



The FSAP Update

a newsletter from the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

Spring 2007

Dealing with Change

The Faculty and Staff

Assistance Program provides assessment, brief counseling, and referral services for all faculty and staff regarding any personal or health-related problem which affects an individual's life and work.

FSAP services are free to faculty, staff, and family members and are completely confidential. The staff also provides consultation to supervisors when an employee's personal problems are affecting work performance or relationships. For more information or to make an appointment, call 545-0350.

CHANGE
At Work
At Home
In Life
We can help.

THE FACULTY AND STAFF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
545-0350
www.umass.edu/uhs/services/fsap UMassAmherst

You look around at your new, second bathroom and marvel at how you ever lived without it. Your family outgrew the home's single bathroom long ago, but until recently, you ignored the discontent rather than face facts. "What took me so long?" you wonder. In a word – change.

Change happens all the time. You get promoted, quit your job to stay home with the kids or decide to move to a bigger house. You may have been thinking about the changes for a while, or they may have come as a surprise. But whether they're positive or negative, planned or unplanned, change can still be stressful and difficult.

Change is a process consisting of four steps:

- disbelief or denial;
- anger or blame;
- reluctant acceptance; and
- commitment.

Understanding and being aware of these stages can make it easier to work through the changes in your life and ease your stress.

The first stage of change is disbelief or denial. In this stage, you may not even be aware there's an issue.

Because you don't know there's anything wrong, you aren't planning for change. If you do recognize a problem, you may think you can work around it without much effort. Take our bathroom example: you know your children are getting older and, in your one-bathroom house, there just isn't enough time in the morning to get everyone showered and out the door in time. You may think, "Well, it's not ideal, but we can make it work. Maybe we can all get up a half an hour earlier." It seems reasonable to you; after all, a half hour isn't that much earlier.

The next stage is anger or blame. Using our example, you may become angry when no one sticks to your new, earlier bathroom schedule. You find yourself yelling at everyone to get up and get moving. You hate starting your day like this; the grumbling through the door tells you it isn't going over very well with anyone else in the house, either.

Eventually, you may find anger fading as you begin to accept the problem. This is reluctant acceptance. You're acutely aware that the new schedule isn't working for anyone, including yourself. Mornings are bad enough, and this is making everyone miserable. Tired of being the bad guy, you decide something has to be done now. You write "call a contractor" on your To-Do list.

In the last stage, commitment, you modify your behavior or environment and commit to the change. You start seeing the future and the potential that's there. It's a week or so later, and you're sitting at the table drinking your coffee. You hear the same old morning fights, but this time you've reached the end of your rope. You get the phone book, call the contractor and schedule an appointment for a quote on an additional bathroom.

You breathe a sigh of relief, knowing your mornings will soon be more peaceful.

Change can be a difficult and stressful process, even at the best of times. If you find stress is starting to take you over, these ideas from *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* may help:

- Don't sweat the small stuff
 - Make peace with imperfection
 - Be aware of the snowball effect of your thinking
 - Become more patient
 - Ask yourself the question "Will this matter a year from now?"
 - Surrender to the fact that life isn't fair
 - Repeat to yourself "Life isn't an emergency"
 - Choose your battles wisely
 - Argue for your limitations – they're yours
 - See the glass as already broken (and everything else too)
- Breathe before you speak
 - Relax
 - Do one thing at a time
 - Count to 10
 - Be flexible with changes in your plans
 - Cut yourself some slack
 - If someone throws the ball, you don't have to catch it
 - Keep asking yourself "What's really important?"
 - Trust your intuition
 - Live this day as if it were your last. It might be

If you need additional help or someone to talk to, the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program is available; call 545-0350 for an appointment.

From *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff ... and It's All Small Stuff*, by Richard Carlson, Ph.D., published by Hyperion, January, 1997; www.dontsweat.com



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