

Why do we react differently to change?

Everyone reacts in their own way to change. How we react depends on what is important to us, which can vary over time. Understanding your and other's reactions can help you to connect and communicate more effectively during change.

Understanding Reactions to Change: The SCARF Model

The SCARF Model¹ is a useful framework that helps us to understand individual reactions to change. This model explains that our reactions to change are influenced by five motivating factors: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness.

	Status	Certainty	Autonomy	Relatedness	Fairness
	Status refers to a person's perception of their identity and importance.	Certainty refers to our need for predictability and clarity in our environment.	Autonomy refers to our need to feel a sense of control over our environment and decisions.	Relatedness refers to our need for a sense of connection and belonging with others.	Fairness refers to the perception of being treated in a just and equitable manner.
What might we see during organisational change?	"I've worked hard to become a team leader and I'm annoyed that I might lose the title in the change."	"I'm stressed as I've recently made some significant financial decisions and now I'm not sure if my job level will change."	"The decisions being made about my role feel out of my control. I want to have a say as to what my job looks like."	"I love working with my team and our team lunches are the highlight of my day. I'm really sad I might have to move teams."	"How come the changes are only happening to our team and not the other teams too? That's really frustrating."

Reflect on your own reactions to change by asking

- What specific aspects of the proposed change am I most interested/enthusiastic about?
- What specific aspects of the proposed change are causing me the most concern or impacting me the most?
- What does this tell me is important to me?
- What do I know for certain about the proposed changes and what am I assuming?
- What support and/or information do I feel would be most helpful to me right now?
- Is my behaviour being impacted by how I'm feeling about the change? If so, how?
- Based on what I'm feeling is important to me, what feedback can I provide about the change?
- How can I communicate my feelings and needs to my team or supervisors to seek the support I require?

Working with other's reactions to change

Listen openly and actively to colleagues who are reacting to changes.

Remember not to assume other's reactions, instead check-in with your colleagues.

Everyone reacts to change in their own way, and that's ok. Please don't hesitate to talk with your leader, HR Partner, Change Manager or a member of our Assure Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if you would like additional support.