Change

THE UNCERTAINTY OF CHANGE

Our ability to adapt to constant change has never been tested quite like it is right now.

We know that the introduction of some significant change can incite emotional, behavioural and cognitive responses, which will often evolve over time. And interestingly, some of the responses to COVID-19 are only just starting to emerge now, particularly in relation to team collaboration and engagement.

During the peak of COVID-19 last year, some people reported feeling calmer, less stressed and more relaxed. They recognised that so much was outside of their control but the pandemic had forced them to slow down, stay home, spend time with family and tackle new tasks and activities. Others responded completely differently – they felt anxious, trapped, claustrophobic and frustrated that they were forced into a totally different existence. A year later, and many people are still feeling impacted by the events of last year, recovering from a sense of isolation and loneliness. There is no question that change brings about different responses in all of us. In almost all industries but particularly hospitality, societal and environmental change has created significant change to your workplaces as well. Now – more than ever the saying is true – change is the only constant.

So how do we manage in these turbulent times?

EXPLORING A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

In order to navigate the uncertainty of change, it can be useful to consider the following areas:

Positive reframing – Practice the act of finding the positive of the situation, even if it seems small and insignificant. There is a saying that our minds are like Velcro for negative emotions and like Teflon for positive emotions. We need to train ourselves to consider the positives – this will get easier the more we practice.

Networks – It is important to have supportive relationships and a network of people you can call on to support you. If you don't feel that you have a strong support network, or that your needs outweigh their capability to help, it may be time to engage a professional.

Personal control – There are often elements of the changing situation that are outside of our control – COVID-19 is certainly an example of that. Rather than focus your attention on what you cannot control, it is better for your mental health to focus your attention on what is within your control. This leads to feelings of empowerment, as compared to feelings of helplessness.

Self-management – How you manage yourself through times of change can be crucial, which can include looking after your physical health, managing your time appropriately, setting yourself realistic goals to achieve and recognising and managing your feelings of stress and pressure.

Comfort with uncertainty - This is often the hardest aspect to master. We are not designed to be comfortable with uncertainty! We like to know what is happening, when will this occur, what will be the impact and how will this affect us. Often, we will try to get out of situations that seem uncomfortable as quickly as possible. But it is very important to remember that emotions are fluid and situations will change. Change can be uncomfortable but with discomfort often comes growth.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

These questions are designed to prompt team discussion and interaction following the podcast:

- What have been some of the different responses to COVID-19 that you have seen?
- How do you think you have handled the changes that we have experienced in these last 12 months?
- What can we do as a team to better handle these changes?