individual Concerns

To help bring about change, you first must know an individual's concerns. Then those concerns must be addressed. While there are no set formulas, here are some suggestions for addressing the stage of concern.

Stage 0: Awareness concerns

- If possible, involve people in discussions and decision about the innovation and its implementations.
- Share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much it overwhelms.
- Acknowledge that a lack of awareness is expected and reasonable and that there are no foolish questions.

Stage 1: Informational concerns

- Provide clear and accurate information about the innovation.
- Use several ways to share information – verbally in writing, and through available media. Communicate with large and small groups and individuals.
- Help people see how the innovation relates to their current practices – the similarities and the differences.

Stage 2: Personal concerns

- Legitimise the existence and expression of personal concerns.
- Use personal notes and conversations to provide encouragement and reinforce personal adequacy.
- Connect people with others whose personal concerns have diminished and who will be supportive.

Stage 3: Management concerns

- Clarify the steps and components of the innovation.
- Provide answers that address the small specific “how-to” issues.
- Demonstrate exact and practical solutions to the logistical problems that contribute to these concerns.

Stage 4: Consequence concerns

- Provide individuals with opportunities to visit other settings where the innovation is in use and to attend conferences in the topic.
- Make sure people are not overlooked. Give positive feedback and needed support.
- Find opportunities for people to share their skills with others.

Stage 5 Collaboration concerns

- Provide opportunities to develop skills for working collaboratively.

- Bring together, from inside and outside the University, those who are interested in working collaboratively.
- Use people to assist others.

Stage 6: Refocusing concerns

- Respect and encourage the interest individuals have for finding a better way
- Help people channel their ideas and energies productively.
- Help people access the resources they need to refine their ideas and put them into practice

References

Holloway K, (2013) A measure of concern: Research-based program aids innovation by addressing teacher concerns, retrieved 30 May 2013, <http://www.learningforward.org/docs/tools-for-learning-schools/tools2-03.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Kubler-Ross E, (1993) On death and dying. Collier, New York