

## TIPS FOR GETTING THROUGH THE STAGES OF CHANGE

### Losing Focus

- Expect some forgetfulness.
- Use to-do lists.
- Ask for clarification of expectations and temporary lines of authority.

### Minimizing the Impact

- Tell yourself the truth about what's happening. List the gains and losses associated with the change. Be honest about what you're losing or giving up.
- If others offer help but you're not ready to accept it, respond in a way that leaves the door open for their support at a later date.
- Take one step at a time.
- Don't stay in this stage too long, but don't try to end it precipitously either. Start gathering your courage for the next stage, which is more difficult.

### The Pit

- Expect to feel angry, discouraged and resentful. If you know what is happening inside you, you are more likely to keep your equilibrium.
- Let yourself experience the feelings. Suppressing or denying them will make it more difficult for you to deal with change in the future.
- Find a safe place to express your feelings, preferably with someone who can listen comfortably without taking them on or trying to talk you out of them.
- Develop a positive vision of what things will be like when you have finished this transition, then think of it often. People with a clear vision have an easier time getting through "the Pit."

### Letting Go of the Past

- Say good-bye to the past either formally or informally. You might do this with a "letting go" ritual. An example of such a ritual would be to review what was positive about the past, recount good memories and then bury it. Or it may be more appropriate to have a graduation party.
- Allow some sadness in longing for the way things used to be.
- As you look ahead, think of what you'll need to adjust to the change—new skills and new approaches. Consider new ways to attain them.
- Take care of yourself. Celebrate the small successes.

### Testing the Limits

- Seek new experiences and ways to use the skills you've gained.
- Spend time with people who have experienced the same change or loss.
- Talk about the past only with those who will listen and not become impatient.
- Associate with people who are encouraging and supportive.

### Search for Meaning

- Spend time reflecting on your experiences since the change occurred. Sort through your feelings; ask yourself, "What have I learned that I didn't know before?"
- Look back to how you handled the different emotional stages. Notice which were particularly difficult, and give yourself a pat on the back for getting through them.
- Find others going through the same experience. Listen carefully to see if you can offer any support.

### Integration

- Appreciate reaching this final stage. (It doesn't always happen.)
- Recognize how far you've come and the skills you've learned along the way.