



It's Up to Us to Create a Healthy and Supportive San Diego

Shine a Light On: Life Transitions & Change

Life transitions can include changes like moving, starting a new school or job, getting married or divorced, becoming a parent, or other big events. They can be joyful, difficult, or even a mix of both.

These big changes can be stressful. They can often disrupt our routines, too, making us feel unsettled. That's why even when something exciting happens, we may feel anxious, scared, and happy—all at the same time.

Big changes can feel hard at first, but over time they get easier. Learn more about why we react like this, and discover ways to help make uncertainty feel more manageable.

Why do we react this way?

Our brains have evolved to think any change could be a threat to our safety. When change happens, the brain's amygdala (the “alarm bell”) goes off, signaling there's something new. This can lead to stress, nervousness, or excitement.

As we learn how to live with the change, the brain sends messages to build new pathways and adapt. Over time, our feelings about the change fade, and the new situation starts to feel normal.



Read Up: How to Navigate Life Changes

- **Maintain or create routines.** A life transition can often interrupt regular routines. To help yourself adjust to the change, try to stay consistent with your eating, sleeping, and physical activity.
- **Connect with loved ones.** Friends and family members can offer advice and a sense of support during transitions.
- **Reframe your thoughts.** A simple but powerful exercise you can try is to consciously shift your mindset. For example, try replacing “I can’t handle this” with “I’m learning to adapt.”
- **Find outside support if you need it.** If a transition feels unmanageable, or the stress and anxiety don’t get better, try finding support with a mental health professional. See what help is available at Up2SD.org.

Common Questions About Change



How can you make change feel less uncomfortable?

Try to reframe change in your mind. Think about things you might gain from the change, or how you’ve navigated other changes in the past and what they taught you.

How can you feel more in control?

Try doing something that helps you reduce stress, like exercise, journaling, or meditation. Doing things that actively fight stress helps you feel like you’re accomplishing something and helps calm your brain.

How do you know if you need help?

Signs you may need more help during a major life change include having a hard time coping with daily life, shifts in sleep or appetite, or strained relationships with loved ones. If these issues last for more than a couple weeks, consider seeking professional support.

Sources

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