

# LEADING CHANGE BASICS

*Change is inevitable.  
Except from a vending  
machine.  
(Anonymous)*

We all know that change can generate stress, confusion, fear, and be a drain on energy and productivity. Change can also bring about positive differences, open up new opportunities, and cast situations in a better light.

ESD has been undergoing change for some time now. While change is a constant dynamic in any organization, the changes brought about by the COVID-19 crisis have been especially stressful and difficult. Going forward, we will continue to experience change. Below are some reminders about change that may be helpful.

## Appreciative Inquiry Assumptions

Appreciative Inquiry is a methodology used by people seeking to create positive changes in an organization. Its core belief is that through building on what is already working, change can be more effective and positive. The eight assumptions can help frame one's thinking about change:

<b>In every society, organization or group, something works.</b>	<b>What we focus on becomes our reality.</b>	<b>Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.</b>	<b>The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.</b>
<b>People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).</b>	<b>If we carry parts of the past forward, it should be what is best about the past.</b>	<b>It is important to value differences.</b>	<b>The language we use creates our reality.</b>

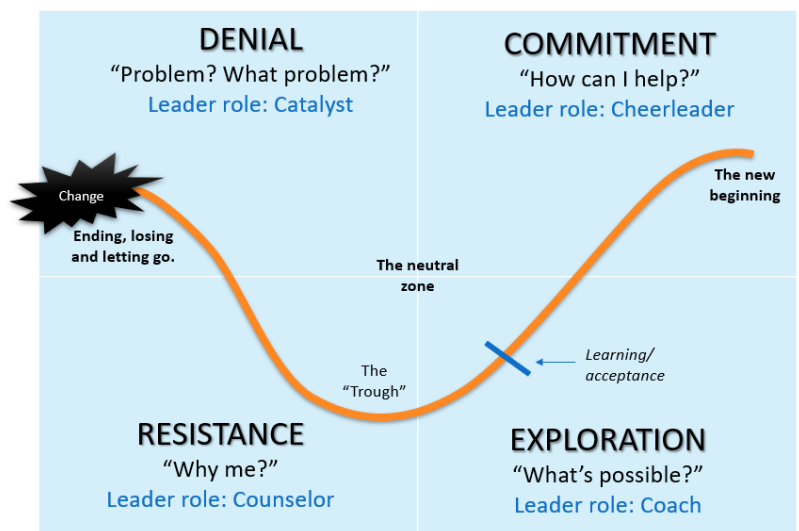
*(Excerpted from The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry)*

## Emotional Stages of Change





Not everyone moves through change in the same way or at the same time. We all need to recognize for ourselves where we are and what it will take to move us toward commitment. This is a challenging time, and we know time and space are needed to move through these stages. It will be important, however, for us (as employees experiencing change and as leaders leading change) to do what is needed to move into a sense of commitment towards new ways of working.

The emotional stages of change include:

1. **Denial:** Unwilling to recognize that change is taking place. Does not take necessary steps to prepare for change.
2. **Resistance:** Often characterized by anger or withdrawal. May blame others.
3. **Exploration/Acceptance:** Reluctantly moving towards new reality. May not embrace it but acknowledges that it is real.
4. **Commitment:** Focus on the future and a sense of possibility.



# Typical reactions associated with change

Stage	Employee - Typical reactions	Leader Role
<p><b>DENIAL:</b> “Problem? What Problem?”</p> 	<p><b>May feel shock, denial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Say “What change?”</li> <li>• May shut down</li> <li>• Go through the motions</li> <li>• Do “Business as usual”</li> <li>• Don’t hear</li> <li>• Seem apathetic</li> </ul>	<p><b>CATALYST:</b> <i>Give information so people understand the change that is being introduced.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer information IN SMALL DOSES; PHASED</li> <li>• Listen more than talk</li> <li>• Reflect their experience</li> <li>• Don’t push new vision</li> <li>• Check in frequently</li> <li>• Solicit and answer questions</li> <li>• Accept where they are with the change</li> </ul>
<p><b>RESISTANCE:</b> “Why Me?”</p> 	<p><b>May feel anger, blame, bargaining</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express anger; emotions</li> <li>• See no positives</li> <li>• Speak in absolutes</li> <li>• Feel victimized – blame</li> <li>• Look depressed</li> <li>• Negotiate a “deal”</li> <li>• Trouble reasoning</li> </ul>	<p><b>COUNSELOR:</b> <i>Help people process emotions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name and acknowledge the emotion</li> <li>• Understand their reality (but avoid sympathy)</li> <li>• Listen, listen, listen</li> <li>• Accept where they are (no judgment)</li> <li>• Make contact (if people are avoiding)</li> <li>• Ask: “What might be in the way of moving through this change?”</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXPLORATION:</b> “What’s Possible?”</p> 	<p><b>May feel acceptance; openness to learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to accept the change</li> <li>• Start to look ahead</li> <li>• Can be self-doubting</li> <li>• Start considering possibilities</li> <li>• Still processing events</li> <li>• Open to learn</li> </ul>	<p><b>COACH:</b> <i>Help people begin to see possibilities – for themselves and for the organization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-create new solutions</li> <li>• Agree on exploratory actions</li> <li>• Explore specifically ... roles, timeframes, skills, etc.</li> <li>• Avoid either/or thinking</li> <li>• Spark creativity in conversation</li> <li>• Express confidence</li> <li>• Ask: “What do you need to be successful?” ... “How can I help?”</li> </ul>
<p><b>COMMITMENT:</b> “How Can I Help?”</p> 	<p><b>May feel action, decision-making, problem-solving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving to action</li> <li>• Start problem solving</li> <li>• See opportunity</li> <li>• Receptive to ideas</li> <li>• Show signs of being “in the present” vs. in the past</li> </ul>	<p><b>CHEERLEADER:</b> <i>Acknowledge progress and reward positive action – all along the way</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solve problems, remove barriers, get into action.</li> <li>• Invite people into implementation</li> <li>• Acknowledge how people are learning and growing</li> <li>• Recognize individual and team accomplishments</li> <li>• Stay available – keep fine tuning the plan</li> <li>• Share successes with others</li> </ul>