Coping with Change

It’s been said that the only constant in our world today is change. As we look back over our marriage to this point, we would have to agree. Coping with change is never easy. Most of us resist it, because we are comfortable and secure in our world as we know it. And yet, if change is an inevitable reality of life (and it is), then we’d better be prepared to respond when the unexpected comes knocking on our door.

1. Recognize that you are in change

As we have said, most of us have a natural aversion to change. We have a tendency to want to stick our heads in the sand and hope that it will go away by the time we come up for air.

This strategy may provide short-term relief, but it never helps in the long-run. Denial does not make our problems disappear; instead it usually makes things worse by giving us less time to think through a reasoned response. Instead, when unexpected circumstances arise, it is best to face them head on.

2. Honestly face your fears

Not every person has the same tolerance to risk. Some adventurous souls actually relish the adventure of new situations. Others like their life exactly as it is: nice and predictable. For these people, the idea of change produces fear. We recommend developing an accountability relationship with another person. An accountability partner can give you the encouragement you need to press on.

3. Communicate, communicate, communicate!

John Kotter, Management Consultant and Author, writes that one error leaders make during times of change is that they underestimate the issue of communication by a factor of 10. Certainly the same is true of couples. In order to successfully navigate change as a couple, it is vital that you be on the same page with one another. You need to know how your spouse feels about the impending transition. You also need one another’s wisdom and ideas as you explore all of your options.
If you are approaching a major change in your life, set aside a special date night to talk through the issues with your spouse. Coping with change is difficult enough when we are united; it is much harder when we are pulling in different directions.

4. **Take stock of your resources**

Anytime unforeseen circumstances arise, a key step is to evaluate the resources you have at your disposal as you deal with the issue. Depending on the specific situation you are facing, your relevant resources could include finances, time, skills, or even other people in your life that can help you through the adjustment.

At times, change might require you to make some tough decisions, like perhaps re-working your budget. For us, it meant the sale of our dream home, to pay off debt. You may need to seek some outside counsel from someone on this.

5. **Anticipate stress**

Change is rarely easy; it is often a source of great stress. To make matters worse, you and your spouse may deal with it completely differently. We would suggest that both of you obtain an assessment on your individual styles and how you each handle stress. This will help you to understand one another’s stress reactions and will enable you to work together more effectively.

Times of intense pressure can either pull you together or push you apart. Stress will come, and you need to ensure that it does not divide and conquer.