






Understanding Change

Not necessarily linear. Not necessarily all five stages or in this order. May jump back and forth. Kubler-Ross not substantiated, but gives language and concepts to help our observations and consideration.

STAGE	Negotiation	Self-Justification	Acceptance	Exploration	Resolution
FUNCTION Why it's useful	Protects us from pain of losing something that is valuable to us. Allows time to take in the full impact and handle a little bit at a time.	Suppressed feelings and understanding of the 'real' reality come to the surface. Anger may mask feelings of sorrow or fear.	Re-entering reality, coming to terms with the 'new' reality. It may not be 'good' but you can live with it. Reflective time.	Ready to move, grow and evolve into the new reality. Open-mindedness about possible responses.	Living the new habits that help thrive in new reality.
What it LOOKS like	Disbelief Resistance to facts Avoidance Confusion Shock Numbness Fear Selective listening Fight for status quo We shut out reality to avoid dealing with the problem.	Strong emotions. Outrage. Anger. Blaming others. Frustration. Irritation. Anxiety. Panic. Dread. Feelings too overwhelming to allow rational thinking. Victim mentality. Sabotage.	Quiet stage. Grudging acceptance. I don't like it, but I can't reverse it. Acknowledgement. Feeling of helplessness, hopelessness. Low mood. Depression. Low energy. Insecurity. Regret past choices.	Exploring options. Moving on. 'What I had before was great, but there might also be advantages if I take this new path.' Learning to work in the new situation. Develop capability. Optimism. Hope. Testing. New energy. Experimentation. Research. Design. Search for meaning.	New plan in place. Acting on it. Contributes to change. Incorporates new changes into habits. A renewed person. Feelings of satisfaction.
What it SOUNDS like	<i>What change? This is not happening. This doesn't affect me; I'll keep doing what I've always done! It'll all blow over! What I'm doing works; if it ain't broke, don't fix it.</i>	<i>Why should I have to change?! It's not my fault! I don't deserve this! Someone's to blame! It's YOUR fault!</i>	<i>I'll have to put up with this. I suppose I can give it a go. Maybe it's not as bad as I thought.</i>	<i>Where do I go now? Where can I find more information? What options are available? I may have to figure this out as I go.</i>	<i>Let's get on with it How do we make this work? Acknowledging and living with new reality</i>
SYMBOL					
CONSEQUENCES of staying in stage too long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miss opportunities Economic or personal stagnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying as a victim (low energy - fester) Anger (negative energy – boil) Turn away those who may be able to help Blaming/scape-goating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't move into constructive action Tend to become <u>dependent</u> Sink into depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "All over the shop" Frozen by too many choices Don't get the results without action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become rigid; focus on dealing with only one change at a time. May miss other unchosen changes coming at you
GETTING UNSTUCK Questions to ask Things to say Things to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is happening? How's it going? Share facts Bring into the conversation someone who has accepted the change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tolerate the 'blame' behaviour for a little time. Showing you care can help dissipate anger. What do you think the pitfalls of this change could be? How do you think this change will affect you? Share that you sometimes feel the same. Don't take offence Avoid arguing whether the change will happen What upsets you most? What can I do to help? What are you prepared/need to do? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions to define the problem and the effect on the person's life How willing and able are you to try something different? What has worked in the past when you've adapted to change? What would be reasons to change? Pros and cons of changing/not changing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to use a decision-making process that narrows possibilities down to an effective action and then plan action. Support to put plan into action, initially through small cycles of experimentation and reflective learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly scan the horizon, and your own subtle emotions, for change that might be coming.
Getting unstuck	Face the facts and communicate facts to others in a calm and kind way that encourages understanding. Don't tell others they're wrong. Identify what is important to others and frame the	Do not make important decisions during this phase. At this stage people are defiant. Setting yourself against them may only intensify resistance to change. Allow them to really feel the anger. The more they really feel it the sooner it will dissipate. Anger provides strength that binds us to reality, and it is	This is a more constructive stage but may not be very energetic or proactive. Encourage them to talk about what is important to them. Ask questions that draw out what they see as their life's purpose and what they need (as opposed to <i>how</i> they get		Taking time out periodically to look at the big picture – <i>What is going on? What do you see, hear, feel?</i> Assess change going on, messages/warnings that you may hear that change that's coming - in



	problem in terms of that. Ask questions that reveal and challenge 'wishful' thinking. At this stage people are in negation because they are threatened with loss. Don't steal their sense of self and self esteem too!	something to grasp onto. This is not the time to point out the silver lining. But allow the person to feel you are there and listening. Show genuine concern and support.	it). This will take attention away from the problem back to a positive goal, to grow motivation and hope.		order to be ready to respond early. Watch our own language and reactions to check if we are doing any of the behaviours of stages.
STAGE	Negotiation	Self-Justification	Acceptance	Exploration	Resolution
Well known example - Covid 19	Not accepting reality; but your 'preferred' reality. This can't be happening. It's just like the flu. It will only affect the city. It's a conspiracy and I'm going to get on with my life as normal. I've got more serious things to worry about. I'm going to go out to my favourite bar and party. I'm young and the virus won't hurt me, so I can do what I like.	Why me? This isn't fair! It's ridiculous; so stupid! It will cost billions! What are these morons doing? Who is responsible? Why weren't they ready for this? They are inept! If they make me wear a mask, I'll resign.	This really is happening and there's nothing I can do about it. It's not good, but I'd better help and do what I can. I don't want my grandma to die early. But how will I pay the rent; how will my business survive? Are we all going to get it anyway? People I respect are taking it seriously and in other countries it has got out of control. Closing down everything is costly, but will save lives and help recreate some kind of stability. If we act fast and decisively, with the best science, we can save lives and our future.	What must I put in place to keep myself and those I care about as safe as possible? How can we hold the community safe, buying time to understand the virus and develop new ways to support each other while we learn to live with it? What are my strengths and weaknesses? What do I really want in my life? Who are my real allies? What opportunities are out there? What out of the box ideas can I come up with to find new ways I haven't considered before?	I have developed strategies to protect myself and others. Now I will assess the key areas of my life that may have been neglected and find new ways to rebuild those areas in this changed world of socialising and work.
Example - Lost girlfriend	'She wouldn't do this to me. She'll realise she's wrong and be back tomorrow'	'How could she do this to me? She's selfish!'	'If she'll give me another chance I'll be a better boyfriend. I'll give her everything she asks'; or, 'I'll never have another relationship; I'm doomed to fail everyone'	'The end was hard, but perhaps in the future I can have another relationship. I need to reflect on what happened and learn some new relationship skills so I'm ready when it happens. I'll make a plan to take up new activities where I'll meet people with similar interests and values.'	'I am learning a lot about myself and other people as I take on these new hobbies and social habits'. It's been a rough time lately. What other parts of my life have I neglected while I was focused on this relationship?'
Pam's example - End of BRL	It won't happen. BRL is a DPI flagship. Community loves it. They've said this every year for the last three years. It won't be any different this time.	They are so stupid. This program provides so much value. They'll be sorry.	I think it's really going to happen this time. I'll stop trying to turn the decision around. I can't do anything to stop it.	What do I really want from life? What are my strengths? What have I always wanted to try?	'What have I learned from this experience? Where else can I apply those new ideas? What can I put in place to make this unlikely to surprise me next time?'
Thinking and Action for not getting stuck	14,000 government officers lose their jobs at the same time as me. Competition for jobs is going to be fierce. If I delay action, others will get the few jobs available; my options would be reduced.	If I became a complainer; if I start whinging about government or policy, people will begin to find me annoying; my reputation for 'leadership' will be trashed. I will lose the support and good opinion of those on whom successful change of career may depend.	Because I was very familiar with this model, I spent little time here. I am driven by my value for integrity to practice what I preach. I determine to accept change early and find the positives.	What opportunities exist that match my talents and goals? How can I take this great material out to the communities who still can benefit from it? Integrity means for me that I don't depend on government to make this good work happen.	I am the first person in the department to accept the redundancy package and commit to starting my own business. I get a business mentor and set up the foundations for success.
Getting unstuck	I anticipate that the five stages of unchosen change may well begin happening to me. I remember what's important. I talk to the wisest people around me and gather a wide variety of opinions.	Being aware of my thinking and how it matches my beliefs. I don't spend long here. I draw on leadership ideas I've learnt. I value integrity and know I must practice what I preach.			
Leaders role	Information. Communication.	Emotional support	Emotional support	Guidance and direction	Support to take action
Your example					



No one experiences unchosen change in the same way, but there are predictable stages many people go through. The stages can take seconds or years to pass through.

If you or others are having trouble with the feelings and changes, a mental health professional is a good resource for vetting your feelings and finding a sense of assurance during difficult times.

Understanding these predictable stages can help lead ourselves and others successfully through change. However, most of us are not counsellors and it is good to know when to seek a mental health expert as support for yourself or others.

Assumptions work in a stable situation. During times of change it is more important than usual to surface assumptions and check they are still useful in the new reality. Change can also force us to identify and challenge assumptions that may not have been working for us for some time. Taking time to identify long-held, problematic assumptions, will help learn what works and what doesn't, generate new strategies and actions, and understand why the way we're working together may not be working because our assumptions *differ!*

Assumptions are also not equivalent to paradigms but underpin them. Paradigms are our worldviews that are based on certain assumptions about people, interactions, and the universe. So, biases influence assumptions that bring forth the paradigms we uphold. Beware the affliction of Paradigm Blindness - blinkers that make it hard to see information that conflicts with what we already believe, or what is convenient to believe but untrue.