South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

# Managing change- survive or thrive

Working in the Trust, we all have witnessed monumental change and challenges: the demands the Pandemic brought, the cost-of-living crisis, bed pressures, and staff shortages.

Now with Encompass we are moving toward more change. This paper is not about Encompass. It is about managing change that is on the horizon.

The demands in the health service are certainly changing. The needs of the population are different from the needs we grew up with. We need to adapt to meet these challenges.

Even positive change can be upsetting to some. Change takes us out of our comfort zone. Fear of the unfamiliar is one of the biggest barriers to change with uncertainty a source of stress. When stress becomes overwhelming, it can harm well-being. For some, change brings loss.




Managing any change effectively can take time. It won't be all clear sailing. Mistakes will be made to be learned from.

Change can be particularly challenging in healthcare because of the complex relationships between a wide range of departments, professions, patients/clients and carers.

Being able to cope with change is sometimes seen as resilience. That word has been overused in recent times yet there is a science behind.it. Resilience is not a trait but a process, meaning it can be shaped and open to influence.

Let's take a look at a few healthy practices for increasing your level of resilience and coping with change. It is not an exhaustive list of what builds resilience, though a good start. These can also apply to things outside of work as much as inside.

You choose what will help you and your resilience. It is actively choosing what will help you and doing it is what is known as "agency". Agency is the most significant thing in building resilience.

**Evaluate Your Level of Control**: Sometimes it's all too easy to become fixated on events over which we have no power. To evaluate your level of control over a situation, you can ask yourself, "What can I take responsibility for here and what is outside my control?" When you look for opportunities to work towards change that is possible, you are less likely to feel stuck in difficult situations. This sounds a bit like the "Serenity Prayer "doesn't it?

**Check Your Thought Patterns:** When stress builds**,** it is normal to see things more negatively. You might see things in black or white, assume the worst and ignore the good. Can someone change the way they think? Of course they can if they know how. If you take the time to examine your thinking, you might find some space to nudge your thinking towards more resilient thinking. If you are not sure how, the booklet we used in Stress, Managing and Resilience Training (S.M.A.R.T), ***Bend Don't Break*** that can help you with that. We now have an on-line, self-help version anyone can use confidentially and at your own pace.

Bend Don't Break | ASCERT www.ascert.biz/bend-dont-break/ Opens best in Edge

**Be in the Present**: When you worry about the future or dwell on mistakes, you are not in the present. To bring yourself back to the present, observe what's around you. Get in tune with your body, paying attention to how it responds to stress. Set aside time every day to relax, use deep breathing and other grounding techniques bringing your focus back to the present. We will be talking about specific skills to do that in the next paper on calming skills.

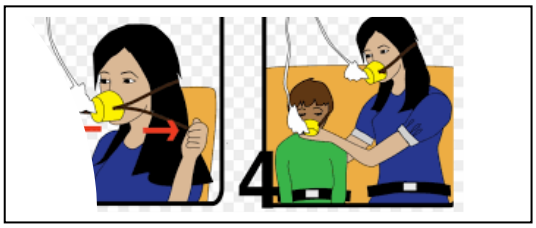
**Find Your Priorities** Resilient people see change as an opportunity rather than something to fear. What's really important to you? Where do you see yourself wasting your time and energy? With a clear sense of your goals and values, you will find your mind and body can be much more resilient when it comes to the stressors of change.

**Strive to maintain some normalcy.** Structure and routine are comforting. The more you can maintain routines in the midst of a change, the better. Go for your usual walks and try to stick to your normal sleeping, waking and eating times.

**Create some comfort.** Incorporate stress-relieving and enjoyable activities into your day. Listen to relaxing music, use relaxation or mindfulness, be physically active, and laugh. Some people use their spiritual beliefs. It does not matter what you do as long as it is comforting to you and healthy. Avoid quieting troubling emotions with unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, drinking, and over eating.

**Count your blessings.** Gratitude is one of the most powerful things you can do to boost well-being. Writing down or sharing highlights of your day can go a long way toward making you feel less depleted. Even during difficult times, noticing the positive things around you can act almost like a reset button for your mind.

**Prioritize self-care:** Caring for ourselves in the Health service is often less intuitive and was not part of our training. We are caregivers, not care-receivers. It is no surprise that this is not easy for us to do consistently. We put our own needs second. Self-care in not a luxury, it is a necessity. Remember those instructions we hear on an airplane about putting our own oxygen mask on first? That applies here too.



A large part of self-care is taking care of our physical health. We are the only ones who can ensure that we eat properly, sleep long enough, exercise regularly, keep our brains active, and see our GP when we need to.

We can also monitor and nurture our emotional health, watching out for the signs of burn out: feelings of energy drain, exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job; feelings of negativity or cynicism, or feeling you are not doing enough. Have you noticed any of these in yourself or colleagues?

Prioritizing your health means not being afraid to ask for help when you need it. Asking for help and support is definitely not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength. After all, if we value the care, we give then we can also value the care and support we get when we need it.

Knowing where to get support is important. Staff Well-being has pulled together the support available to all of us in the South Eastern Trust.

Staff Support Hub - 1 (pagetiger.com)



Thanks for reading this. We hope it was helpful.

Ed Sipler – Health Development, and Stephanie Hare- Staff Well-Being.