

Adapting to change

GETTING STARTED

After the previous lesson, you carried out interviews with individuals you know to find out how they coped with change. With a partner, discuss what or who helped them adapt. Remember not to share names, so the information stays confidential.

KEY TERM

Adapt – adjust to new conditions or circumstances.

Life events, whether expected or unexpected, force individuals to make changes to their lives. They must find ways to **adapt** to the changes that life throws at them.

Adapting to expected and unexpected events

Change happens in every life stage. Those who understand the changes that may happen can prepare by thinking about:

- how it will affect them
- how they can adapt
- seeking support and advice.

Events that happen unexpectedly, such as an accident or being made redundant, may be more difficult to cope with and adapt to. The individual has less control over the event.

Adapting to new circumstances



Letting go and accepting the loss



Loss of old lifestyle, relationships, health or mobility

Figure 1.27: Steps for coping with change

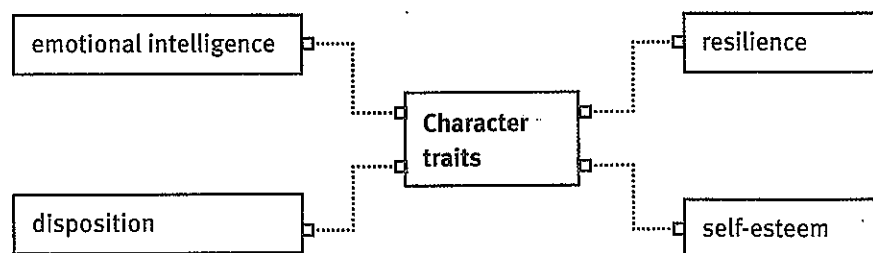


Figure 1.28: These character traits influence how individuals cope with life events

Resilience

Resilience is a person's ability to come to terms with, and adapt to, events that happen in life. Resilience can help people to overcome the worst effects on their development. It is stronger in people who:

- have a positive outlook on life
- are able to accept that change will happen
- belong to a close family and community network
- are able to plan for expected life events.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is about how we value ourselves and our abilities. High self-esteem leads to confidence and a feeling of self-worth. High self-esteem helps individuals cope with change because they are more likely to feel they have the strength and ability to adapt to new circumstances. They are more likely to:

- adapt to their new circumstances
- have the confidence to make decisions about their change in circumstances
- feel able to try new things or make new relationships
- believe in themselves to be able to change things.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence describes how individuals are able to understand and manage their own emotions and relationships. This ability is particularly important at times of change.

Understanding emotions is about knowing how an event or change in circumstance might affect you. It is helpful to know how your emotions affect your decisions (such as being impulsive) and why you behave in a particular way in response to situations.

Managing emotions is about accepting feelings. It stops individuals from becoming overwhelmed and not able to cope. Being able to share feelings with others and controlling emotions helps individuals to make more positive decisions and move on.

Disposition

Do you know anyone who always appears cheerful and has a good outlook on life? They have a positive disposition. A positive disposition can help individuals to accept and cope well with change. A negative disposition may cause individuals to find accepting and coping with change more difficult.

Table 1.10: Disposition

Positive character traits	Negative character traits
More able to take decisions	A sense that things will not go well
Enjoy change	Reluctant to change
Can clearly assess the impact of events	Resigned to what might happen
Has perseverance	Gives up more easily

ACTIVITY

Case study

When Alex retired in her 60s, she isolated herself for some time. She had been used to getting up at 7.30 every morning to go to her job as the manager of a garden centre. She felt she had no purpose in life because she had suddenly found she had lost the relationships she had with colleagues and her status as a manager.

Alex gradually came to terms with this loss and began to find new hobbies such as bowls, which she was good at. She had more time to be with her grandchildren, began to travel to see places she had always wanted to visit and to build new friendships. Her self-image improved greatly, and she now feels more contented than when she was working.

In pairs, discuss the event in Alex's life. Identify the four character traits (described above) and how they may have helped Alex to adapt. Share your ideas with the whole class.

CHECK MY LEARNING

Consider each of the following events:

- redundancy
- moving house
- starting a family.

Outline the emotions that individuals may experience when faced with each event.

Consider possible positive and negative emotions.