

● Ask America's Ultimate Experts

“Help! I hate change!”

Whatever transition you're facing—be it moving, taking on a new job or getting ready to retire—our expert advice will make it easy for you to deal with *any* change!

1 Rev your resilience!

Fill a cookie jar with concerns!

Simply writing down your anxieties about an upcoming change can help defuse them, confirms life and executive coach Laurie Calzada. “Say you're about to move and you're worried about meeting new people,” she says. “Write down that fear on a piece of paper, stuff it in a jar and walk away.” Placing your concerns in a container helps distance them so you can move on and plan for change—instead of worrying about it.

Practice in your car!

“Research shows practicing small changes helps you triumph over big ones,” says psychologist Linda Hoopes, Ph.D. “Practice coping strategies during day-to-day hassles—like an unexpected traffic jam,” she suggests. “Breathe, and focus on other people in the cars next to you; remember they're being inconvenienced, too. Working on how you first respond to a little change helps you become calmer and more resilient when a big change happens.”

Plan a weekend getaway!

One of the most enjoyable ways to learn to cope with change is to take a trip. “It's a pleasurable way to push yourself out of your comfort zone,” says Hoopes. Can't get away right now? No problem. Just imagining a vacation helps your brain begin to view change as a positive experience.



Stop and sit awhile!
Taking short breaks will make any transition—like moving—easier!



Note your successes!
Write down all the times you've successfully handled change. Keeping a “greatest hits list” will inspire you the next time change rolls around!

2 Make any transition easier!

Revisit a past passion!

When Calzada went through a divorce a few years ago, a friend asked her, “What's something you've loved in the past, but couldn't do while you were married?” That simple question helped her see the hidden opportunities in even an unwanted change. “I always loved to dance but gave it up when I got married, so I went out and found a class—now I have a total passion for the Argentine tango,” she says. The upshot? When you're going through a transition, hold on to a hobby or revisit a past passion to strengthen your sense of self—it'll make adapting to changes around you easier.

Read your role models!

Having a role model, someone who's weathered her fair share of changes, can help you with yours—even if that role model is fictional! “Empathizing with a character in a book who is going through challenging changes reminds you that you're not alone—and helps you get a better perspective on what you're going through,” says Hoopes. Pick up anything that inspires you from *Gone with the Wind* to *The Hunger Games*. The book on Hoopes' nightstand? “*Unbroken*, the real-life story of a World War II POW; the only thing that got him down is that he finally had to give up skateboarding at the age of 93! His story reminds me that change is all relative and that you can get through anything with the right, positive mindset.”

3 Take control!

Make a change checklist!

Just think about three things: your situation, yourself and your support system, notes psychologist Nancy K. Schlossberg, Ph.D. For example, if your situation is you've been laid off, look for a silver lining—maybe it's that now you can start your own business. Next up: self. Ask what you can do to ease your transition, say, draft a new résumé. For support, ask, “Am I letting loved ones help make this easier for me?” Exploring each “S” gives you a sense of control.

Have coping strategies!

The people who are most successful at coping with change use not one but several strategies. That could mean taking up a de-stressing hobby like gardening, making a short to-do list and asking a friend for advice.

Devise a 3-step plan!

Why three? It's just enough steps to move you forward yet not enough to overwhelm you. If, for example, you're moving, list three things you'll do to make new friends: Visit the local church, introduce yourself to your neighbors and sign up for the PTA.

—Kristina Mastrocola



Our expert panel



Motivational speaker and life coach **Laurie Calzada** is the coauthor of *180 Ways to Effectively Deal with Change* and the author of *Inspiring Passion in Others*.



Work psychologist **Linda Hoopes, Ph.D.**, author of *Managing Change with Personal Resilience*, is president of Resilience Alliance, an organization that helps businesses and individuals thrive through transitions.



Psychologist **Nancy K. Schlossberg, Ph.D.**, is the author of eight books on how to make successful life transitions, including *Counseling Adults in Transition*.