

Stages of Change

Denial/Resistance

Denial is frequently our initial reaction to unexpected, unwelcome or unwanted change.

Some examples might be:

“I’ll never climb that” when faced by a steep hill.

“He can’t be dead” after a fatal road accident.

This reaction is also common with “good change,” such as marriage, a first child, a new job, etc. The shock of the new situation can bring on negative emotions that overshadow other thoughts and feelings.

Our tendency is to deny, bury and/or resist that change until we have time to get over the shock.

Justifying the Resistance

Next, we begin to rationalize our feelings of denial and resistance by pointing out the adjustments we’ll have to make, and/or thinking up other reasons to reject change. We’re continuing to buy time to regain control.

Consideration

By this stage, we have regained our balance, and are prepared to fairly assess the situation. Here, we begin to recognize the possibilities of the change. We begin to work out how we will carry on in the new environment.

Resolution

The final stage is one where we begin to see the “bright side,” our fear changes to excitement and/or resolution, and we commit ourselves to the change.