



PEACE AT WORK
PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT AND CARE ENHANCEMENT

POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF CHANGE

UNIT 14

03/2025



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this learning unit, participants will be able to:

- Recognise how change, personal, organisational or societal, affects emotions, motivation and well-being.
- Identify barriers that make change feel threatening or overwhelming.
- Apply strategies to develop a positive mindset and adaptive coping skills during transitions.
- Reframe change as a catalyst for growth, learning and innovation.
- Design practical steps to strengthen resilience in the face of uncertainty.

Introduction

Change is an inevitable part of life and work. Whether it's a personal transition, organisational restructuring or global transformation, change often brings uncertainty, but also possibility. Many people experience resistance or anxiety when facing new situations, mainly because change challenges habits, comfort zones and established roles.



However, when approached with awareness and openness, change can become a powerful driver for personal and collective growth. It can spark creativity, foster resilience and create new paths for fulfillment and collaboration.

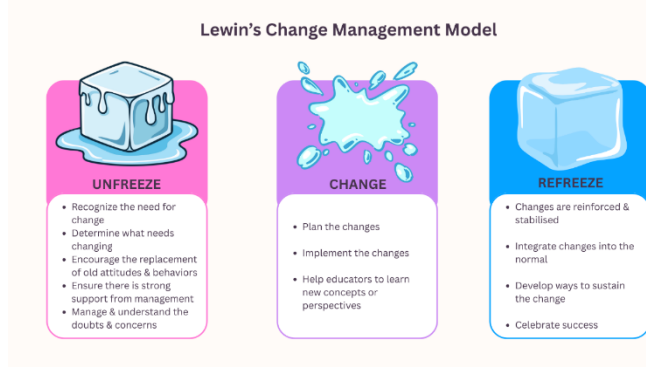
In this unit, you will explore how to shift from a fear-based reaction to a growth-oriented mindset. You will learn tools for adapting to transitions and transforming uncertainty into opportunity for yourself, your workplace and the wider community.

Understanding Change: Why it Feels Hard

Change often feels uncomfortable because it challenges our routines, expectations, and sense of stability. Every change begins with an “unfreezing”, a moment when familiar patterns are questioned or disrupted ([Lewin, 1947](#)). Recent research reinterprets this idea, showing that

unfreezing is not just a step but a dynamic emotional and cognitive process ([Cummings et al., 2016](#)).

[Psychologist Kurt Lewin \(1947\)](#) described change as a process of unfreezing, change, and refreezing, moving from old behaviors to new ones. During the transition phase, discomfort and resistance are normal reactions to uncertainty. [Learn more about Lewin's change management model here.](#)



As we navigate change, we may notice feelings of resistance, confusion, or even loss. This is completely normal. The Change Curve, inspired by Kubler-Ross's stages, describes how people often move through phases such as denial, frustration, exploration, and eventually acceptance.

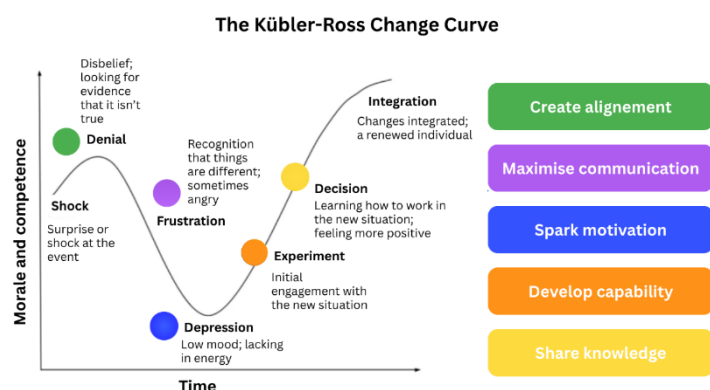
Pause for a moment: Which stage do you recognise most yourself right now?

According to [Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's Change Curve \(1969\)](#), people can often experience emotions similar to grief, denial, frustration, exploration, and acceptance, before reaching adaptation. Understanding this emotional journey helps normalise discomfort as part of growth, not a sign of weakness. [Read more about Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's Chang Curve here.](#)

Organisational culture also plays a significant role in how we react. Culture functions as a shared lens that shapes "how things are done here" ([Schein, 2010](#)). When this lens shifts, for example, when norms or expectations change, our inner response follows.

Reflect: In your workplace or community, how do people usually respond to new ideas or transitions?

Change can feel challenging, but it is also learnable. Group decision shows that when people participate in shaping the change, they adapt more



quickly and feel more in control ([Lewin, 1947](#)). Similarly, clear communication and shared purpose support more effective adaptation in organisations ([Austin, 2015](#)).

Remember: your reactions are not barriers; they are signals guiding you toward understanding and growth. By noticing them and engaging with them, you prepare yourself to move from uncertainty toward opportunity.

From Resistance to Resilience

Resistance to change is not a sign of weakness, it is a natural and protective response to uncertainty. People often resist because they fear losing familiar routines, roles, or control. This resistance can also arise when goals are unclear or when trust in leadership is limited ([Cummings et al., 2016](#)). Change involves cognitive and emotional disruption, making it understandable that we need time to process and adapt.



Resilience, however, transforms resistance into adaptability. Rather than simply “bouncing back”, resilience enables individuals and groups to bounce forward, using change as an opportunity to grow. Resilient individuals rely on emotional regulation, positive coping strategies, and realistic optimism to navigate adversity more effectively ([Bonanno, 2004](#)). These strengths help them maintain balance

during transitions and recover more quickly from stress.

Organisational culture plays a crucial role in shaping resilience. Supportive, transparent environments, where people feel psychologically safe to ask questions or express concerns, enable smoother adaptation ([Schein, 2010](#)). Clear communication and shared purpose encourage individuals to engage actively with change rather than resist it ([Austin, 2015](#)).

Here are a few practical steps that can help shift from resistance to resilience:

- Acknowledge uncertainty rather than avoiding it ([Carleton, 2016](#)).
- Reframe challenges as opportunities for learning or innovation ([Gross & John, 2003](#)).

- Stay connected to supportive people and networks ([Ozbay et al., 2007](#)).
- Practice emotional regulation, such as through mindfulness, reflection, or journaling ([Kabat-Zinn, 2003](#)).

Reflection: *What is one small, constructive step you could take today to face a current change with greater confidence?*

By approaching change with curiosity instead of fear, you strengthen your ability to adapt and open space for personal and collective growth.

Seeing Change as Growth

While change can initially feel disruptive, it also offers valuable opportunities for learning, creativity, and development. When we shift our perspective from “what is being lost” to “what can be gained,” our emotional response changes too. This mindset shift is closely related to the concept of a growth mindset, which suggests that abilities and behaviours can evolve through effort and learning ([Dweck, 2006](#)).



Research on organisational learning shows that when individuals and teams feel safe to experiment and explore, they become more flexible and innovative. [Schein \(2010\)](#) highlights that psychological safety, the feeling that we can speak up or make mistakes without fear, encourages learning behaviours and constructive adaptation. When people feel supported, they are more willing to try new approaches, offer solutions, and engage actively with change.

Self-efficacy also plays an essential role. According to [Bandura \(1997\)](#), believing in one’s capacity to influence outcomes increases motivation and encourages people to take initiative even in uncertain circumstances. This sense of agency helps transform change from a threat into an opportunity.

Think about it: What recent change gave you a chance to learn something new or discover a new strength?

Communities and workplaces that embrace learning-oriented mindsets tend to adapt faster and more effectively. Group decision research shows that when people participate in shaping the direction of change, they feel ownership, making the transformation process smoother and more sustainable ([Lewin, 1947](#)). Leaders who communicate openly and encourage participation help create environments where individuals see change as meaningful rather than intimidating ([Austin, 2015](#)).

In essence, perceiving change as growth is not just about optimism, it is about recognising your capacity to adapt, contribute, and thrive, individually and collectively.

Tools and Strategies for Adapting to Change

Adapting to change becomes easier when we use intentional strategies that support clarity, resilience and emotional balance. While each person's experience of change is unique, certain evidence-informed tools can help us navigate transitions more effectively both individually and collectively.

One powerful approach is self-reflection. Research on organisational learning emphasizes the importance of pausing to understand what has changed and how it affects our thoughts and behaviours ([Schein, 2010](#)). Keeping a brief reflection journal can help you name your feelings, recognise patterns, and identify new possibilities.

Another useful strategy is reframing, shifting the narrative from “I can’t handle this” to “This is something I can learn from.” Practising cognitive reframing supports psychological flexibility and reduces stress responses during transitions ([Austin, 2015](#)). Even small shifts in language can open space for new perspectives.

Try it: Take one current challenge and rewrite it as an opportunity. What changes?

Support mapping is another practical tool. Lewin's early work on group dynamics showed that social support increases motivation and strengthens engagement with change ([Lewin, 1947](#)). By identifying people, networks, or resources you can rely on, you reduce the feeling of facing

change alone. Support can come from colleagues, mentors, communities, or even online learning groups.

Setting growth goals also helps build confidence. These goals should be realistic, specific, and achievable, a simple step that reinforces your sense of progress and competence. [Bandura \(1997\)](#) highlights that small, attainable mastery steps strengthen self-efficacy, making change feel more manageable and within personal control. When you can see movement, however small, the process of change feels more manageable.

Here is a concise summary of these tools:

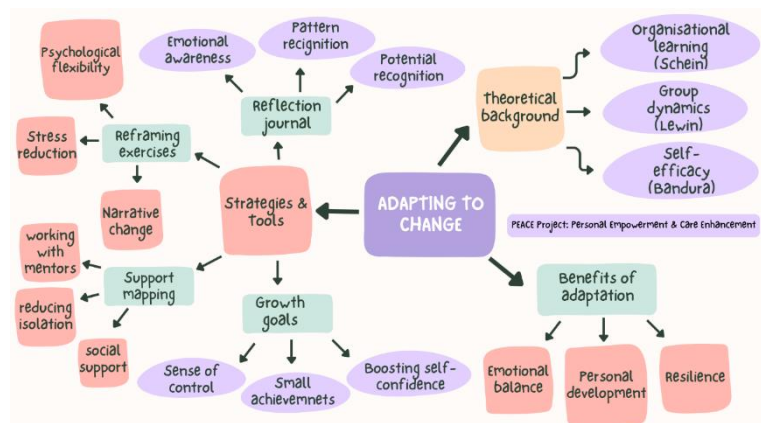
- Reflection Journal: Enhances awareness and emotional clarity.
- Reframing Exercises: Builds flexibility and reduces threat responses.
- Support Mapping: Strengthens connection and reduces isolation.
- Growth Goals: Creates direction, motivation, and momentum.

Reflection: Which of these tools feels most useful to you right now? How could you apply it this week?

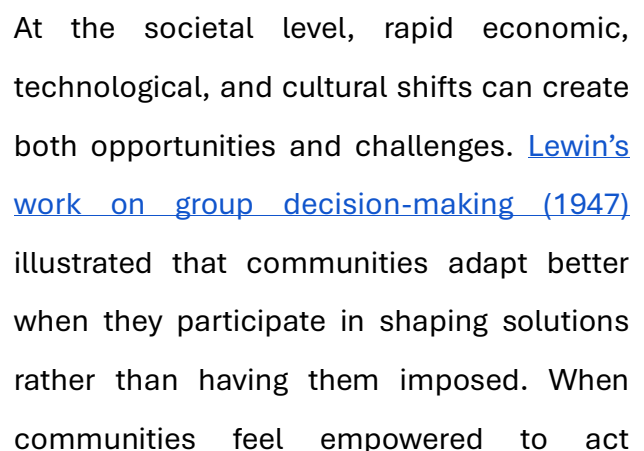
Adapting to change is not about perfection; it is about staying curious, taking small steps, and trusting your capacity to evolve. With the right strategies, change becomes less of a disruption and more of a pathway to growth.

Organisational and Societal Dimensions

Change does not happen in isolation. Our ability to adapt is strongly influenced by the environments, structures, and cultures we belong to. At the organisational level, change can be challenging when communication is unclear, when roles shift suddenly, or when support systems are weak. [Schein \(2010\)](#) emphasizes that organisational culture shapes how individuals interpret and respond to new situations. A culture that values



In resilient organisations, leaders play an active role in guiding change. [Austin \(2015\)](#) highlights that effective leaders communicate openly, explain the reasons behind changes and involve employees in the process. This participatory approach allows people to feel heard and respected, which strengthens trust and creates psychological safety. When people feel safe, they are more willing to experiment, share concerns, and engage constructively with new directions.



Reflect: How does your organisation or community typically respond to change? With openness or resistance? What could make the process smoother?

Ultimately, both organisations and societies thrive when change is embraced as an opportunity for growth. By cultivating cultures that prioritise communication, inclusion, and learning, we create environments where people not only adapt, but also flourish.

Activities

Self-Reflection Your Change Story:

Think of a recent change in your life (big or small). Take a moment to reflect on the following:

- How did you first react, emotionally or physically?
- Which stage of the Change Curve do you recognise in yourself?
- What helped you move forward or feel more grounded?

Tip: Try writing for 3 minutes without stopping. You may uncover insights you weren't aware of.

Reframing the Challenge:

Choose one current challenge you are facing. Write it down in one sentence. Now reframe it as an opportunity: *"This situation allows me to..."*

Reflection: How does the reframed statement make you feel compared to the original?

Support Mapping:

List three people, groups, or resources that could support you through a change you are navigating. They might be colleagues, mentors, friends, community groups, or learning resources. Consider:

- How can they support you?
- Have you reached out to them yet?
- What is one small step you can take to activate this support?

Set a Growth Goal:

Identify one small, achievable goal connected to a change you are experiencing. Examples:

- learn a new skill
- schedule a conversation
- ask for clarity
- practice a helpful habit

Make it specific: "This week, I will..."

Why it works: Small successes build momentum and strengthen your sense of self-efficacy ([Bandura, 1997](#)).

Summary – Key Takeaways

Change is one of the few constants in human experience, yet our growth depends on how we choose to respond to it. Every transition, whether it's personal, professional or societal, challenges our stability, but it also opens new pathways for learning and development.

Resistance to change is a natural reaction, as it reflects our need for safety and control. However, resilience transforms that resistance into adaptability, that is the ability to stay grounded while adjusting to new realities. By cultivating a positive mindset, we can reframe uncertainty as a chance to explore, innovate, and evolve.

Moreover, change is rarely an individual process. Collaboration, empathy, and inclusion are what make transformation sustainable and meaningful. When we view change not as a threat but as an opportunity for shared progress, we strengthen both personal fulfillment and the collective well-being of our societies.

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Further resources

[Global Shapers, The Belonging Project \(Global Shapers\) \(2021\)](#)

[TEDxTalks, Resilience & Mindset: Turning Challenges into Growth | Anusmita Khatua | TEDxADIS Muroor Youth \(2025\)](#)

[The Resilience Mindset by Justine Martin Queen Of Resilience Podcast \(2022 - ongoing\)](#)

Conversations with Carolyn Spring, How to keep going through challenging times ([part 1](#) and [part 2](#)) (2024)

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Case Study 10: Turning Uncertainty into Growth

Brief Description:

Andreas, a 50 years old project coordinator, had been working in the same organisation for over 15 years. When the company announced a major restructuring and digital transformation, he felt anxious and uncertain about his role and position. The introduction of new technologies and management systems made him question whether his skills were still relevant.

At first, Andreas resisted the change, focusing on the loss of his routine and control. However, after attending a series of internal training sessions and working group discussions, he began to recognise the new opportunities. He enrolled in an online leadership course, joined a mentoring program and started applying what he learned to guide his colleagues through the transition.

Gradually, his perspective shifted from fear to curiosity. He realised that the change was not only reshaping the organisation but also revitalising his own professional growth and confidence.

Problem Description:

The sudden restructuring created a sense of instability and insecurity among employees. For Andreas, the main challenge was resistance to change and the fear of becoming obsolete in a rapidly evolving environment. His initial reaction was defensive, leading to frustration and disengagement.

Emotional/Physical Effects:

- Increased stress and worry about job security
- Difficulty concentrating and low motivation
- Emotional fatigue and sleep disturbance

Response/Intervention

The organisation implemented change management workshops based on Lewin's three stage model (unfreezing - changing - refreezing), encouraging employees to express their concerns and cocreate the solutions. The managers received training on psychological safety and transparent communication, while employees were offered upskilling opportunities.

For Andreas, participating in these programs was transformative. Through guided reflection and peer support, he reframed the change as an opportunity to learn, grow and contribute in new ways. By taking the initiative, he became an ambassador for the change within his department, helping others adapt and building a more positive team culture.

Reflection Questions

1. What emotions did Andreas experience during the change process and how did they evolve over time?
2. Which organisational strategies helped transform his resistance into resilience?
3. How can participation and communication reduce fear and uncertainty in times of transition?

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