

The Effects of Change on Mental Health

We have all heard the old adage that there are only three certainties in life. These are birth, taxes and death. Underpinning these three is the one constant - **change**. In many cases change can be positive and rejuvenating. However, during times of financial uncertainty and significant organizational change the stress associated with change can negatively impact mental health.

Signs and symptoms that your mental health may be negatively affected:

- emotional fatigue
- apathy
- increased use of drugs and/or alcohol
- anxiety and panic
- anger
- decreased work performance
- uncontrolled emotions (anger, crying spells)
- inability to manage work and/or personal life
- physical fatigue
- restlessness/sleeplessness
- rigid thinking
- lowered self-esteem and self-confidence

Improving overall mental health

- **Manage stress:** we all have stressors in our work and personal lives but learning how to manage them before they threaten to overwhelm us is critical
- **Self-Confidence:** Identify your abilities and build on them. Identify your weaknesses and be aware of them. Your level of self-confidence can show in many ways: your behavior, your body language, your work and your play.
- **Find strength in numbers:** Sharing problems with co-workers who are having similar experiences may reduce feelings of isolation. However, be cautious not to allow these conversations to take a purely negative tone. This will drain your energy and increase anxiety.
- **Give and Accept Support:** be willing to offer support and assistance to your co-workers. In return, it is as important to be willing to accept assistance when needed.
- **Be realistic:** It is likely that workplace demands and workload will increase, prepare accordingly
- **Maintain a sense of humor:** having a sense of humor about life's difficulties can provide a way to bond with others, look at things in a different way, normalize your experience, and keep things from appearing too overwhelming or scary.
- **Maintain proper nutrition and physical activity:** When we are under stress, we tend to make poor nutritional choices that can actually exacerbate our stress levels. Ensuring you are eating nutritious, well balanced meals can reduce the impact of stress on the body, repair the damage done by stress, and optimally prepare the body for future stress. Exercise can be an extremely effective stress reliever. Exercise decreases stress by increasing endorphins, giving your mental outlook a natural boost.

Resources and Supports Available:

Assistance for Staff

Human Resource Services (OHE)

Phone: 780.492.4555

www.hrs.ualberta.ca

Assistance for Students

Counseling & Clinical Services

Phone: 780.492.5205

www.uwell.ualberta.ca

Assistance for Postdoctoral Fellows

Assistance Program for Postdoctoral Fellows

Phone: 780.428.7587

www.hrs.ualberta.ca/PDAP

Employee and Family Assistance Program

Phone: 780.428.7587

www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap

Graduate Students Assistance Program

Phone: 780.428.7587

<http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca/gsap>

For more information about mental illness, and assistance available visit "Facing Facts" at www.virtualwellness.ualberta.ca.

