



# NAVIGATING CHANGE

BY NATALYA H. BAH

## IMAGINE IF YOU WALKED INTO WORK TOMORROW AND EVERYTHING HAD CHANGED.

What if your desk had been taken away; you had a new boss; or your job responsibilities were altered? What would that feel like?

Often changes, even those that have been long planned out, feel just that shocking. Employees can feel taken by surprise by changes unless an effort is made to help them prepare for what is ahead. However, organizations and leaders don't always have the bandwidth to launch a full-scale change management process. So, what can employees do to prepare themselves for changes that may be ahead?

It is important to start off by understanding a big picture of change. In particular, that we may experience stages of change that are very similar to the stages of grief:

- **Denial:** "This cannot be happening."
- **Anger:** "Are they crazy? This is a terrible idea."
- **Frustration:** "I'm so tired of the disorganization."
- **Acceptance:** "I'm beginning to get used to this new way of doing my job."

Have you ever made similar statements or experienced these emotions while navigating a major change?

There can be another stage that we can experience which is learning. During and after a change we can take stock of what we have learned in terms of new technology being used or new processes for accomplishing work. Upon reflection of a change experience, we can also learn about how we handle changes.

*Continued On Reverse*



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*It is important to start off by understanding a big picture of change. In particular that we may experience stages of change that are very similar to the stages of grief.*

Regardless of which stage we may be experiencing, we can consider our own strengths as a way to maneuver our way through change. What are strengths that people may possess? Flexibility, critical thinking and effective communication are examples of strengths that could be considered.

The first step is to take inventory of the strengths that you have by creating a list. Start off by thinking about what you are really good at and love to do. Many of your strengths will be found there. You can also ask others who know you well about what strengths they think you have, or you can take a self-assessments as another way to gather your specific strengths.

Once you have created a list of your strengths, begin considering how those strengths can help you maneuver through a change event. For instance, overall, how could each of the strengths you have documented be helpful during change? For example, if your strength is that you are very tech savvy, how can that help you when new technology is introduced? Even if your instinct is to resist the change, it is helpful to remember that understanding and becoming an expert on a new technology is a strength that you possess.

Through further analysis, we can also come up with a list of strengths to develop or improve, to help us through change events. What is missing from our strength list that would be helpful for us going forward? For instance, critical thinking could be helpful for analyzing how a change is going to impact our specific responsibilities.

Armed with a list of current and future strengths, we will be better prepared to face what may happen. So, if we ever walk into work and are faced with unexpected changes, we will at least have already considered and improved strengths to help us successfully navigate it.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natalya H. Bah has been a part-time instructor at Graduate School USA (GSUSA) for the last eight years. She serves as an Action Learning Coach and Instructor for the Emerging Leaders Program and the Executive Potential Program.

Ms. Bah has created Change Management workshops aimed at employees and leaders facing a changing environment. She also teaches GSUSA's Project Management curriculum and has been involved with the creation and editing of both in-class and online learning in that subject.

Ms. Bah has provided self-assessments and dynamic team building sessions for non-profit and federal groups on behalf of GSUSA. Outside of her Graduate School USA work, Ms. Bah is a business owner, providing executive coaching, training and consulting services to the public and private sectors. She created the Define and Achieve Your Goals Process™ and is a certified Birkman Method® Consultant.